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IRAQ: REPORT FROM THE FIELD

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UNITED STATES SENATE

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IRAQ: REPORT FROM THE FIELD

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

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

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:38 p.m., in room SH–216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. John F. Kerry (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Present: Senators Kerry, Feingold, Cardin, Shaheen, Kaufman, Lugar, and Corker.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN F. KERRY, U.S. SENATOR FROM MASSACHUSETTS

The CHAIRMAN. This hearing will come to order.

Today, we are honored to be joined by America's top diplomat in Baghdad, a long-time friend of this committee.

Welcome back, Chris. We're delighted to have you back here and look forward to your testimony today.

I also want to recognize the efforts of all of our very capable and, I would say, courageous diplomats who are serving in harm's way. They often don't get the credit that the soldiers on the front lines get, but in many ways they are equally at risk, and they do an extraordinary job, and they deserve our gratitude. And we extend it to them, today and always.

Six and a half years after going to war, we are finally entering our Iraq endgame. By next August, consistent with the President's February speech at Camp Lejeune, American troop levels will be down to 50,000 or lower, barely a third of where we are today. A residual force will leave by December 2011, in keeping with the bilateral security agreement that provides the legal framework for our ongoing presence in Iraq. These redeployments are going to take place in a complex, evolving political and security landscape.

When Iraqis go to the polls next January, they will elect a new Parliament and Government, and they're also scheduled to participate in a referendum to ratify the security agreement. If the Iraqi public rejects the agreement, then I believe we have no choice but to withdraw all of our forces as quickly as we can. This would complicate our redeployment and severely curtail our ability to assist the Iraqi security forces and government, but at this point I'm not sure how we would justify asking our soldiers to stay one day longer than necessary if they are formally disinvited by the Iraqi people.

In a sense, the security agreement that the Bush administration negotiated with Prime Minister Maliki made moot the old "should

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we stay or should we go" argument. Even so, Iraq remains, frankly, a sort of Rorschach test for pundits and for policymakers. On the one hand, a person can look at the security gains since 2006, when sectarian violence threatened to tear Iraqi society apart, and conclude that Iraqis have stepped back from the brink. And it's true that, since the worst days of 2006 and 2007, violence has dropped by 85 percent, even with the recent mass casualty attacks. American fatalities are at their lowest rate of the war. Al-Qaeda in Iraq, while still deadly, is only a shadow of its former self.

There has been political progress, as well. In the January elections, unlike in 2005, sectarian and ethnic identification is unlikely to be the sole organizing principle of Iraqi politics. And I know that Ambassador Hill will share some thoughts with us today on that. The leader of the Anbar Awakening, a group that evolved out of the Sunni Arab insurgency, has been talking openly about a political alliance with Shiite Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. Such an announcement would have been unthinkable just 18 months ago. Other Sunni factions are exploring a coalition with the Kurds. Electricity production, which had long been stalled, quietly increased by 40 percent in the last year. That's the optimistic side of the ledger.

But, one can also look at the same set of facts on the ground and come to a more complicated, perhaps even pessimistic, conclusion; namely, that removing an American presence that has been the lynchpin of the security improvements of the last few years would lead Iraq back into a downward spiral of communal violence. It is, frankly, too soon to know whether the rise in violence since American forces withdrew from Iraqi cities in June is an uptick or an upswing. Whether it is a blip or a trend, recent violence has been troubling. August was the deadliest month for Iraqis in more than a year, and the devastating Black Wednesday bombings against the Iraqi Foreign and Finance Ministries last month were a stark reminder that forces opposed to reconciliation remain capable of devastating attacks that could alter the country's direction. The attacks were also a blow to the Iraqi people's confidence in their own security forces.

And, of course, Iraq's problems don't end there. Arab-Kurdish tensions remain unresolved. Corruption is rampant. Millions of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons remain far from home, waiting to be resettled. Iraq's relations with its neighbors are volatile. These are really just a few of the many challenges that Iraq is going to face in the coming months.

So, what's it going to be? Which is it, in a sense? Is Iraq beginning to unravel again, or are these just the inevitable bumps on the road toward returning responsibility for Iraq to Iraqis? What will happen after we leave? We don't have definitive answers to these questions, but, as one who has long advocated the responsible redeployment of American troops from Iraq, I believe the President has made the most of the difficult situation that he inherited there.

At this point in our mission, America must approach Iraq with a dose of humility. There are limits to what we can accomplish there, and we may be approaching those limits.

As Iraqi politics enter an election season and our troops leave the cities, we no longer have the ability to dictate outcomes, if we ever did. While the American people stand ready to help Iraqis, it is

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time to take the training wheels off and let the Iraqis define their own future.

The task ahead as we drawdown our forces is to provide a nudge here and there to ensure that Iraq doesn't crash when the wheels do come off. In the last year or so, the Maliki government has been increasingly keen to signal that it is in control and capable of maintaining security. We should encourage this. Iraqis' ability to keep their own house in order is the key to leaving behind a stable Iraq.

In the meantime, perhaps the tragic Black Wednesday bombings will persuade Iraq's leaders to take a more honest look at their capabilities and needs. Today, Iraqi politics have room to breathe in ways that they simply didn't have in 2006 or 2007. But, the real test remains, not just for Prime Minister Maliki, but for all of Iraq's senior leaders. Are they willing to make the political compromises necessary to forge a sustainable political compact that provides the foundation for a stable Iraq? The answer will go a long way toward determining Iraq's future.

Mr. Ambassador, Iraq today I think, as evidenced here in this room to some degree, has become the forgotten war—whereas, Afghanistan was, previously—largely pushed off the headlines and out of the evening news. But, that doesn't make your task any easier; and I don't need to be the one to tell you that. The families of the 130,000 troops and 1,000 diplomats in Iraq need no reminder that their loved ones remain in harm's way. Just 2 days ago, four American solders were tragically killed.

Afghanistan will receive a lot of attention in the coming weeks, including by this committee, as it should; but, I hope this hearing will help serve as a reminder that, while it is coming to a close, our mission in Iraq is not yet over.

I look forward to hearing your testimony, and I thank you for making the trip back to Washington to be with us today.

Senator Lugar.

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

Senator LUGAR. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome back to the committee, Ambassador Hill.

Two months ago, I had the privilege of meeting with Prime Minister Maliki in Ankara, Turkey, as he led the Iraqi delegation at the signing of the Nabucco Pipeline Treaty. He predicted that exports from his country would fill half that pipeline. Two weeks later, the Prime Minister met with this committee, here in the Capitol, presenting a confident face to Members as we questioned him on everything from Iran and Arab-Kurdish relations to refugee returns and the readiness of his security forces and his government to deliver for the Iraqi people.

In the international arena, Mr. Maliki is traveling extensively, making the case that his country is ready to rejoin the community of nations, to emerge from chapter 7 status, and carry on responsibly as a mature state.

Domestically, as he prepares for the January 16 elections, he was projecting calm confidence and full control of all quarters, asserting Iraqi sovereignty and advancing an Iraqi first agenda. However,

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the devastating car-bomb attacks inside the Baghdad Security Zone, 3 weeks ago, which killed scores and injured hundreds more, stripped off that confident veneer. The coordinated explosions, which targeted the Finance and Foreign Ministry buildings, rattled the government and the Prime Minister, who came out pointing fingers and second-guessing decisions to bring down security barriers in parts of Baghdad. Senior members of the government even questioned the reliance on U.S. forces for security. The incident showed that a smooth glide path for Iraq is very unlikely.

There are positive signs in Iraq, but the political accommodation sought by the United States has not come about, despite the political space that was created by the surge and other factors. The central government remains weak, and ethnic and sectarian divisions remain. It appears that influence and control are achieved by the traditional means, even while the government muddles through day-to-day operations.

For our own part, serious questions remain about our policies going forward and our strategy. The President and the Vice President continue to speak about troops coming home at the end of 2011, but we do not have a clear understanding of how that withdrawal will occur under optimal conditions, much less worst-case scenarios.

Metrics coming out of MNFI and Embassy Baghdad point to positive directions. If these are reliable, that would be a welcome change from the fragile and reversible situation of earlier years.

Today, Ambassador Hill, from you we need realism, not the naive opportunism of the Coalition Provisional Authority days, to assess whether our strategic foundation is firm.

Key questions for you today should include, first: In the last few years, many critics charged that we were taking our eyes off the ball with respect to Afghanistan. Are we at risk of taking our eyes off the other ball as the attention and resources shift from Iraq? Has planning for withdrawal and normalization diverted attention from tasks and priorities that lay ahead in Iraq, particularly beyond the January election?

Second, are we developing lasting relationships and institutions? Having moved from the construction phase, it's not as easy to see progress when buildings and power generators are not the product. What programs are key to ensuring Iraq does not backslide?

And third, what and who will fill the power void as U.S. forces withdraw, first from cities, but progressively from the entire country? The "how" of withdrawal is even more important than the "when."

And fourth, all of the Kurdish region has been relatively calm. The International Crisis Group recently warned that a, "destructive political conflict," could arise over Kirkuk as Iraq Army and Kurdish forces are arrayed in opposing formations. Can this confrontation be resolved? And what are the consequences if it is not?

And fifth, are Iraq's neighbors playing constructive roles? What about Iran?

And sixth, as Prime Minister Maliki seeks reelection and put together a coalition, is there a chance that the platform will develop in a way that further breaks down sectarianism?

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And finally, do we and the Iraqis see eye to eye on the priorities going ahead? Are the policy foundations firm? Are you receiving the clarity of directions you need from Washington?

As we work to complete appropriation bills for 2010, the answers to these basic questions are essential to the work of the Congress and to this committee. As much as we'd like you to be the one with a crystal ball to tell us what things will look like at the end of 2011, it's more important that you give us your best sense of how things are progressing toward that date, and how things stand today.

We thank you so much for coming.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Senator Lugar.

Ambassador, we look forward to your testimony. Thank you for being here with us today.

STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER R. HILL, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC

Ambassador HILL. Thank you very much, Chairman Kerry.

I would like to—I have a statement which I'd like to——

The CHAIRMAN. We'll put the full statement in the record as if read in full, and if you'd summarize, that would give us more time to have a good dialogue. Thanks.

Ambassador HILL. Very good.

Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today about our opportunity in Iraq as we transition from a military-to-civilian-led mission and about our efforts to develop a strong, long-term relationship with Iraq.

This is the start of a 12-month period at the end of which all combat forces will be withdrawn. We have huge interests in capitalizing on the opportunity in Iraq. Iraq is at the center of the Middle East, bordering key countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and our NATO ally, Turkey. It is the border between Kurdish lands and Arab lands. It is really where Sunni meet Shia. It is a very central part of the Middle East, and a country in which we should have enduring interests. For the first time in decades, in fact, Iraq has a chance to become an engine for regional stability and regional economic growth rather than a source of regional tension and dispute.

A convergence of events present the possibility of genuine advancement. Our civilian effort will help foster security through active diplomacy to contain and begin to resolve internal disputes, and to foster longer term stability by showing the Iraqis how to build a market-oriented economy and a genuinely representative and accountable government. Over time, as we make progress in the economic and political goals, we will see a significant reduction in our civilian presence, both in the province and at the Embassy in Baghdad. But, for now, during this transition, we intend to actually strengthen our civilian presence as our military begins to ramp down. We need to show that we are taking over some of the tasks that our military is and has been engaged in, and that will mean an even strengthened civilian operation, after which we look to see the civilian effort begin also to ramp down.

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Mr. Chairman, Iraq has, indeed, suffered a series of attacks over the last weeks, including, actually, several on minority communities. Particularly horrifying were, indeed, the attacks on the Iraqi Foreign and Finance Ministries on August 19. But, in fact, the reality is that Iraqi people have stood firm and rejected retribution, and so far they have prevented the beginning of a new cycle of violence. This doesn't mean that these attacks don't need to be taken seriously; they need to be taken with great seriousness. But, we have found that the Iraqi people are reacting well to this. We have found that the Iraqi security forces are reacting well to this, and we believe that this is really quite a change from in the past.

There's been some good news in Iraq, as well. They've staged two rounds of successful elections—the provincial council elections in January and elections in the Kurdistan Regional Government, just a couple of months ago, in July. In both cases, the voting was free, fair, and peaceful.

Today, there are new provincial councils operating, and they know that the voters will have an opportunity to judge their performance.

Preparations have begun for national elections, scheduled in January 2010. The Council of Representatives is working on an election law to govern the conduct of elections. Iraq's High Electoral Commission has begun to register voters and political parties are negotiating coalitions. We'll continue to work with the Iraqi leadership to ensure that this process is completed.

In the economic area, Iraq's economy remains very much a work in progress. It's beset by drought, inadequate reforms, falling oil prices earlier this year, which, indeed, hurt the budget. But, as production and export levels have begun to increase and oil prices have recovered in recent months—Iraq's budget has improved somewhat. Nevertheless, we have many near-term concerns about the fiscal stability. Iraq is going to have to work very closely on a standby agreement with the International Monetary Fund, and we're pleased that it is doing so.

It also needs to undertake economic reforms which will lay the groundwork for greater help from the World Trade Organization. We can be helpful. But, on the economy, the time has come, really, for Iraq to step up to the plate. There is no question that Iraq has the resources to be stable and successful, but it needs to better mobilize these resources, starting with oil.

The Iraqi people are blessed with enormous oil reserves, estimated to be the No. 3 country in the world. And on June 30, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil held the first bid round in Iraq's history, with 32 international oil companies competing for six oil fields. One field was awarded. It is a major field and if it lives up to its expectations, it's possible that Iraq's oil exports could actually double, from this one field alone. Iraq needs to do more in this area. We need to work closely with Iraqis, because we need to see, increasingly, Iraq paying for its own bills as we ramp down our bilateral assistance.

Iraq needs to work on a more diversified economy, and we are very pleased that Prime Minister Maliki and we have worked together on a United States-Iraq business and investment conference, to be held on October 20, here in Washington. Two hundred

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representatives from Iraq will attend the conference. It will be a delegation of senior government officials. And we hope that this conference, together with the discussions with high-level Iraqi officials and a dialogue of economic cooperation, will really act to spur investment in Iraq.

But, beyond some of these economic issues, I want to stress that Iraqi issues do not exist in a vacuum. A look at the map shows that Iraq is located in the center of a complex neighborhood. Iran's influence is very much a reality in Iraq. We recognize that elements of Iran's influence, such as trade and religious tourism, can have a positive impact. But, too often, Iran has played a negative role, meddling in Iraq's internal interests and training violent militias. With Syria, tensions persist between Baghdad and Damascus. Turkey has special interests in the north. Iraq's history with Kuwait is difficult. And the problems reach back beyond 1990.

Against this backdrop, there's a fundamental question. Is the Sunni Arab world prepared to make room for an Arab state that in all probability will be led, though not dominated, by the Shia? How Iraq deals with its neighbors will define what kind of region emerges in the coming year. We—in coming years—we need to help Iraq find solutions to some of these longstanding regional issues.

I think our diplomacy in Iraq, internally in bilateral terms but also multilaterally, will have a vital role to play. We've expanded our efforts to facilitate, first containing, and then beginning to resolve, disputes in northern Iraq between Kurds and Arabs. I was just in Iraqi Kurdistan over the weekend discussing how we can move forward on issues like developing the vital oil sector in a way that benefits all Iraqis, and how to begin to address the thorny dispute in Kirkuk. We need to begin the process of getting various ethnic and sectarian communities engaged in settling their disputes. The U.N. has an important role here, and we want to work very closely with the U.N.

Our diplomatic track is designed to fully complement our military efforts to foster cooperation between Kurdistan regional security forces—that is, the Peshmerga—and those of the central government in Baghdad. And General Odierno has been very much engaged in this area.

I think we need to understand that the first milestone of the security agreement—that is the—removing United States forces from the cities and villages in Iraq on June 30—turned out to be a very important day. It was more important than many people thought, I think, because many of the Iraqi people looked to the question, Would the United States fulfill its obligations under the security agreement? And I think the overwhelming majority of Iraqi citizens do believe we have done just that.

This date has turned out to be a very important date, because Iraqis now see that the United States can be trusted in the agreements we sign. And I think the Iraqis are now very interested in moving on to see if we can implement the Strategic Framework Agreement. The Strategic Framework Agreement, a sort of companion piece to the Security Agreement, lays out all the elements of a long-term relationship with Iraq. And this is the agreement that we very much want to follow and to guide us in the years ahead.

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To be sure, the transition to a civilian-led mission presents many challenges for us. We need, first of all, to make sure we have the funding to take up tasks that our military has been providing in the past. And the State Department has been working very hard to make sure that we have that funding. There are elements of assistance—for example, police training—that the military has been engaged in. These will be transferred to the State Department, and we are very much on these issues.

I think this Strategic Framework Agreement that we are pursuing was very much the focus of Prime Minister Maliki's visit to Washington in July. He and Secretary Clinton convened a second meeting of the Higher Coordinator Committee. We've established joint coordination committees in a number of areas and will continue to be very much engaged on these issues.

Mr. Chairman, with those comments of our overall trends in Iraq, I stand ready to hear your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Hill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER R. HILL, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ, U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, DC

Chairman Kerry, Senator Lugar, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today about our historic opportunity in Iraq as we transition from a military to civilian-led mission, and about our efforts to develop a strong, long-term normalized relationship with Iraq. Such a relationship could serve as a model for how we approach the aftermath of other conflicts, based on the strategic interests of both states.

We have huge interests in capitalizing on this opportunity. Iraq is at the center of the Middle East, bordering key countries like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and our NATO ally, Turkey. For the first time in decades, Iraq has a chance to become an engine for regional stability and regional economic growth rather than a source of regional tension and dispute.

A convergence of events presents the possibility of genuine advancement. Our military is in the process of drawing down combat forces and transitioning to a predominantly advise-and-assist role. Our civilian effort, under my direction, will help foster security through active diplomacy to contain and begin to resolve internal disputes and to foster longer term stability by assisting the Iraqis in building a market-oriented economy and a genuinely representative and accountable government. Over time, as our programs make progress on these economic and political goals, we will significantly reduce in our civilian presence both in the provinces and at the Embassy in Baghdad.

REALITY ON THE GROUND

Iraq has suffered a series of attacks over the past several weeks, including several on minority communities. Particularly horrifying were the attacks on the Iraqi Foreign and Finance Ministries on August 19. The reality, however, is that the Iraqi people have stood firm and rejected retribution and a new cycle of violence such as the one that brought Iraq to the brink in 2006.

This does not mean we don't take the attacks seriously. We do. Our civilian and military personnel have been cooperating extensively with Iraqi counterparts on investigations, security, and medical treatment.

There has been some good news. Iraq staged two rounds of successful elections this year—the provincial council elections in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces in January, and elections for the Kurdistan Regional Government in July. Today, new provincial councils operate, aware that voters will have an opportunity to judge their performance in the next elections. Preparations have begun for the national elections scheduled for January 2010—the Council of Representatives is working on an elections law to govern the conduct of the elections, Iraq's High Electoral Commission has begun to register voters, and political parties are negotiating coalitions—several of which are likely to be cross-sectarian. We will continue to work with the Iraqi leadership to ensure that this process is completed.

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Iraq's economy remains a work in progress, beset by drought, inadequate reforms and falling oil prices earlier this year, which hurt the budget. As production and export levels have increased and oil prices recovered in recent months, Iraq's budget situation has improved somewhat. Nevertheless, we have concerns about near-term fiscal stability in Iraq. The Iraqi Government must continue to pursue a responsible fiscal policy, which includes negotiating another Stand-By Arrangement with the International Monetary Fund. It also needs to undertake the economic reforms necessary to join the World Trade Organization and integrate into the global trading system. We stand ready to broaden our economic cooperation, and toward this end, we look forward to the Iraqi Government's ratification of several pending bilateral cooperation agreements. We can be helpful, but on the economy, the time has come for the Iraqis to step up to the plate.

The Iraqi Government has the resources to become stable and successful but it needs to better mobilize those resources, starting with oil. On June 30, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil held a bid round with 32 international oil companies competing for six oil fields and two gas fields, one field was awarded. It is Iraq's largest producing oil field, one that could boost considerably Iraq's oil production. A second bid round, planned for December, will include larger fields that have been minimally developed. In the runup to the next bid round, we are urging the Iraqis to recognize the opportunity it presents. This round needs to be a success, and we have discussed intensively with the Iraqi Government how it can make its investment climate in the sector more attractive. Provided the Iraqis can also reach consensus on hydrocarbons legislation, and on revenue-sharing, it could be a real game-changer for the country.

Nonetheless, long-term growth and stability will require a more diversified economy with greater foreign direct investment. The Prime Minister says that his government will take measures to address legal and regulatory hurdles to investment. There are many hurdles, the legacy of Baghdad's adherence to socialist ideology for decades lingers in the minds of many Iraqi's, who remain suspicious of free trade, foreign investment, and other reforms needed to open the economy and spur employment. We review these issues in detail with the Iraqis, ranging from the aviation sector to agriculture. We will keep urging progress on market reforms. During his July visit to the United States, Prime Minister Maliki announced plans for the first United States-Iraq Business and Investment Conference to be held October 20 and 21 here in Washington. About 200 representatives from Iraq will attend the conference, led by a delegation of senior government officials. Preceding the conference, on October 19, we will host several high-level Iraqi officials for the Dialogue on Economic Cooperation, a bilateral economic policy discussion where we will highlight steps the Iraqis can and should take to spur investment. These events will be significant steps as we help Iraq attract foreign investors and stand up a market economy. A market economy generating sustained economic growth and increased employment opportunities will weaken insurgent and extremist networks. Were Iraq to rebuild its infrastructure and economy on the scale that its neighbors in Saudi Arabia and the gulf did in the 1970s and 1980s, it would be an engine that would help the regional economy and indeed that of the world.

Beyond bilateral and economic issues, I want to stress that Iraq issues do not exist in a vacuum. A look at a map shows clearly that Iraq is located at the center of a complex neighborhood. Iran's influence is a reality. We recognize that elements of Iran's influence, such as trade and religious tourism, can have a positive impact on Iraq's economy. Too often, however, Iran has played a negative role, meddling in internal politics or arming and training violent militias. With Syria, tensions persist between Baghdad and Damascus. Iraq's history with Kuwait is difficult—and the problems reach back beyond 1990. Against this backdrop, there is a fundamental question: Is the Sunni-Arab world prepared to make room for an Arab state that will be led by a government in which Shia play a leading role? How Iraq deals with its neighbors will define what kind of region emerges in the coming years. We need to help Iraq find solutions to longstanding regional disputes. We want to see an Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors, one that can be an anchor of stability and prosperity, where the chances of having to put our excellent servicemembers back at risk are small.

Iraq still faces internal threats to its stability. The extreme Sunni-Shia violence of 2006–2007 has abated, thanks in part to some of our efforts, such as enlisting the help of the Sons of Iraq. In the bombings we have seen in recent months we detect an effort by al-Qaeda in Iraq to rekindle that violence, but to the great credit of the Iraqi people, they have not risen to the bait. At the same time, there is a risk of escalation in tensions between Arabs and Kurds around the disputed areas in northern Iraq. And we are working with Iraq to address the return of refugees

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and internally displaced persons in ways that will help avoid instability and contribute to Iraq's development.

Our diplomacy has a vital role to play. I have expanded our effort to facilitate first containing, and then beginning to resolve, disputes in northern Iraq between the Kurds and the Arabs. I was just in Iraqi Kurdistan discussing how we can move forward on issues like developing the vital oil sector in a way that benefits all Iraqis and also how to address the thorny dispute in Kirkuk. We need to begin the process of getting various ethnic and sectarian communities engaged in settling their disputes through discussion. The U.N. has an important role here. All of us want to ease tensions and cool the emotional temperature so individuals and families can start to build stable lives—and develop the economy. In this context, our diplomatic track is designed to fully complement our military's effort to foster cooperation between Kurdistan regional security forces and those of the central government in Baghdad.

CHANGING ROLE IN IRAQ

A major visible sign of how the times are changing was the drawdown of combat troops from cities and villages on June 30. The President has made clear our intention to drawdown all combat troops by August 31, 2010, and drawdown all U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of 2011. As the military draws down and the role of the State Department increases, we are working with General Odierno and the rest of the military and other civilian agencies to make the transition from a military-led effort to one led by civilians as seamless as possible.

In general, we are not seeking to replicate the programs of the military but instead to transition to a more normalized relationship. This is what I believe we want as a country and this is what the Iraqis tell us they want as well.

Helping Iraqis make their country secure will require that we continue to partner closely with Iraqi military and police. The military has had the lead role in supporting the development of a capable and nonsectarian Iraqi security forces and we have seen huge gains in terms of Iraqi forces' capabilities and cohesion, although the Iraqi police in particular still have far to go in terms of establishing a fully professional and self-sustaining force. As the military prepares to drawdown all its forces in a little over 2 years, it is our intent that the State Department take over the lead on police training. Our programs will focus more selectively on the higher order skills that the Iraqi police now need.

All of these issues have a political dimension; solutions that focus on security alone can only go so far. Through the strong civilian effort that President Obama has committed to, we will step up when our Iraqi counterparts ask for our help on issues that are important to us. Our assistance will be useful in settling disputes, supporting the national elections, building more transparent and professional state institutions, and creating conditions that minimize the likelihood of conflict. For example, Secretary Clinton announced $100 million in new assistance to support the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis after her July 24 meeting with Prime Minister Maliki.

The transition to a civilian-led mission presents other challenges for us as well. Some have already become apparent. To make sure our diplomats and other staff are active beyond the Embassy walls, we are moving our civilians around Iraq more than ever. Our civilians in Baghdad and in the provinces are slowly but noticeably making progress helping Iraqis better manage Iraqi affairs and Iraqi projects in areas like education, economic issues, energy, and transportation.

For example, international airlines like Gulf Air are starting service to the new airport in Najaf—a project we didn't pay for but for which we provided expert advice through our mission staff in Baghdad and the PRT. That is the model of how we will operate in the years ahead. Najaf, one of the most important cities for Shia Muslims, was once wracked by violence and terrorism at the hands of Sunni extremists and Shia militias. Now it is generating many investment projects in religious tourism and education, with the airport a major factor. This is the kind of growth and stability that we want to see elsewhere in Iraq.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

As our relationship with Iraq transitions, the SFA will become the framework for our bilateral relationship. The SFA outlines areas of cooperation and allows us to continue our civilian programs that address the concerns of the GOI and the U.S. goal of a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq. Under the SFA, we are stepping up our work in areas ranging from educational exchanges, to the environment, to economic development and trade promotion; all to capitalize on this opportunity to make Iraq genuinely stable and secure. Najaf's airport is but one small example of

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how we do this. The broad plan is detailed in our Strategic Framework Agreement for a Relationship of Friendship and Cooperation between the United States of America and the Republic of Iraq that lays the basis for a long-term partnership.

Our Iraqi colleagues are keen partners in implementing the agreement and this was a focus of Prime Minister Maliki's recent visit. On July 24, Secretary Clinton and Prime Minister Maliki convened the second meeting of the Higher Coordinating Committee under the Agreement to review the progress made since it entered into force in January.

The Agreement calls for the establishment of Joint Coordination Committees, as necessary, to execute and oversee implementation. To date, four such working groups have convened.

The Committee on Services and Information Technology provides a structure for cooperation on capacity-development and institution-building, an area where improvement would yield great benefits for Iraqi society. Our programs work with Iraqi ministries and executive offices to develop civil service skills and ministry leadership. For example, we have helped our Iraqi counterparts improve electricity service delivery and have provided intensive training on specialized medical treatment for Iraqi doctors.

The Committee on Economic and Energy Cooperation has overseen technical assistance and training for the Ministry of Oil on contracting, licensing, the tender process, and dispute mitigation. The U.S. Commercial Service has made it possible for eight delegations of Iraqi businessmen to attend trade shows in the United States. And we are working with the Government of Iraq and the World Bank to develop a regulatory framework for, and to invest in, microfinance institutions currently operating in Iraq.

The Committee on Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation focuses on strengthening the judicial and corrections systems. There are courts operating now in parts of Iraq where there used to be none, such as the new one in Ramadi that we helped build in once violence-wracked Anbar. International human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch have acknowledged that the treatment of detainees in Justice Ministry prisons—whose guards we train—has improved. Meanwhile, legal clinics and judicial training we provide has reduced the time prisoners wait to get trials. Better detention conditions and faster resolution of cases takes some of the edge off of sectarian divisions and ultimately reinforces stability in Iraq.

Finally, the Committee on Education, Cultural, and Scientific Cooperation provides an umbrella for our many Fulbright and International Visitors Programs, which bring scholars and experts to the United States for long- and short-term study. Iraq recently committed $2.5 million to the Fulbright program, making it the largest Fulbright contributor in the Middle East. We are also partnering with Prime Minister Maliki in his ambitious program to send 10,000 young Iraqis for university studies abroad. I mentioned the problems that hinder Iraq's economy because of discredited socialist ideologies and practices. Iraqis—both the people and the government—hunger for better education and, in the end, only better educated graduates can ensure that Iraq is prosperous and stable in decades to come.

We are not alone. United National Assistance Mission for Iraq or UNAMI has ambitious plans. Our NATO allies are helping with training programs. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund are contributing as well to our shared objectives in Iraq. But all of them need to do more.

ELECTIONS AND GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Under the Strategic Framework Agreement we have agreed to work with the Government of Iraq to support and strengthen Iraq's democracy and democratic institutions on a purely nonpartisan basis.

A legitimate national elections process and subsequent government formation is key to improving stability. The successful conduct of the provincial council elections in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces in January was encouraging, and we hope to help the Iraqis build on that success.

The national elections and subsequent government formation carry high stakes for many political actors, successful election and a smooth transition to the new government are critical for Iraq's developing democracy and its people. What is happening now is that various politicians are reaching into other communities in an effort to put together a coalition they think could win in January. This is heartening. But politicking and jockeying for position will also continue following the elections, when Iraq's elected leaders will have to work together to create a government. This may be a long process, but it is imperative that we show our continuing

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support for Iraq's democracy. Our focus is on building a long-term relationship with Iraq that can survive the uncertainty surrounding elections.

OUR CONTINUING PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUND

As the United States-Iraq relationship continues to change, our civilian presence and programs will necessarily shift along with it. In Baghdad as the relationship between the U.S. mission and the Iraqi Government continues to normalize, the Embassy will be rightsizing it's presence down from the extraordinary staff levels that were required to support the interim government a few years ago. In provinces, as our military presence draws down, the number of PRTs will decrease too, but we want to maintain significant engagement in important provinces. Consistent focus on key provinces could help prevent violence and instability that may spread to other areas. We are currently engaged in a deliberative process within the administration on the future footprint of the U.S. mission in the provinces and we will be happy to update you as we move forward.

The intrepid men and women serving in our PRTs have amassed a record of achievement that all of us can be proud of. They have contributed significantly to the decline in violence in most parts of Iraq; helped prepare for provincial and now national elections; provided capacity-building assistance for provincial officials; spurred good governance and reconciliation; strengthened civil society and much more. More importantly, it is a record of achievement that local Iraqi communities are eager to build on.

The transition from a military- to civilian-led mission will involve significant programmatic and management challenges. We are planning for the civilian-led programs to follow on from military ones that have yielded successes and will need to be continued, such as police training. An effective transition from a military-led presence to a civilian-led presence will require strong civilian leadership in Baghdad and the provinces. Part of the transition will involve making necessary, sometimes tough, decisions about the types and degrees of programs that will be critical for us to continue in order to secure and build on the achievements made to date. As the State Department takes the lead from the Defense Department, we will be developing a resource plan that enables us to carry out the mission in Iraq.

We will align our assistance efforts, both in Baghdad and in the provinces, toward the goals most important to achieving economic growth, stability, and ultimately a secure Iraq. Ambassador Pat Haslach is coordinating our foreign assistance programs in Iraq, as well as the transitions those programs will undergo as the military presence draws down. Helping develop capacity in Iraq's government institutions, assisting women and widows who have suffered disproportionately from the violence, and aiding returning refugees and internally displaced persons seeking to reintegrate into Iraqi society are some of the important aspects of our activities on the ground in Iraq. Our programs also support the President's Cairo initiatives—improving economic development and access to opportunities, education exchanges, and so on—and make it possible for Iraqis to participate in American programs with citizens of other countries in the region.

Looking out longer term, we can see where our civilian effort reaches its objectives. We will have finished training programs and helped the Iraqis establish sustainable economic growth, and stable governance and management systems. We can then continue to ramp down our effort. Already the Embassy is planning for a gradual reduction in the number of agencies and American personnel both in the provinces and at the Embassy starting in 2010.

CONCLUSION

We are at a new stage in our relationship with Iraq. We must maintain strong engagement to prevent backsliding and build close and constructive ties. Such ties are squarely in our interests, in Iraq's interests, and in the interests of the region.

An Iraq focused on economic development will want stable, predictable relations with its neighbors.

An Iraq where different ethnic and sectarian groups work together to solve common problems will improve security—and free people to get down to building businesses, not bombs.

An Iraq where people go safely to the polls and have a say in the decisions that affect their lives will make for a better future. To paraphrase a former mayor of New York, issues-based politics will help drive home the point that there is no Shia or Sunni way to clean the streets.

The Strategic Framework Agreement provides a solid foundation for civilian engagement and cooperation. We hope this will help us develop that relationship. As we transition responsibilities from military to civilian agencies, we will need your

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support to make sure that our men and women on the ground—military and civilian—have the resources they need to do their jobs and cement the new phase of our relationship with Iraq.

Our help is still essential on these fronts. Iraq's successful transformation will be the ultimate justification for the sacrifice of the American people, especially our servicemembers.

The August 19 bombings and other recent attacks were awful. But they have not discouraged the Iraqi people and government from working toward a better future, and they should not discourage us from assisting them, where appropriate, in that endeavor.

In closing, I want to thank all the men and women who have served in Iraq, both military and civilian. They have done a truly brilliant job in a very different type of war. My thoughts are with those we have lost, those who have suffered serious injuries, and their families. We will continue to be indebted to them for their service, we will never forget their sacrifices, and we thank them all for their service.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

We're going to do a 7-minute round, since we have a number of Senators here, and try to expedite.

You mentioned, in your testimony, a strengthened civilian effort. What do you mean by that? We have the largest Embassy anywhere in the world. Are you envisioning a larger——

Ambassador HILL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Civilian——

Ambassador HILL. First of all, the Embassy is, indeed, very large. And frankly, it is unsustainable in its current configuration, and will need to get smaller.

Just on the issue of housing for our employees, we are set up for about 600 employees; we have some—over 1,000 people there. We've taken one-bedroom apartments, put a Sheetrock divider through a small living room, and make them into two-bedroom apartments for two unrelated employees. So, just in terms of the physical infrastructure, we are not set up for the size we are, and we need to get smaller.

That said, there are certain tasks in the very near term that we need to take up, and take up with great seriousness, to make sure that, first of all, the Iraqis understand that the United States is not leaving; United States forces may be leaving, but the United States is not leaving. Chief among these, of course, is the issue of the police training, a function that was performed by the military which will soon be performed by people from the State Department.

So, in doing that, we need to look at how we protect these people. Do we—and are we going to have to have additional security for these people now that we no longer have U.S. forces to do that? So, there will be some near-term issues like that. The overall footprint of the United States—indeed, the overall funding for the United States—will go precipitously down. The issue is how, in some areas——

The CHAIRMAN. It's a balance.

Ambassador HILL [continuing]. We have to take over for what the military has done.

But, I want to assure you, Mr. Chairman, I want to see that Embassy smaller.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Ambassador, you also talked about the issue of reform in Iraq. And, you know, we've been sitting on this committee, listening to this talk—I mean, I can remember Secretary Rice, down in the lower room of the Dirksen, testifying to use in January, 3 or 4 years ago, saying, "The oil law is almost done.

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We're ready. We're moving forward on this and that," et cetera, et cetera. We are at least 3 or 4 years later now, and still those contentious issues remain contentious. It seems to me that those may be the flashpoint, in the absence of an American presence. Would you lend your view on that, and on the prospect of actually resolving these——

Ambassador HILL. Well, first of all, I'd like to say that I think getting the economy there operating—namely, getting oil starting to be pumped out of the ground—is essential to the future of that country. And frankly, we cannot be funding things that should be funded by the Iraqis, and would be funded if they were able to move on the oil sector.

With regard to the hydrocarbons law, I went out there with the expectation that we would move on that; I know and you know it's been held up for 3 or 4 years. I have really worked that issue. We have tried to break it down, find out where the real differences are between the Kurdish Government and the Iraqi Government. It's a complex piece of legislation, actually involving four separate pieces of legislation having to do with revenue-sharing, having to do with institution-building, having to do with how the ministry would operate. And I think, realistically speaking, it will probably not get done before the January elections.

So, our concern has been, we cannot have Iraq's future held up, or simply held hostage, to this one piece of legislation. Therefore, we were pleased that the Iraqis did move ahead with the beginning of something they hadn't done for decades and decades; begin the process of bidding oil fields to foreign concerns. They didn't do it during Saddam, they didn't even do it pre-Saddam. So, they have begun that. They began it in June.

The CHAIRMAN. That's all well and good, but if all those revenues——

Ambassador HILL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. If all those revenues are piling up in even greater amounts, and—without some distribution mechanism——

Ambassador HILL. Yes.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. You would have——

Ambassador HILL. Well, there is a distribution mechanism. The 17 percent is basically agreed by all sides. So, even when the Kurdish regional government were able to export some oil with an agreement with Baghdad, they did it under the provision of 17 percent.

So, I think these things can be properly distributed. The issue is in the—I won't say "long run"—but certainly in the medium run, they're going to need this law, because the main issues go to things like infrastructure. Iraq's oil sector is very much in trouble, with very aging infrastructure. They have to have agreements on how they're going to pay for that. Is that the responsibility of local authorities? There are other issues having to do with the southern part of Iraq and their own regional concerns. So, I think they can deal with some of the key elements, but it would be much better if they dealt with a hydrocarbon law.

But, I'm giving you my sense of the situation, and I don't think we're going to get there before January. And therefore, we really

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want to focus on getting them to bid out these fields, because getting British Petroleum in there is a good development.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Ambassador, Syria and Iraq had indicated a willingness to try to cooperate on the borders and deal with the foreign-fighter issue, which is very much in our interests, and we've been pushing that on both sides, but the bombings on August 19 have led to a diplomatic explosion between the two countries. They've pulled their ambassadors and traded recriminations. So, where do we stand on that? What, if anything, could be done to end that? Will Turkish mediation make a difference? Is there something that, you know, we should be advocating at this point? And what do you think is the prospect for getting back to the place that we had hoped to be?

Ambassador HILL. Well, I think we would like to see Iraq and Syria have a good relationship. And it was rather ironic that, on August 18—that is, 1 day before the bombing—Prime Minister Maliki was in Damascus, and they signed a number of economic agreements. Obviously, things are in a difficult state, and things are, frankly, on hold right now, through this downturn in the relationship.

The Iraqis are very concerned about the fact that some senior Baathist leaders went and found refuge in Syria, and remain in Syria, and the Iraqis have, understandably, called for their return to Iraq. That issue, frankly, needs to be worked through.

In terms of foreign fighters, there has been a diminished flow of foreign fighters from Syria to Iraq, but I don't think anyone should say that's gone to zero. And the issue of foreign fighters in Syria is also an issue that we need to be—I think everybody needs to be—focused on.

The Iraqis, in their investigation of August 19, have come to the conclusion that this was more than an al-Qaeda strike; they believe there is considerable external influence in this. Their fingers tend to point toward Syria. We would like to work with the Iraqis on what evidence they have—we would like to share with the Iraqis what evidence we have to try to understand precisely what happened, and then get on with dealing with that and improving the relationship.

Syria, obviously, has been a troubled neighbor for Iraq, but, I think, in the long run, Iraq needs to develop this relationship. Prime Minister Maliki spent 18 years of his life in Syria, so when one talks to Prime Minister Maliki about Syria, you have to do it with—in a way that's respectful of the fact that he knows a thing or two about Syria.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

Senator Lugar.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, as Americans read the newspapers about attacks now in Iraq, the question is raised, in a commonsense way, after the withdrawal of our forces from the cities on June 30, what is the outlook of the ordinary Iraqi citizen in cities about his or her security or about security in their homes and neighborhoods? In essence, there was rejoicing that we had fulfilled our commitment, and we did so. And yet, even the people that we have tried to train and left to provide the security seem to be inadequate for that task.

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Now, granted, the numbers of casualties are well down, as are the number of attacks, by any statistical measurement. Nevertheless, life has to go on in an ordinary way for people, with or without the United States. That being said, what is your prognosis of the security arrangements Iraqis are providing for themselves, and the perceptions of their citizens about that?

Ambassador HILL. I think, with regard to perceptions, obviously there are concerns among Iraqi citizenry about the capability of their forces and their ability to handle a great security challenge, which their own government believes is not just developed within Iraq, but also has some foreign roots. So, this is a major issue there.

That said, I think the locus of opinion is that it is time for the Iraqi forces to protect Iraqis. And so, the United States forces, which I do believe are the greatest fighting force the world has ever seen, has also become the greatest training force. There's been tremendous effort put into making sure the Iraqis are able to manage this issue. We have a great deal of cooperation as we try to have transparency in what we know about the situation and what they know.

Now, the Iraqis will do things a little differently than the United States forces. And some of the things they do, in our opinion, ought to be changed. The question is, Can you get them to change things by just telling them, or are they going to have to learn to change things by the experience? You know, one issue is checkpoints. Are checkpoints, alone, enough to solve these problems, or do you have to have much more aggressive patrolling?—that sort of thing. I think these are things the Iraqi forces are entirely capable of learning.

You know, right after August 19, there was a lot of finger-pointing about, Did the police do enough? Was the army doing enough?—et cetera. I counsel that, really, this is not a time for finger-pointing. There'll be plenty of time for that in the future. What they really need to do is come together and figure out how they can do things better.

There has been a lot of talk about whether these issues were related to bringing down T walls. I think anyone who's visited the Foreign Ministry—and, indeed, I took some of your colleagues to see it—they realize that it wasn't just an issue of T walls; it was an issue of a very well-funded terrorist group with very large truck platform, carrying thousands of tons of explosives, doing damage in a way that—I think, for most Americans to understand it—you have to think back to Oklahoma City. It was that type of agricultural chemical-based weapon.

So, my own judgment is that the Iraqi forces—and, indeed, the Iraqi Government—is going to be challenged very much in the coming months. I also am of the judgment that they will learn from these terrible events, and will make the adjustments they need to make.

I don't think this is a function of the fact that somehow, if we turned it over to them a year from now or 2 years from now, the issue would be much different. I think they have to simply learn, and I think they are doing that. There are some very capable people in the Iraqi security forces.

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Senator LUGAR. Let me ask, as a followup to that, about the security of American personnel. You've indicated 1,000 people are in Iraq in a diplomatic capacity. But, news accounts indicate many more Americans are still in Iraq completing various projects, as private sector partners and so forth. What security do your personnel have, or the people doing the projects? And how much security is going to be required in this period of time? Furthermore we now have to get all of the equipment, supplies, vehicles, whatever we have in Iraq, out of Iraq. It must be a huge withdrawal operation you're looking at, not just of people, but of all of these goods and armaments. How is that proceeding?

Ambassador HILL. Well, Senator, I think the military is working the logistics very well of how they will get their personnel and equipment out of Iraq, what routes they will use, how they will protect the force. I, as a humble American ambassador, I really don't think I can give any advice to General Odierno on this matter, except to say that—as a general statement, the environment in Iraq continues to be very dangerous. And if you just measure progress in Iraq by the degree of danger, I think it's very much in the interests of terrorists and insurgents to create the impression that it's extremely dangerous, and therefore there's been very little progress.

We believe that we have adequate security to protect our civilians. When I go out, I go out in reinforced convoys. I must say, as a personal observation, when you arrive there and then you look at the number of people that have to be moved when I need to go from point A to point B, you think to yourself, Do I really need to go from point A to point B? Can I do this on the phone or something? But, soon you realize that if you allow yourself to be demotivated by worrying about how many people are moving when you're moving, you won't be able to get your job done.

So, a lot of security people are moved whenever diplomats are moved around the country. We find it absolutely essential to get into the so-called Red Zone. I say "so-called," because outside the Green Zone is the rest of the country, known as the Red Zone. But, we need to be out there. It is not without risk. We have lost people in the Embassy. We may lose people in the future. We believe it's the right approach. We take all precautions. No one is interested in doing anything against the precautions of our security people.

So, it's a very tough environment. I must say, arriving there, realizing the difficulty of just getting from the airport to the Embassy, we are all very struck by it, but we're not going to give in to it. We're going to get our job done. We're going to get the Iraqis to stand this place up. And when our people leave, they will leave with a sense of a job accomplished. That's what we're going to do.

Senator LUGAR. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Lugar.

Senator Feingold.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you.

Ambassador Hill, thank you for being here.

I'd like to thank the chairman for holding this important hearing.

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I'm extremely pleased that we finally have a timetable for ending our involvement in the war in Iraq. And, while I'm concerned that the redeployment is not being done as promptly as it should be, this step will allow us to refocus on the global threat posed by al-Qaeda.

I remain convinced that foreign occupations are usually not a good strategy for combating a global terrorist network. We need to find ways to relentlessly pursue al-Qaeda while simultaneously developing long-term partnerships with legitimate local actors, and doing so through civilian, diplomatic, and development efforts that do not involve a massive military footprint.

And now, as we transition out of Iraq, it is extremely important that we focus on making this an orderly withdrawal and doing everything we can, through diplomatic means, to help promote the political reconciliation needed to bring lasting peace to Iraq.

As to some questions, Ambassador, how do the Iraqi people feel about the redeployment of all United States troops by the end of 2011, as currently required by the bilateral agreement? Is there any—is there a danger that any indication that we're backing away from that commitment would be greeted with strong opposition?

Ambassador HILL. I think the dates of December 2011, August 2010—these were agreed with the Iraqi Government in—at the end of 2008. I think any indication that we were not prepared to live with these dates would be very poorly received by the Iraqi people. And indeed, we saw this in the movement out of the cities on June 30, 2009. Whenever we tried to discuss that, in terms of nuances, immediately the Iraqi media and the Iraqi public got concerned that somehow we were looking for ways not to accomplish that. In the end, we did exactly what we said we would do, which was, we pulled our people out of the cities. And I think it really has established a reservoir of trust that, when you reach an agreement with the Americans, you can take it to the bank.

So, I think it's very important to live up to these agreements. And I think the Iraqi people, even though they do have great concerns about security—I think they want to be responsible for their—see their country responsible for their own security. As I said earlier, I think these will be difficult moments ahead, but these are nonetheless, Iraqi moments to handle, and I think they will deal with this. We are dealing with some very competent people there, very intelligent people, and they will know what to do.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you for that answer.

The Iraqi Government intends to hold a nationwide referendum on the bilateral Status of Forces Agreement and while there's been a lot of speculation about how this could impact our redeployment timetable, I'd like to also point out that both the Iraqi Parliament and the Iraqi people will have had a chance to vote on the agreement, even though the United States Senate has not. Can you assure us that any potential modifications to the security agreement will be submitted to the Senate for ratification?

Ambassador HILL. The issue of the Senate ratification goes beyond my writ, but I will certainly take that question to the State Department and get you an official answer on that.

Ambassador HILL. I can give you my personal opinion, that we would not——

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Senator FEINGOLD. Would you, please?

Ambassador HILL [continuing]. Want to be changing this—we would not engage in changing this security agreement without considerable consultation. But, as for the actual relationship between the Senate and the executive on this, I'd like to defer to our lawyers at the State Department.

Senator FEINGOLD. Well, thank you for that answer, and I look forward to further comments on that after you've done that.

[The written information from the State Department follows:]

We do not intend to amend the Security Agreement at this time, and we would not negotiate with the Iraqi Government to amend the Security Agreement without considerable consultation with Congress. We would expect to discuss with Members of Congress, in appropriate settings, the objectives of any changes and the substance of any issues under negotiation, and we would expect that State Department lawyers would carefully review any proposed amendment and advise how such an amendment as a matter of domestic law, should be concluded.

Senator FEINGOLD. The recent revelations about gaps in security at the Kabul Embassy continue to highlight our apparent inability to maintain discipline over our security contractors. In order to ensure adequate security for our missions, do you think it would be preferable to have the military provide security for U.S. embassies in war zones, which would ensure that we have a legally binding command-and-control over such personnel?

Ambassador HILL. You know, I believe our military has been tasked with a lot. And this is one where—when we talk about security personnel in an embassy, this is one where Chief of Mission ought to take this. And I believe that with these contractors, who report to mission elements, who, in turn, report to me, that we have adequate control. And what I can assure you is that I will do my best to make sure we don't have incidents. Incidents do happen. They happen everywhere. They happen in every institution. But, I can assure you that we do a lot to try to ensure that they don't happen. And I would rather not task the military with still another mission.

Senator FEINGOLD. Thank you. According to the Department of State's inspector general, there's no plan in place for transition to a diplomatic presence in Iraq, and we're, therefore, not adequately prepared for our military's redeployment. In response, the State Department indicated it has produced a unified transition plan, which was under review. When can we expect to see a final approved transition plan to ensure our diplomatic operations remain uninterrupted? And is the Embassy jointly producing a plan with the Department of Defense in order to ensure that the transition is well coordinated?

Ambassador HILL. We are working very closely with our colleagues at MNFI—really, on a daily basis—and we have stood up an entire planning cell at the American Embassy, in our political-military section, under Ambassador Cameron Munter, who deals, on a daily basis, with the military on this. We also have a joint campaign plan, and we work through it, really, on a daily basis.

We know the absolute responsibility we have in the State Department to ensure that the gains that have been achieved by our men and women in uniform are not lost; that we pick up and take the ball when they give it to us, and we're ready to move with it. So, we have an overall joint campaign plan. We have many

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other documents, in terms of the planning for how we take over functions—whether it's police training or others—and I'm sure we can share many of those with the committee.

Senator FEINGOLD. But, is there a unified transition plan that—apparently, that's under review—that we're going to be able to see? When will we be able to see that?

Ambassador HILL. You will be able to see, I think, our joint campaign plan that we work out with the military, but I'm not sure about this other document. Maybe I can take the question——

Senator FEINGOLD. All right.

Ambassador HILL [continuing]. And get back to you.

[The written information referred to follows:]

Planning and coordination are ongoing and robust, and the goal is to ensure that our diplomatic operations remain uninterrupted. The Embassy's planning units in the Political-Military Section and in the Office of Provincial Affairs are heavily engaged in multiple planning activities for the transition. One example is the Joint Campaign Plan (JCP), which has many components that will guide our transition in areas like rule of law, economic development of Iraq, and building Iraqi security force capability. These planning activities involve not only close coordination with DOD and other agencies, but with other Embassy Baghdad elements as well.

The United States-Iraq Security Agreement and the United States-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement have produced a negotiated way forward to achieve United States and Iraq goals. The Embassy is currently planning for a provincial presence beyond 2011 and is working to define the elements of bilateral security cooperation, rule of law/police-training programs, and other assistance programs.

Senior Embassy management has provided significant leadership and planning guidance for the assumption of functions and programs currently performed by the military, the transition of facilities and property, workforce planning, and the normalization of Embassy operations.

Senator FEINGOLD. That sounds good. Thank you very much, Ambassador.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Feingold.

Senator Corker.

Senator CORKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good to have you back.

Ambassador HILL. Thank you, sir.

Senator CORKER. Yes, sir. And, Mr. Ambassador, for your service, thank you very much.

I know that, typically, we would have witnesses from the State Department, and Armed Services would have witnesses from the military, but, just to follow on a little bit with Senator Feingold's comments—or, questions—the taking down from 130,000 troops to 50,000 troops is a pretty big logistical feat. And I know we're going to stay pretty manned up until after the elections, and then, very shortly thereafter, be down to 50,000 troops. Are you comfortable that, logistically, in doing that, that the plans are being set in place to make that happen in an appropriate way?

Ambassador HILL. I'm very comfortable. I've talked to General Odierno on a number of occasions. He has, really, some of the finest planners I've ever seen working on this. And you're quite right, the overall numbers stay pretty much constant; they're coming down a little already, but they stay pretty much constant through the January election, and then start ramping down in the spring. And his planners work this very carefully.

Senator CORKER. So, to the hardware, anybody that—all of us have been there, and the amount of hardware on the ground, I

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think, would shock most people who haven't seen the billions and billions of dollars of equipment that is there. You know, what is the—going to be the outcome of that? To me, that's an even greater logistical issue——

Ambassador HILL. I think it's a——

Senator CORKER [continuing]. As to how we move all the hardware out of the country. Where is it planning to go at this moment? Could you give us some insights there?

Ambassador HILL. Well, again, I have to defer to my colleagues in the military. But, I can tell you, there's some 2 million pieces of hardware in that country. It is simply extraordinary. There are vehicles, there are generators, things like that.

What you're asking, though, is a subject of ongoing planning by our military to see which things are worth carrying all the way back to the States, which might be left for civilian use as we take over military roles. I keep mentioning police training, but that's one of the most obvious, because it's one of the biggest. So, the question is whether there's some hardware on that side—on the military side that could be transferred to the civilians. We're looking at that issue.

There's, of course, the issue of the Iraqi Army and what equipment would be appropriate to be transferred to them, and then whether there's any other regional contingency for that equipment.

I am not, though, the one to talk about how the hardware belonging to the military should be divided, but I can assure you that there is a very active discussion, especially within MNFI and other military planners, on how to do that.

Senator CORKER. One can't help but, when you sit and talk to our leaders there, realize that there's really no way that Iraq, as a country, even with the amount of oil that they have and the revenues that will be generated there—there's no way, in the short term, they can sustain themselves budgetarily—I mean, with the troops, the police, all the things—the reconstruction that is necessary. I'm wondering if you might talk to us a little bit about how long you think it's going to be into the future that we, as a country, are supporting Iraq financially.

Ambassador HILL. Yes. Senator, I think that's a very fair question. Iraq needs to stand up a lot more revenue. And, in particular, they have, only in August of this year, reached 2 million barrels a day of oil exports. This is a country that is at least the holder of the third-largest confirmed oil reserves in the world, some 115 billion barrels of oil in the ground. I think they have to do a lot better job of getting the oil sector to start pumping this out, which is why, earlier, we were discussing this issue of the bids and the fact that they gave to British Petroleum for negotiation a field called Rumaila, which is down in the south. If that goes well, Rumaila will get something more over the next 5 years. And I think that's kind of the timeframe, to answer your question. Within this 5-year period, we should be looking at—just from that field, they should be able to get up to, maybe, on the order of 1.7 million barrels a day. Put that together and that's almost doubling their exports.

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So, in the timeframe, I would say, in the next 3 to 5 years, they should be able to substantially increase their exports, and, therefore, their funding.

Senator CORKER. But, not to support themselves as a country.

Ambassador HILL. No, I think they can. You know, they have an enormous supply of oil. And I think if they start getting that out of the ground, and assuming oil prices are what they are, Iraq should be able to pay their own bills. There is no question, they should be able to pay their own bills. What they have to do is get over the notion—and it's a notion that goes beyond or before Saddam Hussein, it goes into the 1950s, it goes, maybe, even to the British occupation in the 1920s and 1930s—the notion that they don't want to see assets be turned over to foreigners to develop. So, they've got to get over that. There is a good sign of that, in June, when——

Senator CORKER. Right.

Ambassador HILL [continuing]. British Petroleum was invited in to negotiate on this field. They're going to do additional bids later this year. And we're hopeful that this will result in substantially increased oil.

Senator CORKER. Right.

Ambassador HILL. I mean, remember, it has the third-largest reserves in the world. There is no reason they cannot pay their bills.

Senator CORKER. Yes. I noticed, last night when the President spoke, that he continues to compare himself very favorably to the previous administration, and especially as it relates to budget issues, which, by the way, on budget issues, I very much am glad that that's the case. Is it your feeling, then, that they will continue the pattern of not asking for any moneys for Iraq in supplementals, but it'll be done per normal budget requests and through normal appropriations?

Ambassador HILL. Again, how moneys are requested, either through supplementals or through the normal budget process, is a set of decisions that goes beyond my writ in Baghdad. I have enough problems in Baghdad. But, what I can tell you is that we need certain funding for our operations in Baghdad. We need funding for the various programs we're doing. And it's the usual push and pull, but I believe we're getting what we need in order to get the job done.

And another thing I can assure you is, we're really going to be vigilant on how that money is spent. We have an ambassador who came out there, named Patricia Haslach, and I put her in charge of all of these assistance matters, so that everything comes to her, and we are looking to see whether these things are working, whether the Iraqis really are using them; and if not, we're going to cut the programs.

Senator CORKER. My time is up, and I know my colleague from Maryland is next. I do hope, in writing after this, you'll potentially give us an update on where the U.N. sanctions issues are as it relates to Iraq.

I mean, obviously, the sanctions were put in place in 1991. The great work you're doing has caused Iraq to be a very, very different country, as have many others. I mean, there's been huge sacrifice by many folks. That's inhibiting Iraq's progress. And I'd just love

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to have a written update as to what's happening to change that, because my time is up.

And again, thank you for your service.

Ambassador HILL. Senator, that is one of my favorite subjects, and I would be happy to be in touch with you on that.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Corker.

Senator Cardin.

Senator CARDIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for holding this hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. Let me say to everybody, we have a vote, I think, in 10 minutes or so. And there may be another round that people want to have, so we'll see where we are.

Senator CARDIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador Hill, it's always a pleasure to be with you. And thank you, again, for your service in Iraq.

I've talked to you before about the issues of Iraqi refugees and displaced persons. A significant number still live in Jordan and Syria, and many no longer live where they used to in Iraq. Can you bring us up to date as to what the Iraqi Government has been doing in regards to refugee issues, what's happening in the neighboring countries, and whether we are actively involved in trying to encourage more refugee-related activities?

Ambassador HILL. Senator, we are very much actively involved. First of all, in terms of internally displaced people, there has been progress in getting people back to their homes. It's often not an easy process, because you have to, often, evict people from homes before you can bring the original homeowners back.

I will tell you, though, very frankly, that the progress on refugees, some 1 million or 1½ million refugees, who are mainly in Jordan and Syria, that progress in those areas is inadequate. We have named a special coordinator to deal with this on the Washington end. I have an extremely capable refugee coordinator, in the Embassy in Baghdad, who has a lot of experience in this—Mark Storella—and we have—we need, from the Iraqis, a similar commitment to bringing these refugees home. The Iraqis often tell us that there are no barriers; they can simply come home. We believe more needs to be done to make sure that they feel welcomed and feel safe. So, I can assure you, this is a real priority, because these refugees, who are in places like Syria and Jordan, are not having an easy time of it; it is costing everyone money, and we would like to get them home.

I have raised this with the Iraqi Government, and I will continue to raise this. There's one very specific thing, which is, they have agreed to name an interagency coordinator, because this can't just be dealt with in their Ministry of Migration; they need to have a more interagency process. They've agreed to do this, and I think we're going to really hold them to it.

Senator CARDIN. Well, I thank you for that. I've had a chance to visit with some of the Iraqi refugees in both Syria and in Jordan, and you're absolutely right. There is a concern over safety issues upon return. There are more complications than just being able to return to Iraq itself, and it does require the attention of the Iraqi Government. It's one of the areas that I've had great concern over, as to whether they're giving a high enough priority to this issue.

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I know they're concerned about it. But, I would just urge you to continue to press for progress. This is a humanitarian issue and one that needs to be dealt with by Iraq if it's going to be able to move forward in governing its people.

Ambassador HILL. Senator, I completely agree with you. Another element of this is, a lot of these refugees are precisely the kinds of skilled people that Iraq needs back in the country. So, it's not just that the refugees need to get back; Iraq needs these people back. So, with your permission, I'd like to take your comments right back to the Iraqi Government and stress the fact that this is a major issue back here in Washington, that we look at this issue very closely. The United States is very much engaged in helping refugees throughout the world, and we expect our partners to be similarly engaged in this.

Senator CARDIN. Could you give us a few more details as to what is happening between Syria and Iraq since the August bombings, whether there are diplomatic communications and progress being made between the two countries, whether the United States has a role to play in this or not, and your assessment as to how the August bombings affect the ongoing relationship between Iraq and Syria?

Ambassador HILL. Well, there's no question that it affected the ongoing relationship. On August 18, the day before the bombing, Prime Minister Maliki was in Damascus for the first time in many months, and they signed some economic agreements, and they actually agreed to make some progress. So, that was actually probably the high point.

A day later, there were two bombings in Baghdad, and within days, the Iraqi Government expressed very public concern about Syria's role. As that has happened, the ambassadors have been recalled.

There is dialogue. That is, there are diplomatic communications. And, as you know, Turkey has attempted to try to do some mediation. But, I think there needs to be further work; Syria needs to understand the depth with which the Iraqis consider the fact that the Syrians have given refuge to senior members of the Baath Party who are very much dedicated to violent change in Iraq. This is very much something the Iraqis worry about.

We have been concerned in the past about the flow of foreign fighters from—or, through—Syria. This has diminished in recent years, but it has not stopped. So, it is important for us to see this situation calm down.

But, I'd like to make a broader point; what the Iraqis were saying is that some of the problems of terrorism that they are encountering, including these mammoth bombs that were really sort of Oklahoma City-like, were bombs that could not be done just by people within the country. There is foreign influence. And for this reason, the Iraqis have gone to the United Nations and asked for additional help. The Prime Minister sent a letter to Secretary General Ban Ki-moon; I know the U.N. is considering what to do about this. So, the point the Iraqis are making is that the issue goes beyond Iraq, and they need neighbors to step up on this, including Syria.

I would like to say, as I said in my opening testimony, that I think one of the real tests, or one of the real questions—let me put

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it that way—is, Can a region, which is far and away dominated by Sunni governments—can that region make room for an Arab state that will probably have a Shia-led government? Are they prepared to do that? This is a change in the equation. You know, Saddam was very much a Sunni.

And so, when we look at some of the influences in Iraq, we have to be, No. 1, concerned about Iran, because they have been very much present in Iraq in a very malevolent way, but we also have to be concerned about some of the Sunni countries, where there has been some evidence to suggest that they have been funding some of the terrorism in Iraq.

Senator CARDIN. I think we'd just—Mr. Chairman—I think we'd be interested in finding out as much information as we can as to Syria's role in regards to Iraq. It's not unique to Iraq, our concerns about Syria and support——

Ambassador HILL. Right.

Senator CARDIN [continuing]. For terrorism. And I think——

Ambassador HILL. Right.

Senator CARDIN [continuing]. It would be important for us to be kept informed as to what we determine the Syrian role was in regards to the August bombing.

Ambassador HILL. OK.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Senator Cardin.

The vote has started, but I want to try to ask a few more questions before we have to break out of here.

Senator Lugar, do you have more? You don't have any?

First of all, with respect to the relationship that Senator Cardin just referred to, the Sunni neighborhood, which is as you know, the majority of the neighborhood. I'm concerned about what you've said. And can you be more specific, a little bit, about where these pockets of, sort of, tension with respect to the relationship in the Sunni world are coming from? And how serious is that as we go forward with less and less American presence there?

Ambassador HILL. Well, I think what we want to be concerned about, or what we want to avoid, is a situation where countries equate the withdrawal of U.S. troops with a withdrawal of U.S. interests in Iraq. We would like to stand up a long-term relationship with Iraq. We want to be very active with Iraq. We've invested heavily in Iraq in every way. And so, we want to be very much there.

And if there is a perception in the neighborhood that somehow the United States has lost its strategic interest in Iraq, we could have a sort of new great game going on, where neighbors, including—and especially—Iran, but also Sunni states as well, see somehow that Iraq is up for grabs. And so, that's what we are mainly concerned about.

Now, Iran's——

The CHAIRMAN. Are you saying, though, that that is the current Sunni perception?

Ambassador HILL. I think it is a perception among some Sunni countries. I don't want to name names here, but I do believe that some Sunni countries believe that somehow it was an aberration that there's a Shia-led government there, and that somehow, in January, it'll flip back, and they just need to be a little patient or

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show a little more effort to try to get the Sunni parties to be better funded, and somehow they could emerge victorious with a split Shia community.

So, my point is, there's a perception in Iraq that they could be subject to this kind of process of neighbors trying to influence the outcome of elections. I think that would be very dangerous, and I think it's very much a perception that we need to tamp down, especially with other countries in the region. We need to convince countries in the region that the answer to Iranian mischief is not Sunni mischief; the answer to Iranian malevolence is to do, really, what Turkey is doing; that is, to be openly engaged in Iraq in trying to help Iraq through what is a very difficult time.

In our view a strong Iraq is essential to the region.

The CHAIRMAN. What do you worry about the most, in the context of the drawdown? Next April to August, we will drawdown, ostensibly, some 70,000 to 80,000 troops. The election takes place in January. It may well be that they don't even have a government set up by the time that drawdown takes place.

Ambassador HILL. Well, I worry about precisely that issue. That is, I feel the real threats are not necessarily security, because, I think, in the long run, the Iraqis will be able to figure out security. I worry about developing the political rules of the game. And what I don't want to see is an election that results in 6 months of government formation during which there is really a loss of some of the progress that has been made. So, I worry that it will take a long time to form a government after January.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you pick up any whisperings and/or discussions in backrooms, or privately to you, of an expression of fear about the potential of a greater flow of power to Prime Minister Maliki, and even a greater grab of power, and the potential for a de-democratization in some effect?

Ambassador HILL. Well, Senator, in the privacy of this hearing room, I will say that, indeed, when you talk to Iraqis, we are in an election period, and there are very strong opinions about Prime Minister Maliki across the board. And if you listen to all those opinions—and that's really our job in the Embassy, to understand what people are thinking—yes, you will hear the opinion that you've just expressed.

Now, you'll also hear the opinion that, because Prime Minister Maliki's government was put together with great care after a great deal of political horse-trading, that he has a situation that some of his ministries, in his view, are not loyal to him, or are not functioning. And so, he ends up appointing people around him, in the Prime Minister's Office, to do essentially what are ministerial functions, because he needs to get the job done. And this is a country where ministries often deal with just providing basic services, that sort of thing. So, you hear other people say that he needs to bring these people around him in order to get the job done.

The CHAIRMAN. And what has been the impact—unfortunately, we're going to have to cut off, because I've got to go over to vote—but, what has been the impact of Abdul Aziz Hakim's passing, in terms of the power center?

Ambassador HILL. Yes. I think it is—it is too early to tell, at this point. I went down to the ISCI compound that day, or a few days

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later, for part of the memorial, the mourning period, and it was really quite extraordinary. Every senior Iraqi politician was there. Thousands of people gathered around this mosque area.

I think it's early to tell, but I think ISCI is looking to be a major player in the elections. They were the first to try to form a coalition. It looks like his son is going to be taking over, for the time being. And we have to see how they do in the elections.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, Mr. Ambassador, we do have some additional questions. The last thing I want to do is burden you with a lot of written record, but if you'll permit us, there are a few things we'd like to just make sure are part of the——

Ambassador HILL. Sure.

The CHAIRMAN [continuing]. Record. So, we will submit those to you. And I'll leave the record open for—til next week for the purposes of any other Senators who have questions they need to submit.

The CHAIRMAN. We are very grateful to you. I know it's a long way to travel. And I thank you for switching your schedule with the House in order to comply with our needs here. And the same thing we said to you as we sent you off, in confirming your nomination for this, we think you're the right person for the job. We are grateful that you're there. It's tough. And I think a lot of the questions that have been asked today, you know, may still be open-ended. And I think you know that, too.

But, we look forward to working with you, and, again, look forward to being out there sometime in the near future to get a better look at things.

So, thank you very, very much for the job you're doing. Please thank all of our Embassy personnel there, and, of course, our military personnel. It is not forgotten here. We know they're there, and we care enormously about the outcome. And I appreciate what you've said today about the need to secure the gains and make sure the sacrifices, to the greatest degree that we can, were made for a purpose that we're still fighting for. So, we thank you for that.

Ambassador HILL. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

We stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:52 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL AND QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. With the recent increase in violence in Iraq, including deadly bombings targeting official government buildings and increased violence and tensions in the north, I believe that some of the questions I posed back in March still need to be answered: Have the fundamentals in Iraq changed? And as we drawdown our troops and begin to leave, what else can we do to assist the Iraqis in building a stable state?

The thousands of Americans serving in uniform in Iraq, as well as the civilians working in our Embassy to rebuild that country, deserve our deepest gratitude for their service. In my view, the best way to show our country's gratitude is to bring our troops home to their families as quickly as possible.

I support the President in his efforts to withdraw American forces from Iraq in the most responsible and rapid means possible, and I think that withdrawing from

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Iraq's cities was a key first step. But, Ambassador Hill, what is our next step in the withdrawal process between now and our next deadline in 2010, and when do you expect us to take it?

And as we prepare to take those next steps we must acknowledge the challenges the Iraqi people still face as they build a stable state, and realize that it is the Iraqis themselves who must take necessary steps toward achieving those goals. The Iraqi Government should work to ensure that post-war reconstruction remains on track and does not become further mired in corruption and shady business deals. Iraq must strengthen its own institutions that bolster the rule of law and build Iraqis' trust in their own government. And perhaps, most importantly, Iraqi security forces should work to overcome sectarian and tribal divides and faithfully enforce the rule of law.

In the end, it is only the people of Iraq who can determine the fate of their country, particularly when dealing with issues so closely tied to Iraq's national identity. And as we withdraw our troops, the United States should be ready and willing to provide diplomatic and technical assistance when feasible and appropriate. I look forward to seeing the administration's plan to do just that as U.S. military operations wind down in Iraq.

Ambassador Hill, thank you for appearing before this committee to provide us with an update on the situation in Iraq, and thank you for your continued service to our country.

RESPONSES OF AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER HILL TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR JOHN KERRY

The U.S. Embassy in Iraq is the world's largest diplomatic mission, with more than 1,000 American personnel. In your written testimony, you said that the American Embassy in Baghdad will begin "rightsizing" its presence and that the administration is "currently engaged in a deliberative process . . . on the future footprint of the U.S. mission in the provinces."

Question. When do you expect the rightsizing process to be completed?

Answer. Rightsizing is taking place as the Embassy's mission evolves. We are mindful of the personnel, infrastructure, and financial costs of such a large mission and we are aware that the current size of the Embassy is not indefinitely sustainable. We share your desire to normalize our relations with Iraq and, accordingly, we envision an Embassy that will reflect this relationship.

The current size of the Embassy and our provincial footprint reflects the importance of the United States-Iraq bilateral relationship and the special unique challenges under which the Embassy and the provincial presences grew and continue to operate. As the character of that relationship evolves, the size and composition of Mission Iraq staff will also evolve. As we shift to a civilian lead it is possible that while we will see a long-term decrease we may see an initial increase in some areas as we transition away from old programs and assume new or increased responsibilities in other areas.

Question. How large a diplomatic presence do you anticipate in Baghdad and in the provinces in January 2012, at which point the American military redeployment from Iraq is expected to be complete, as mandated by the United States-Iraq bilateral security agreement?

Answer. As the President has stated, we will need a robust presence through the national elections in January 2010 and the subsequent seating of the new government. As combat brigades withdraw, we will consolidate or disband the embedded PRTs associated with them. Intensive planning has been underway between the interagency, Embassy Baghdad, MNFI and DOD to determine our civilian presence in FY11 and FY12. We will have a provincial diplomatic presence that will reflect in its size and composition not only our program and policy objectives, but the operational realities on the ground, as well.

Question. Approximately how many contractors does the State Department employ in Iraq? How many contractors does the State Department expect to employ a year from now, at which point the United States military presence is scheduled to be at 50,000 troops or lower?

Answer. The Department of State currently employs between 5,000 and 5,400 contractors in Iraq. The contractors provide essential capabilities in such areas as security and operations and maintenance. As with noncontractor staff, contract staff levels will be adjusted to meet the constantly changing mission requirements.

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Question. According to Article 22 of the United States-Iraq Security Agreement, the United States is required to either release detainees or turn them over to Iraqi custody, pursuant to an Iraqi arrest warrant. As of August 27, the State Department reported that 8,974 detainees remained in U.S. custody, down approximately 6,400 since January, when the agreement went into force. When do you expect the process to be completed? What can be done to expedite the process?

Answer. As you note, Article 22 of the United States-Iraq Security Agreement (SA) requires U.S. forces to turn over custody of legacy security detainees pursuant to a valid Iraqi arrest warrant and release the remaining detainees in a safe and orderly manner, unless otherwise requested by the Government of Iraq (GOI). The United States and the GOI have developed a joint detainee committee to complete the process. While the SA does not specify a timeframe by which this process is to be completed, the original goal was to conclude it by the end of this year. Because the vetting of detainees to determine those for whom the GOI would issue arrest warrants is taking longer than originally anticipated, it is now expected that the process will extend beyond the end of the year. While we understand the interests of many to expedite the process, it is also important to ensure that it be completed in a safe and orderly manner, as contemplated in the SA.

Question. I have some concerns about what appears to be the premature winding down of the Iraq Transition Assistance Office in Baghdad. It is my understanding that more than half the positions are now vacant, including positions that the Defense Department would willingly staff. In addition, a letter from the Iraqi Minister of Electricity, Dr. Karim Hasan, to General Petraeus and General Odierno last month raised questions about the State Department's cancellation of a legal contract that Dr. Hasan said was critical to completing negotiations that are essential to improving Iraq's electricity production. As you know, the transition office is an important element of our plans to provide key services like electricity, clean water, and adequate health care as we prepare to hand over these functions to the Iraqi Government next year. Can you please explain your rationale for allowing these openings to remain unfilled and can you please explain what effect these vacancies will have on the transition?

Answer. By law, the 3161 organization called the Iraq Transition Assistance Office (ITAO) is required to sunset in May 2010. My Assistant Chief of Mission, Ambassador Pat Haslach, and I regularly review ITAO staffing levels to ensure they are adequate to accomplish one of its key missions—to complete expeditiously remaining large scale infrastructure projects.

The reconstruction phase of U.S. efforts in Iraq is over, and we are focused on providing the government and people of Iraq with technical assistance to develop their capacity to improve the effectiveness and transparency of government institutions and to broaden the base of economic growth. For example, through the Department of State and USAID, the Embassy manages a robust portfolio of technical assistance and capacity development programs for all Iraqi ministries.

As we transition from a predominantly military presence in Iraq to a civilian presence, USG assistance oversight will require 3161 hiring authority beyond May, 2010, and will need a follow-on 3161 organization to ITAO. This organization's mission would be different from ITAO's, reflecting the new, cooperative nature of our relationship as we work to make Iraq a secure, sovereign, and stable nation better integrated internationally and regionally, with a strong economy.

Our 3161 employees provide essential subject matter expertise. We see the need for such expertise continuing for the next several years through the fragile transition period as we work to reduce the drivers of instability and implement the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). The flexibility of the 3161 mechanism gives us the capacity to direct quickly people with essential skills to where they are most needed.

Question. You have stated your commitment to address human rights abuses and protect minorities in Iraq. There have been many instances of violence against gay, lesbian, and transgender Iraqis, and some reports suggest that such targeted hate crimes are only increasing even as other forms of violence in Iraq decline. Are these murders being investigated? Can you please update us on any steps that the U.S. Embassy and the Iraqi Government are taking on this issue?

Answer. As Secretary Clinton said on September 11 at the Roosevelt Institute, we must condemn violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The U.S. Government continues to promote the human rights of all Iraqi citizens, including in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community and religious and ethnic minorities, through our civilian programs and training with the Iraqi security forces. We condemn all acts of violence and human rights violations committed

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against individuals in Iraq as a result of their sexual orientation, gender identity, religious beliefs or ethnic identities. The Embassy has raised the issue of violence against LGBT Iraqis as well as attacks against minority groups with senior GOI officials, including the Minister for Human Rights, and has urged them to respond appropriately to all credible reports. We are also working with local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and our diplomatic partners to ensure that the rights of Iraqi citizens are protected and respected.

We have confidence that the Iraqi Government will ensure that the rights of all Iraqi citizens are protected and upheld, regardless of sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity, but we are not aware of an investigation currently underway regarding these murders.

After the July attacks against several churches in Baghdad, we were pleased to see immediate action by the Government of Iraq to provide increased security near churches. Following the attacks, Ambassador Hill met with minority leaders to discuss their concerns and will continue to work with Christian leaders to monitor the security situation in the future.

Question. According to human rights organizations, more than 1,000 people face execution in Iraq. In light of concerns that Iraq's criminal justice procedures fall short of international standards and allegations of torture and false confessions, what steps, if any, is the United States Government taking to encourage rigorous standards for fair trial in capital cases?

Answer. Our Embassy has reported that the increase in executions most likely relates to the fact that the former Minister of Justice was opposed to capital punishment, while the current Minister's views differ. Because we share the concern that standards of justice and investigation meet international norms, we have a broad range of programs designed to improve capacity in these areas.

Torture in all forms and under all circumstances is prohibited by the Iraqi Constitution. Throughout 2009, Iraq's Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Human Rights (MOHR) have documented and investigated allegations of coerced confessions and torture reportedly conducted by Government of Iraq (GOI) officials in MOI and Ministry of Defense (MOD) facilities.

Strong efforts are being made by the U.S. military and the Department of State's Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) to help the GOI decrease human rights violations against detainees and foster an environment of respect for human rights within Iraq's security and correction institutions. INL's corrections training and advisory program in support of the Ministry of Justice and Iraqi Corrections Service emphasizes the operation of safe, secure, and humane prisons and detention facilities. The United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners serve as the basis for the human rights component of the training. Through this program, all Iraqi Corrections Officers receive basic training on human rights, and information about prisoner rights is posted in Ministry of Justice prisons and detention facilities.

The Department is also funding programs that underscore the importance of an inclusive, transparent, responsive, and accountable government that prevents abuses. We are funding programs aimed at establishing a strong independent judiciary, as well as programs that foster greater democratic participation and capacity throughout Iraqi society. Our Embassy is highly focused on these issues and will continue to monitor human rights issues closely.

Responses of Ambassador Christopher Hill to Questions Submitted by Senator Richard Lugar

Question. In terms of developing lasting relationships and institutions, what programs are key to ensuring Iraq does not backslide? What funding levels have been identified and requested for those programs for the long term?

Answer. Democratic institutions are taking root in Iraq, but progress is uneven and fragile. As USG assistance makes the transition from being predominately military to mainly civilian, we must maintain strong engagement to prevent backsliding and to build close and constructive ties. Such ties are squarely in our interests, in Iraq's interests, and in the interests of the region. In addition to security assistance programs mainly managed through DOD, the Strategic Framework Agreement provides a solid foundation for civilian engagement and cooperation. Going forward, we will seek to align to our foreign assistance with the priorities of the SFA.

From the total request of $415.7 million in FY 2010 Economic Support Funds, the President has asked Congress for $171.2 million in order to help national, provin-

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cial, and local government institutions strengthen their capacity to protect and expand the rule of law, confront corruption, and deliver basic services. It is imperative that the United States continue to build on earlier successes in order to help the Iraqi Government and its people take full responsibility for Iraq's future stability and growth.

At the national level to support ministries, $85 million has been requested in order to develop institutional capacity for public administration training build core functions in key ministries and executive offices, and support civil service reform to strengthen national capacity development. The next phase of the Ministerial Capacity Development program will build on previous success, such as engaging in a continuous lessons-learned exercise and rolling out activities to the provincial level. A key focus will also be the institutionalization of capacity-building efforts within the ministries themselves.

To complement the efforts at the national level, the Local Governance Program (LGP) builds capacity of local governments to respond to citizens' needs, thereby contributing to the shared goal of a stable, prosperous Iraq. The objective of the FY 2010 request of $60 million for LGP is to establish and strengthen the conditions, systems, and institutional capacity for Iraq's provincial governments. At the provincial level, $10 million will augment the Community Action Program's effort to strengthen subprovincial government and to assist communities in organizing and better articulating their needs to government bodies.

We have also requested that Congress provide $6.2 million to develop three primary areas of the Iraqi inspectors general capacity to conduct high-quality investigations and maintain organizational sustainability. We will seek to:

(1) Provide advanced corruption-focused investigative skills training to IG investigators from all IG offices aimed at improving investigative performance;

(2) Deliver training to executive/managerial/supervisory personnel to enable them to more effectively administer anticorruption programs and sustain a modern professional anticorruption program; and

(3) Deliver Train-the-Trainer instruction to IG personnel to fully equip them with the requisite skills to deliver future IG training programs.

In FY 2010 we have requested $10 million to continue USAID's Legislative Strengthening Program, which improves the institutional capacity of the Council of Representatives. The legislature aspires to play a stronger role in determining public policy, appropriating public resources and holding the government accountable on behalf of its constituents—a radical departure from the past, when Iraq's legislature was marginalized and treated as a rubber stamp by the strong executive. This program is particularly important given the likely turnover of parliamentarians after the January 2010 Iraqi national elections.

Question. Sectarian violence appears largely to have ended in 2008. Dissension along Sunni and Shia lines appears to have abated as well. In the provincial elections earlier this year Iraqis voted out incumbents, Islamists suffered losses, and nationalistic themes were victorious. What fault lines do you look to for movement on whether this might backslide? Is there worst case analysis and planning should January elections come out differently and sectarianism reerupt? Feel free to share with us any classified analysis and planning if that is helpful as we seek to understand what we could face into next year.

Answer. The emergence of issue-based politics is an encouraging sign of the development of Iraq's democracy. We continue to monitor potential fault lines, including the implementation of the Sons of Iraq program and the establishment of alliances in the run up to national elections. While we expect continued formation of electoral alliances and coalition discussions, it is quite probable they will come together mostly around sectarian lines. Iraqi voters will be the arbiters of Iraq's future direction and the elections will give a good indication of their support for sectarian politics or preference for greater movement toward ethnic and religious integration in politics. Formation of a national government following elections will likely require participation by multiple groups and intrasectarian cooperation and we support the efforts of Iraqi parties to promote national unity. Ultimately this is an internal Iraqi matter and the Iraqis are responsible for forming their national government.

We anticipate that the national elections will build on the success of the provincial elections. Violence is at its lowest point since 2003. Most importantly, key drivers of past violence, such as the Sunnis, who boycotted elections in 2005, have been enfranchised by 2009 provincial elections, and have vigorously organized and are jockeying for advantage in the runup to 2010 national elections. We have every expectation that 2010 elections will again meet international benchmarks for "free and fair" as did this year's provincial elections.

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At the same time, while the capabilities of the ISF are steadily improving, and as we approach next year's elections, we will draw on all source reporting to develop scenarios for possible outcomes, and MNF–I will continue to assist the ISF where it can in preparation for possible acts of AQI terrorism. That said, we have not formally conducted an exercise aimed at the reeruption of sectarianism stemming from election results, as at this point we do not believe it likely. We will continue, however, to sharply focus on all possible outcomes related to the elections, including sectarian violence. In that regard, we will continue to be receptive to sharing our thoughts with you or your staff to advance your understanding of what we could face next year.

Question. Lower oil prices and flat oil production have created a budget deficit in Iraq that could jeopardize the Iraqi Government's ability to undertake needed capital investments and meet fiscal operating costs.

- What are we doing to get the Iraqis to be more efficient in their budgeting? (They still spend more than $6 billion on the public food distribution system, with experts estimating they spend $6 delivering $1 worth of staples to more than half the Iraqi population. Meanwhile, they are coming to us with requests to fill shortfalls in their military modernization budget perhaps because they know how important those matters are to us.)

Answer. We continue to work very closely with Iraqi Government ministries and provincial governments to improve budgeting. Our engagement is in coordination with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) integrated programs to assist Iraq with public financial management. The Office of the Treasury Attaché in Embassy Baghdad coordinates our engagement with the central government on budgeting, providing advisers who work with the Ministry of Finance regularly to help the Iraqis make the budget creation and execution processes more effective and efficient. In conjunction with the World Bank and IMF, Embassy officials also assist the Iraqis as they prioritize spending decisions, particularly in the face of limited budget resources. Similarly, economic officers in our Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) engage with provincial officials throughout the country on budgeting issues.

Other U.S. assistance on budgeting comes from USAID and the Department of Defense's Task Force on Business and Stability Operations (TF–BSO). USAID provides technical assistance and training on public administration to both national and provincial government officials, and works with the Ministry of Finance to implement an electronic financial management system, which is operational in 251 spending units throughout the country. The TF–BSO and the Iraqi Ministry of Planning run the Procurement Assistance Center, which provides assistance to Iraqi contractors and national ministries on contracting and procurement practices.

*Question.*What long-range financial commitments is the administration preparing to make to Iraq in terms of security and economic assistance?

Answer. U.S. foreign assistance to Iraq is now, and will continue to be, guided by the principles of cooperation identified in the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). We will gauge our foreign assistance programs based on how effectively they advance the national interests of the United States. As stated by President Obama, an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant, and on the path for economic growth is in the best interest of both Iraq and the United States.

Regarding security assistance, the administration is systematically developing options for supporting Iraq's security needs. The State Department is working closely with the Department of Defense to determine the most efficient and cost-effective ways to help the Iraqi Government equip and train its security forces (ISF) so that it can provide for its own internal security and establish a foundation for external defense capability by December 2011, when U.S. military forces withdraw. Ongoing and future activities associated with this effort include:

- The Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq, working with its Iraqi counterparts, is refining future needs of the Iraqi Security Forces. The Defense Department and the State Department are coordinating closely on the most effective means for Iraq to procure the necessary equipment and how to structure U.S. security assistance programs to assist in procuring, fielding, and sustaining that equipment.
- The State Department notified Congress in 2008 regarding all potential arms sales for Phase I Counter-Insurgency Force and Phase II Transitional Force development. We will continue to provide this congressional notification for the next phase of ISF equipment.
- As part of establishing a normal bilateral security assistance relationship with Iraq after December 2011, we envision establishing an Office of Security

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Cooperation (OSC) in Iraq. The United States currently operates OSCs or similar organizations throughout the world. Typically, they are staffed by DOD/military and other personnel under Chief of Mission Authority who are responsible for managing and otherwise supporting Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Finance, and International Military Education and Training programs, along with other forms of bilateral military engagement.

While the United States is committed to assisting Iraq in developing the security forces necessary to achieving President Obama's goals of a sovereign, stable, and self-reliant Iraq, the Iraqi Government is aware that the United States expects it carry the larger burden of equipping its forces. Iraq has demonstrated its willingness to budget the necessary funds to meet its responsibilities, but budget deficits associated with falling oil prices have underscored the need for robust and continued U.S. security assistance.

U.S. economic assistance for nonsecurity programs is focused in four areas:

- We will promote democracy by working with the Iraqi people and the U.N. to support the upcoming elections, help strengthen civil society, and support democratic institution-building;
- We will provide assistance to national and local Iraqi institutions to strengthen their capacity to protect and promote the rule of law, confront and combat corruption, and deliver basic services;
- We will help the millions of displaced Iraqis by supporting countries already hosting refugees, cooperating with others to resettle Iraqis facing great personal risk, and working directly with the Iraqi Government, the U.N., and other international agencies to resettle refugees and displaced Iraqis; and
- We will continue to assist the Iraqi Government establish the framework for sustainable, broad-based economic growth.

Question. The recent oil bid round reflected the challenges ahead for Iraq in terms of bringing in international business. Necessary legal frameworks are absent, and most responsible major companies are staying away. Do the Iraqis recognize this shortcoming and are they prepared to make drastic changes?

Answer. The Iraqi Government recognizes the many challenges it faces in the development of its oil sector. The problem in developing a framework to regulate the management of the oil and gas sector is that neither the regional or federal governments have found a durable solution to delineate authorities. Therefore, the Iraqi Government is using previous laws to develop their oil sector until a new framework can be established. The previous laws do not permit foreign development of natural resources requiring the Parliament to treat each contract as a separate piece of legislation. Also, the previous laws do not reflect the new federal Iraq.

The responsible major companies understand the risks involved in investing in Iraq. The Iraqi Government must either mitigate the risks to international oil companies or provide greater monetary incentives to encourage companies to assume these risks. The first bid round demonstrated that the international oil companies and the Iraqi Ministry of Oil were close in price. If the Iraqi Government had increased its price per barrel fee or if it had mitigated risk (causing the international oil companies to lower their price per barrel fee), then more tenders would have been awarded. Iraqi Government officials have indicated to us that they have learned an important lesson from the first bid round.

Question. You made passing reference to the World Bank, how are they contributing? What have they been asked to do by the GOI?

Answer. The World Bank plays a central role in Iraq's economic reconstruction and development. It manages approximately $500 million in donor contributions to the "World Bank Iraq Trust Fund," which is part of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI). And it has granted more than $500 million in International Development Assistance (IDA) credits. The World Bank has committed nearly all these funds to projects and programs which have benefited Iraq by improving education, health care, electricity, water supplies, banking sector reform, and public financial management—all areas where the Iraqis continue to look to the World Bank for policy planning and advice.

Developed in close coordination with the Iraqis, the World Bank's Third Interim Strategy Note for Iraq (released last March) focuses on three areas: (1) Continuing support for economic recovery; (2) improving the management of public resources (human, natural, and financial); and (3) supporting policies and institutions that promote broad-based, private-sector-led growth, with the goal of revitalizing the private sector and facilitating job creation. Iraq's immediate interests in World Bank assistance include better managing public resources (through improved financial systems and a national resources assessment starting with energy resources), and

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developing private sector business and investment. With respect to the latter objective, the International Finance Corporation and Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (both parts of the World Bank Group) will play important roles. The new Interim Strategy Note also provides for an additional $500 million in new conventional lending from the World Bank to Iraq. In addition to being supported by a large team of local contractors, the World Bank office in Baghdad is expanding. Included among the recently added staff are an expert in private sector development and a director for management and administration who will handle much of what is necessary in order to increase the flow of shorter term visits by World Bank technical trainers and advisers.

Question. Although the Kurdish region has been relatively calm, the International Crisis Group recently warned that a "destructive political conflict" could arise over Kirkuk as Iraqi army and Kurdish forces are arrayed in opposing formations. Can this confrontation be resolved, and what are the consequences if it is not?

Answer. The status of Kirkuk is one of the most difficult issues facing Iraq as Saddam's brutalities have left a vexing and unhappy legacy in the province. Nonetheless, we remain optimistic about and committed to finding a peaceful solution to political conflict in Kirkuk, and we stress to all parties the need to refrain from provocative actions or inflammatory rhetoric. We support a negotiated approach as the means by which to achieve a consensus agreement on Kirkuk's status. Any solution imposed by one party over another is bound to fail and could result in violence that would harm all parties and the country as a whole. We continue to support the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq to help all Iraqi parties arrive at a framework for resolving disputed internal boundaries, including the status of Kirkuk. All of us want to ease tensions and cool the emotional temperature so individuals and families in the province can start to build stable lives and develop the economy. In this context, our diplomatic track is designed to fully complement our military's effort to foster cooperation between Kurdistan regional security forces and those of the central government in Baghdad. Leaders from both sides have expressed their commitment to working through the UNAMI-sponsored High Level Task Force, a forum created to all the parties to build mutual confidence and resolve issues peacefully and through negotiations.

Question. The United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMI) has proposed several confidence-building measures designed to ease the tensions surrounding Kirkuk and the other disputed territories. Please talk about their proposals and what actions you are taking to promote these measures.

Answer. UNAMI produced a comprehensive report in early 2009 aimed at highlighting the areas of dispute between Arabs and Kurds in northern Iraq. It has since established confidence-building measures between both sides, most notably the UNAMI-sponsored High Level Task Force which endeavors to convene weekly meetings to facilitate dialogue between the Government of Iraq (GOI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). We strongly support UNAMI's work to frame a just and durable solution to tensions between the Arab and Kurdish communities and to encourage cooperation among the various political parties and actors on the issue of disputed internal boundaries (DIBs).

We continue to work closely with UNAMI to push negotiations between the Arabs and Kurds forward. We have encouraged all Iraqi leaders to refrain from provocative actions and inflammatory rhetoric and to approach these issues peacefully and in good faith. In an effort to facilitate progress, we recently named a senior adviser for Northern Iraq who is resident in Kirkuk, and who will work closely across the board with relevant parties. During his most recent trip, Vice President Biden discussed DIBs in his meeting with Masoud Barzani, the President of the KRG. At the same time, we have refrained from supporting individual elements of the UNAMI report, preferring to support and encourage the parties to arrive at mutually agreeable measures.

Question. Much has been made of Arab-Kurd tensions in the North. Recently, General Odierno proposed deploying troops to help defuse the situation. Is this something you and he have discussed? How is this viewed among the parties?

Answer. The lack of progress in resolving territorial disputes and the presence of Kurdish security forces in disputed areas continue to be a source of tension between Arabs and Kurds. Previous incidents in disputed areas between Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Iraqi security forces (for example, the confrontations at Khanaqin in Diyala in September 2008) have risked escalating into conflict. These incidents were resolved through the timely intervention of U.S. Forces, which continue to maintain personnel in these areas.

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General Odierno and I have discussed Prime Minister Maliki's initiative on joint patrols with many Iraqi leaders, among them the PM himself and KRG President Barzani. Maliki's initiative, which is intended to provide greater security along the fault line between ISF and Peshmerga forces, could end up as a longer term confidence-building measure. But the plan is just that—a plan—and is not in the implementation stage; talks involving all sides continue.

It is unlikely that either side would intentionally instigate a military confrontation, and leaders from both sides have stated their commitment to resolving disputes peacefully, but there is always the potential for miscalculation or provocation, especially as U.S. forces depart and the profile of Iraqi security forces units rises. Continued U.S. engagement with the Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan regional government remains crucial to containing tensions.

Question. Oversight of Iraq operations and reconstruction continues to be a challenge, at the project level by implementing agencies, by the inspectors general, as well as in terms of staff visits that put additional burdens on your assets for travel and site visits. More than $50 billion has been spent on reconstruction, and tens of millions have been allocated to the Special Inspector General and other initiatives, but the recipe is still not right, with contractors supervising contractors who are all spending money that is not theirs. What can you do to improve your oversight of programs and to improve access by contracting officers, government inspectors, and even congressional staff.

Answer. Oversight of Department of State contracts in Iraq issued by the Bureau of Acquisitions Management is provided by the contracting officer in Washington and by the contracting officer's representative in Iraq. For contracts signed at post, both the contracting officer and the contracting officer's representative are located in Iraq. Contracts conform to State Department acquisitions regulations and appropriate laws.

Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding signed in July 2008 by the Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of State began a joint partnership to use the Synchronized Predeployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. It was implemented in response to the National Defense Authorization Act 2008, Section 861 (Public Law 110–181) to be the sole joint system for contractor accountability and oversight for contingency contracting. All contractor personnel to include U.S. citizens, third party nationals, and local nationals working on a Department of State contract in Iraq must be entered into SPOT. This system already gives the program managers working with their contracting officers ability to monitor support services used and movements of personnel throughout Iraq. As it matures with data, SPOT will give the Department of State's program offices and contracting officers greater leverage to monitor the contractors' compliance with rules of use of force, value of level of effort to perform work, use resources, and contractor-held property in Iraq.

It is State Department policy that foreign and domestic offices cooperate fully with inspections and audits, and to provide official visitors with all appropriate access and information they require in connection with their missions.

Question. Please share with the committee data on how many congressional staff delegations have visited Iraq in the last 12 months from committees of jurisdiction over State/USAID operations, and sites they have visited outside of Baghdad and military venues sites.

Answer. Eleven congressional staff delegations (Staffdels) visited Iraq during the period 01 September 2008 to 01 September 2009; this was an increase of one from the same period in 2007–08. Of those 11, two contained staff from a committee of jurisdiction over Department of State or USAID programs or funding. None left Baghdad.

Question. What is the status of Basrah Children's Hospital? What have been U.S. outlays toward that project? Does the United States have any remaining interests in or personnel working on this project? Please provide details regarding Project Hope's contributions. Has the site been visited by any congressional staff delegations?

Answer. U. S. Government (USG) funded construction work on the Basrah Children Hospital (BCH) building itself has been completed. Construction remains on related facilities, such as a residence hall, but the principal remaining tasks are staffing and arrangements for the delivery and commissioning of high-tech equipment, which include U.S. involvement. BCH is expected to open for out-patient services on October 14, 2009, with a phased opening for inpatient services to follow on or about December 1, 2009.

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Authorized USG expenditures for the project totaled $111 million. The majority of these funds have been obligated and disbursed. However, BCH also receives USG-funded health sector training through U.S.-funded grants for oncology-radiation training and support, for example.

The USG has no further role in the remaining, on-going United Nations Development Program (UNDP) sponsored projects related to the BCH, which include roads, parking, exterior lighting, water-pumping stations, electrical grid connections, sewage, waste disposal and similar projects. These projects however are not anticipated to delay or to have any impact on the projected opening date. Through our contractors, the USG continues to have a limited role in training hospital personnel and in facilitating the delivery and installation of high-tech equipment.

Project Hope, the long-established U.S. nongovernment organization, has arranged for the donation of several items of high-tech equipment, such as the Siemens-donated MRI and CT scan. Project Hope is also tracking sustainment and maintenance supporting issues. Project Hope is also providing long-term specialized training for 306 clinical interns through 2013 and it projects long-term pediatric oncology training for 92 medical professionals (80 nurses and 12 medical doctors) through 2020.

Varian Medical Systems, Inc., has donated the linear accelerator. In addition, much of the Philips-donated equipment (x-ray devices) is already on-site. Numerous other items of routine hospital supplies and equipment (2,598 line items) have already been installed, as have furniture and office equipment. Arrangements now are being finalized for the delivery and installation of these high-tech equipment sets. Because of the complexities involved with the installation and "commissioning" of the very expensive high-end equipment, as well as warranty considerations and technical training requirements for staff, delays are anticipated, but they should not impact the December 1 opening date for in-patient oncology services. Deep cleaning to make the hospital ready for the safe treatment of patients has begun, and the Ministry of Health expects full in-patient surgical services to commence January 1, 2010.

Due to travel difficulties and past security concerns in Basrah, there have not been any Codel or Staffdel visits to the Basrah Children's Hospital.

Question. What is the status of the Mussayib Power Plant? What are the total outlays toward this project to date? Has this site been visited by any congressional staff delegations?

Answer. There are two power plants in Mussayib, located in Babil province, Iraq: the Mussayib Thermal Plant consisting of four 300 megawatt (MW) thermal units and the nearby, but not adjacent, Mussayib Natural Gas Power Plant. The USG has worked on both sites. We believe this question relates to the Gas Power Plant.

Ten General Electric (GE) combustion turbine generators and a 40,000-barrel per day petroleum topping plant (mini refinery) have been commissioned at the Mussayib Gas Power Plant. Eight turbines are currently operational. Using fuel from the topping plant, the eight units have an aggregate capacity of 360 MW, though the actual generation is less. For example, during the week of September 10–16, 2009, the plant generated an average hourly output of 219 MW, for a load factor of only 61 percent.

The project has gone through two phases. In the first, the Ministry of Electricity contracted with South Texas Industrial Services (STIS) to construct the plant. A contract dispute between the Ministry and STIS resulted in that company demobilizing in 2006. In the second phase, work was resumed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which completed installation of the turbines and the topping plant referenced above.

There were no USG expenditures in the first phase; and Ministry of Electricity (MOE) expenditures in that phase totaled more than US$330 million. Authorized USG expenditures in the second phase were US$35 million. With the completion of the second phase, the project was turned over to the MOE on July 21, 2006. The MOE was to complete the commissioning of the remaining 2 of the 10 units (#9 & #10), according to the original plan, and USG engineers provided them with a detailed action plan to accomplish this task. To date, they have not started this work due to budget constraints.

Although several congressional delegations visited the Doura Power Station, none has visited either of the two Mussayib Power Plants to our knowledge.

Question. What efforts are in place to assist the COR to develop as an institution?

Answer. USAID's "Legislative Strengthening Program" is designed to improve the functioning of the Council of Representatives in executive oversight, the legislative process, and constituent outreach. Established at the request of the COR's senior

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leadership, the multiyear program concentrates on establishing a Parliamentary Development Center (PDC) to organize the COR's long-term training and institutional development needs. (The COR covers the costs of establishing, building, and staffing the PDC.) The program is comprised of a team of international legislative professionals and local experts, who reside in Baghdad and work on a daily basis with Representatives and staff as embedded advisers, trainers, and mentors. The program primarily partners with legislative and oversight committees, the Secretariat, and administrative directorates (e.g., the clerk's office) to assess current operations and help implement agreed-upon changes and improvements. COR leadership requested that the program provide orientation training to COR members following the January 2010 national elections.

The International Republican Institute (IRI), a Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL) grantee, is working with the COR to improve transparency and effectiveness in managing public dialogue within legislative processes. Specifically, IRI is fostering the development of the Iraqi COR Research Directorate, whose functions include research, library services, drafting of budgets, and legal review of bills (similar to Congressional Research Service and Congressional Budget Office functions in the U.S. Congress).

In addition, IRI conducts conferences and training sessions for COR members on public speaking and constituency outreach. IRI is also enhancing the Internet capabilities of the COR and assisting with Web site development, media access, and the creation and use of an Intranet to improve communications. IRI works especially closely with the COR Media Directorate, and provides customized technical training for Media Directorate staff.

The National Democratic Institute (NDI), which is another DRL grantee, is building the capacity of legislators through training sessions for staff of the COR Secretariat, the Speaker's office, the President's office, the COR and Parliamentary Caucuses. NDI also arranges study tours for COR members and staff on good governance. As an outgrowth of its consultations, NDI has worked closely with the COR Research Directorate to establish a dedicated Budget Office that will provide up-to-date statistics and accounting information to Iraqi Representatives when debating financial issues.

Question. Is the Department considering lengthening the tours for foreign service officers now that living conditions at least in Baghdad, are more humane? What other changes are you contemplating to further normalize civilian presence, and impact? Can you make greater use of locally engaged staff?

Answer. The Office of the Inspector General recommended that the tour of duty be adjusted when each direct-hire employee can be housed without having to share apartments (Recommendation 50, OIG report ISP–I–09–30A). Given conditions in Baghdad, including both the overall security environment and the housing shortage which means that most direct-hire employees share apartments, we believe 1 year remains the appropriate standard tour length at this time. We will review the tour length when conditions change sufficiently that a mandatory 2-year assignment would not pose undue hardship.

We are comprehensively reviewing our presence to find means to further normalize Embassy operations. The Embassy is continuing to make greater use of Iraqi staff. There are currently 56 Iraqi staff on board with another 19 in the recruitment and clearance pipeline; post would like to eventually increase this to approximately 125 people.

Question. In your statement you talk at length about the SFA, and the various committees that are working to implement the agreement. Is there a financial commitment to the participation by the Government of Iraq? Is there a financial cost to our participation?

Answer. The United States-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) is a mechanism for outlining our bilateral engagement on policy and program issues, including our assistance transition. The SFA does not commit either the Government of Iraq (GOI) or the U.S. Government to expend funds. All cooperation under the SFA is subject to laws and regulations of both countries, including with respect to the expenditure of funds. Embassy Baghdad officers, who are direct U.S. hires, take the lead in cochairing the various working groups with the GOI.

Question. Going forward, should we be making a long-term financial commitment to Iraq assistance of all types and channel them into traditional program lines? If so, what should those figures be as you project them from today for the next 5 years?

Answer. It is certainly in the United States strategic interest to continue building a robust relationship with the Government of Iraq, including through programs

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aligned with the United States-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). As Iraq's Government and democratic institutions mature, we anticipate our assistance will indeed evolve into more traditional program lines as we move to a more normal relationship. At the same time, we should assure the Iraqi people that the United States will continue to assist Iraq's development and reintegration into the region, as well as help the Iraqis build relationships with the rest of the world.

As the U.S. military continues to drawdown in Iraq, and we move toward a relationship guided by the SFA, we expect our ongoing, nonsecurity related assistance to Iraq to steadily decline as the GOI is able to better meet the needs of its population. However, it is impossible to say with certainty how conditions on the ground will change over the next 5 years, and therefore what our assistance levels will look like. We can say, however, that as the U.S. role in Iraq transitions from being military-led to civilian-led, we will continue to align our assistance to key programs that support the strategic interests of the United States.

Question. Describe your effort and that of the administration to balance competing regional interests that are necessary to Iraq's stability and future. For instance, we have strategic priorities with respect to Iran, Syria, Turkey, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan that may differ from Iraq's. How is our diplomatic mission being coordinated, and are meetings occurring of Iraq's neighbors regularly to promote a coordinated approach across the region? Should they be? What forum would you recommend for such meetings?

Answer. The United States does seek to balance varied and sometimes competing interests in the Middle East that impact Iraq's stability. As Ambassador to Iraq, I am best positioned to discuss how we seek to ensure that our efforts complement our goal for an Iraq that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant.

Over the last year, Iraq has increasingly relied on bilateral engagement to strengthen its ties with neighbors. We are supportive of this approach, but we believe that some multilateral fora are also helpful. For example, we find Iraq's participation in meetings between the Gulf Cooperation Council, Egypt, and Jordan to be a valuable tool for increased reintegration into the region. In the past, the Expanded Neighbors of Iraq Process and the International Compact with Iraq have also been important mechanisms to help facilitate international engagement, particularly on debt relief and economic reform issues. Iraq's participation in such settings not only helps to advance progress on Iraq's reintegration into the region, but offsets negative interference from neighbors like Iran. The Department of State regularly encourages Iraq's neighbors to increase their political, economic, and cultural engagement with Iraq.

Question. COM personnel traveling to Iraq have some great options for direct regional flights to Kuwait or Amman that allow them to arrive fresh and ready to work, but that last hour to Baghdad can take a day or more to travel and deposit someone at the Embassy completely spent.

- a. Does the Department pay the DOD for the dedicated transport flights/rotators that its personnel travel on from Amman and Kuwait? If so, what is the cost breakdown of that service? If not, please provide an estimate for that cost, that DOD absorbs.

Answer. Personnel under Chief of Mission authority traveling between Baghdad and Kuwait use military air on the basis of the 2004 "Memorandum of Agreement Between Department of State and Department of Defense for Support Services in Iraq." The Department of Defense does not charge the State Department for this transport and we have no visibility into Defense funding for this service and therefore cannot estimate the cost.

- b. Does the Department pay for hotel service in Amman and Kuwait for overnights or stays by its personnel who are transiting, or are those paid for through travel vouchers? Are personnel traveling on R&R permitted to submit those costs on vouchers as well? Please provide details on personnel travel costs to and from Iraq for the most recent complete year, it would be particularly useful if this last leg of the journey could be broken out.

Answer. Per State Department travel policy, individuals performing official travel on State Department orders, including going on R&R, submit travel vouchers upon the completion of their trip and are reimbursed for their allowable costs through this mechanism.

Generally, due to the timing of commercial flights and connecting military air flights to and from Amman, incoming travelers overnight for one night. They would submit a voucher and be reimbursed for their hotel costs. Outgoing passengers are normally able to leave Baghdad and fly onward from Amman the same day. If be-

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cause of flight schedules an employee must overnight to catch an onward flight from Amman, hotel and per diem would be authorized. Conversely, in most instances, there is not an overnight stay required when transiting through Kuwait. If a traveler in Kuwait choose to stay in a hotel room while waiting for their onward flight, that would be at their personal expense.

To date, Embassy Baghdad has expended approximately $5.4 million in FY09 on R&R travel costs because we have no visibility into Department of Defense costs incurred for the last leg of travel from Amman or Kuwait into Baghdad, we cannot break out the costs for that portion of travel. Assignment travel to and from post is funded centrally by the State Department.

- c. What is the cost of the associated ground support of ISU Kuwait, whether direct hires or through the KBR contract?

Answer. ISU Kuwait costs for FY 2009 total approximately $746,600 for operations and approximately $2 million in KBR contract costs to support travel into and out of Iraq for all agency personnel under Chief of Mission authority, VIPs, and some contract personnel, as well as shipping freight into and out of Iraq.

- d. At what level can prohibitions on commercial air travel be waived? How many waivers have been issued? What steps are being taken to clear the path for that to be a more regular means of travel for U.S. personnel? What are the hurdles? Can Congress be helpful?

Answer. Embassy Baghdad grants extremely limited exceptions to the prohibition on the use of commercial aircraft on a case-by-case basis and with a compelling justification that the requested travel is mission critical. Approximately 12 exceptions were granted in the past calendar year.

We understand that milair travel in and out of Baghdad is difficult and can negatively affect the morale of the residents of the Embassy. Our goal is to replace the use of military with civilian air as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Embassy and the military continue to work closely with the Government of Iraq to make Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) safe and secure for commercial air travel and the Embassy's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) periodically reviews whether local conditions warrant a change in our security policies. To date, local conditions still do not support either the use of the civilian side of the airport or the use of regular commercial aircraft. The Embassy is exploring routine commercial air options that would provide the required level of security.

At this time, while we will keep Congress apprised of any situational changes, we do not believe there is anything Congress can do to ameliorate the situation and we are grateful for your offer of assistance.

Question. What sense do you have that the elections slated for January 2010 will change the playing field, in one direction or another, in terms of international investment and technical assistance? In other words, are politicians campaigning on this issue? Are there assurances that oil or other contracts will be honored should Maliki be displaced? Does Parliament back this international business and in particular oil activity?

Answer. The U.S. Government has pressed the Iraq Government to respect the sanctity of commercial contracts. If any Iraqi Government, including the new government that will follow next year's elections, started to cancel contracts without due process or compensation, it would deter much-needed foreign investment. Most, if not all, Iraq Government officials understand this is not in Iraq's best interests. Specifically, they understand that foreign investment is vital to realizing Iraq's potential as a major source of oil and gas for the world's economy. We believe any future Prime Minister would understand this. None of Iraq's politicians have openly campaigned on a platform calling for strict limitations on foreign investment.

Question. What do you take from the fact that the field in still restive Diyala province received no bids, and that tremendous gaps were seen in the expected Iraqi price and the bids for the two fields in the Tameem province, whose capital is Kirkuk? Was this a sign of a reluctance to get between the Kurds and the Central Government or simply a calculation that the security risks still demand a high overhead for extracting oil?

Answer. We understand that the Mansuriya field in Diyala province received no bids from international oil companies due to the inordinate amount of security and technical risk in extracting the gas and transporting it to market.

As for the Bai Hassan and Kirkuk oil fields, there were several risk factors: political, technical, security, and financial. Companies that bid on the two fields took all of those aspects into their calculation and came up with a price higher than what the Iraqi Government thought it would take to produce from the fields. The Iraqi

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Government only looked at the cost of production, and did not calculate the risk factors that would be involved in the development of the fields.

Question. What needs to change for international companies to come to Iraq in greater numbers? Are the internal politics still too uncertain for most companies? Are other dynamics at play?

Answer. Iraqi officials are fond of saying that Iraq is open for business. In reality, Iraq has not taken all the necessary steps to establish a clear and effective regulatory framework. While internal politics are an issue, corruption, lack of modern commercial legislation protecting investments, and lingering security concerns have also made improving Iraq's business climate a slow and difficult process. We are committed through the Strategic Framework Agreement to assisting Iraq in attracting foreign investment.

Toward that goal, the Department of State along with the Department of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce are organizing the United States-Iraq Business and Investment Conference to be held in Washington on October 20–21. The conference will promote current investment and business opportunities for U.S. and Iraqi firms, address the challenges to doing business in Iraq, and provide opportunities for U.S. firms to meet with Iraqi ministers and other senior GOI officials.

Responses of Ambassador Christopher Hill to Questions Submitted by Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.

IRAQI REFUGEES

Question. With approximately 1.5 million Iraqi refugees living in Syria, Jordan, and other nations and 2.7 million internally displaced persons within Iraq, the need for the Iraqi Government and the international community to address this issue remains. Ambassador Hill, during your confirmation hearing, I stressed the need for our government to address the plight of more than 3 million people who face dire circumstances. Following this discussion, I held a subcommittee hearing on the Iraqi refugee crisis and sent letters to Secretary Clinton and Secretary Napolitano encouraging them to review policies that are impeding the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in the United States.

- Ambassador Hill, can you provide the committee with your assessment of the Iraqi Government's efforts to resettle those internally displaced persons and encourage the return of refugees from surrounding countries? What actions have you taken to improve the Iraqi Government's capacity to reintegrate refugees?

Answer. As security has improved, Iraqis have slowly started to return home. The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that 220,000–300,000 Iraqis returned to their neighborhoods, predominantly in Baghdad, in 2008, and in 2009 nearly 142,000 had returned as of August. The majority of returnees have been internally displaced persons. Sustaining improvements in security are key to encouraging returns. Achieving sustainable large-scale returns will also require the Iraqi Government's political commitment, as well as improved services, political accommodation, and economic development.

The Iraqi Government has undertaken a number of initiatives to facilitate and encourage voluntary returns. However, increased resources and additional capacity-building are required to adequately meet the needs of displaced Iraqis. We look forward to working more with the Iraqi Government and the international community to further develop programs and structures, and encourage the Iraqi Government to devote higher level attention to these issues. Particular areas of focus include addressing property disputes and improving access to shelter, security, employment, and services for those returning, as well as providing assistance for those displaced that opt to permanently settle in the area of their displacement. In addition, the Iraqi Government provides a cash grant to returnees of 1 million Iraqi dinars (approximately $850) per family, and in mid-August reported that 32,135 families had received the grant.

On July 24, Secretary Clinton announced more than $100 million in new assistance to support the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis. The funds will be used to support assistance programs implemented by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Organization for Migration, and non-governmental organization partners in Iraq. In total, the U.S. Government has made available $346 million in assistance this fiscal year, and we expect to make more contributions later this year. We have maintained a capacity-building program for Iraq's Ministry of Displacement and Migration since the ministry's inception, and, for example, have supported return assistance centers run by the ministry,

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where displaced Iraqis can register their intent to return, document their property claims, and seek restitution for their property.

Question. What actions, if any, have been taken by the U.S. Government to review its policies on the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in the United States?

Answer. We provide refugee resettlement in the United States for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees, for whom return to Iraq would be difficult, if not impossible. This includes those who have worked with the U.S. Government, certain U.S. Government partners, U.S.-based media and nongovernmental organizations, and individuals with approved immigrant visa petitions. In FY 2008, the United States admitted almost 14,000 Iraqi refugees, exceeding our goal of 12,000. For FY 2009, we have already exceeded our target of admitting 17,000 Iraqi refugees. In addition, as of June 2009, we have issued 2,081 Special Immigrant Visas (under section 1244 of the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act) to Iraqis who have faced threats because of their work for us or on our behalf.

We do not favor or discriminate against any single refugee population in our resettlement support. The initial reception and placement program administered by the Department of State addresses the immediate needs of resettling refugees. Our public-private partnership with national resettlement agencies anticipates private sector contributions to meeting the needs of individual refugees in each community. The current economic situation has made it more difficult than normal for agencies to raise the support they need to provide goods and services to refugees and for refugees to find early employment. The Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has awarded $5 million this year to our resettlement partners to assist with emergency housing needs for the most vulnerable refugees. We also intend to raise the amount of per capita funding for FY 2010 to help address the rising cost of initial resettlement. The White House has initiated a review of the domestic refugee program with all stakeholders. The administration intends to address critical issues immediately and work on structural issues going forward.

Question. What actions, if any, has the U.S. Government taken to assist the U.N. High Commissioner on Refugees, the lead agency responding to the Iraqi refugee crisis?

Answer. To date in FY 2009, the USG has made available $346 million in humanitarian assistance for Iraqis displaced inside Iraq and in the region. Of this amount, $198 million has been directed to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We also continue to encourage donor countries to contribute to UNHCR's humanitarian assistance appeal for Iraq.

NEW POLITICAL DYNAMIC?

Question. The January 2010 elections have the potential to be transformative for the Iraqi political landscape as well as for continued U.S. military presence in Iraq. This summer, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki announced that his Dawa Party would leave the Shiite coalition to perhaps form a secular coalition or to forgo all alliances. It is my understanding that a pan-Shiite coalition without the Dawa Party would not be able to win. Ambassador Hill, in recent statements, you have indicated that the political transformation that the Iraqi political parties are undergoing is positive. It is positive because some parties are looking beyond the sectarian divide and finding coalitions they believe can govern. However, the issue of functioning governance still remains a problem.

- Can you give us a picture of Iraq's political landscape in January 2010? Are these emerging alliances focused on the issues of corruption, service delivery, economic performance and security or are they merely providing a nationalist counterweight to those parties with religious or ethnic identities?

Answer. The political landscape in Iraq remains very fluid. Political parties are starting their national election campaign strategies and negotiating with potential coalition partners in the runup to January's election. As these groups attempt to maximize both their share of the vote and their influence in the next government, they continue to evaluate what issues are most likely to resonate with the electorate. Service delivery, security, economic growth, and anticorruption were all key platforms in the January provincial elections and retain appeal for voters in the national elections. We are seeing efforts at building cross-sectarian alliances and anticipate that the governing coalition after the elections will include members from several groups.

Question. As the United States withdraws troops, some are concerned that Iran will try to increase its influence inside Iraq. What is your assessment of Iran's ability to influence Iraqi politics today?

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Answer. Iran continues to invest heavily to gain and sustain political and economic influence in Iraq given the two countries' shared religious and geographic ties. The most troubling aspect of Iran's activities regarding Iraq involves its support for militant Iraqi Shia groups primarily through its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps–Quds Force (IRGC–QF). Quds Force activities have been linked to attacks on U.S. as well as Iraqi forces and civilians.

The Government of Iraq (GOI) has denounced interference in its internal affairs that threatens the stability of Iraq and the security and welfare of its people. Through reciprocal visits with Iran at the head-of-state and Foreign Minister levels, the GOI has sent tough messages warning Iran against interference in Iraq's internal politics, while encouraging improved bilateral relations, economic cooperation, and cultural/religious exchanges. As the GOI continues to increase its regional and international engagement, it is developing a more coherent policy on Iran that encourages constructive, peaceful relations based on mutual respect.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Question. There has been a disturbing rise in human rights abuses ranging from an increase in honor killings to violence against homosexuals. These types of human rights abuses undoubtedly increase the feeling of insecurity among a significant portion of the population. I believe that if the United States does not ensure that international human rights standards are upheld, our training and advising of Iraqi security forces will be undermined.

- Ambassador Hill, what steps is the United States Government taking to ensure that proper human rights standards are practiced by the Iraqi security forces as well as the Iraqi Government?

Answer. The U.S. Embassy and the Multinational Forces in Iraq insure that the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi Government maintain appropriate human rights standards by vetting Iraqi security forces, encouraging robust human rights training, and linking continued foreign assistance to human rights standards.

The U.S. Government provides a variety of security assistance programs to train and equip the Iraqi security forces, including Foreign Military Financing (FMF) to help the Iraqi Security Services obtain the equipment needed to modernize, and International Military Education and Training (IMET), which provides training to Iraqi military and related civilian personnel. Officers at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and in Washington vet units and/or individuals receiving IMET, per the terms of the Leahy amendment. In addition, the USG has emphasized to the Iraqi Government that continued provision of FMF and other security financing programs will be contingent on the compliance of Iraqi security forces with international human rights and ethics standards.

All U.S. and coalition training programs in Iraq emphasize the importance of adhering to international human rights standards and have instilled improved professionalism of the Iraqi Security Services. The Iraqi Center for Military Values, Principles, and Leadership Development (CMVPLD) continues to provide the capability to professionalize the Iraqi Army, offering instruction in five areas, including Professional Military Values, Leadership, the Profession of Arms, Law of Armed Conflict/Human Rights, and the Role of the Military in a Democracy. Ethics training is included in basic combat and leadership programs. In 2009, CMVPLD is delivering ethics training at the division level, as well as conducting training assessment visits to the Regional Training Centers (RTCs) and the Divisions. In addition to these programs under the Ministry of Defense, the Minister of Interior has personally instructed the Iraqi Police that their training also focus on ethics and human rights.

Question. I understand that you have requested that the Ministry of the Interior to investigate allegations that Iraqi security forces are or were involved in attacks against homosexuals. How confident are you in the ability of the Iraqi Government to investigate this matter in a fair and transparent manner?

Answer. As Secretary Clinton said on September 11 at the Roosevelt Institute, we must condemn violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The U.S. Government continues to promote the human rights of all Iraqi citizens, including those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) community, in our civilian programs and training with the Iraqi security forces. We condemn acts of violence and human rights violations committed against individuals in Iraq as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We are working with local and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as well as the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and our diplomatic partners to ensure that the rights of Iraqi citizens are protected and respected. The Embassy has raised the issue of violence against LGBT Iraqis with senior Iraqi Government officials, including the

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Minster of Human Rights, and has urged them to respond appropriately to all credible reports. We have confidence that the GOI will ensure that the rights of all Iraqi citizens are protected and upheld, regardless of sexual orientation and that every effort will be made to conduct the investigation into the allegations in a fair and transparent manner.

Question. I have heard reports that the status of women in Iraq is not improving, but deteriorating. There have been reported increases in child marriage and honor killings. First, do you agree with this assessment? If so, what actions is the U.S. Embassy taking to ensure equality for women in all aspects of life?

Answer. Child marriage, so-called "honor killings," and human trafficking are severe problems in Iraq and are of serious concern for the Department of State. While these cases are extremely difficult to track, the Department's Human Rights Report and Trafficking in Persons Report both note the severity of these problems. Economic desperation has led families in Iraq to sell young women, including children, for the traditional institution of "temporary marriages" or "muta'a." Under these arrangements, the marriage would be terminated after a predetermined period of time and the young women's family would receive a dowry from the husband. These arrangements, like sex trafficking or engagement in prostitution, make young women vulnerable to "honor killings" upon their return to their families. Single female refugees are also reportedly hesitant to return to Iraq for fear of "honor killings."

Iraq's Ministry of Interior has voiced concern over returning victims of trafficking to their families for fear of "honor killings." The Government of Iraq (GOI) does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but has taken significant steps to do so and has drafted comprehensive antihuman trafficking legislation. Ambassador Patricia Haslach, who has been designated as the Inter-Agency Coordinator for Women's Issues and Programs at Embassy Baghdad, follows these issues closely and works with the GOI and the Ministry of Human Rights to address these and other important concerns regarding the status of women and girls in Iraq.

The USG is also funding programs to help the Government of Iraq build its capacity to combat trafficking in persons and to assist Iraqi victims of trafficking. In addition, in partnership with the Department's Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor, the Secretary's Office for Global Women's Issues manages a program to combat gender-based violence through the Heartland Alliance. In cooperation with six participating legal NGOs in Iraq, the program provides training for legal, social, and medical services for victims of gender-based violence in Iraq. The program also seeks to improve government responses to gender-based violence and to foster broader awareness and sensitivities of these issues among key governmental and judicial systems stakeholders.

Responses of Ambassador Christopher Hill to Questions Submitted by Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Question. In March 2009 testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) estimated that as much as 15–20 percent of our reconstruction funds in Iraq (between $3 and $5 billion) have been wasted in Iraq. This is a difficult issue—due to staffing shortages and security issues—but how are we addressing it today, and how can we increase oversight to make sure these instances of waste do not recur?

What specific steps would you recommend to address these oversight and waste concerns?

Answer. We take management and oversight of our assistance funds for Iraq very seriously, and we have benefited from the oversight and suggestions of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), Stuart Bowen. As Mr. Bowen has testified, SIGIR has never found instances of fraud or abuse of funds that were managed by the Department of State. In instances where SIGIR has pointed out room for improvement in the management of our assistance funds, we have taken action to make changes that ensure that our assistance funds are more effectively managed.

As our assistance program to the Government of Iraq (GOI) shifts from large-scale, USG-managed infrastructure and reconstruction projects to programs of technical assistance and capacity-building, in accordance with the United States-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), the nature of project oversight will shift as well. Technical assistance to foreign governments requires a high level of oversight achieved through constant contact with GOI officials and frequent assessment of

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changes in GOI capacity and performance. This oversight process differs from the way oversight was ensured when the USG directly managed major construction projects that were funded in the past. USG technical assistance projects in Iraq are overseen by U.S. Department of State and USAID personnel in Baghdad with the help of local and international contract personnel with appropriate expertise.

To ensure better coordination and oversight over USG assistance projects in Iraq, I have created a new deputy position at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad for transition assistance, filled by Ambassador Patricia Haslach, who ensures that no assistance project is undertaken until the appropriate capacity for USG oversight is also in place. Ambassador Haslach reviews all projects to make sure they are maximizing the impact of our programs, avoiding duplication of effort, meeting the needs of the Iraqi people, and putting American taxpayer dollars to good use.

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BEFORE THE

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UNITED STATES SENATE

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 10, 2009

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