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IRAQI BENCHMARKS: AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

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BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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IRAQI BENCHMARKS: AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:51 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Thomas Lantos (chairman of the committee) presiding.

Chairman LANTOS. This meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order.

Over the next week our committee will hold three hearings on Iraq. Today, we receive the assessment of the nonpartisan General Accountability Office on Iraq's governance track record based on benchmarks established by Congress. As we undertake this review and others in the coming days, it is imperative that we look at Iraq with the broadest possible lens. What we see is not a pretty picture.

The underlying and unspoken assumption of this administration is that the United States and Prime Minister Maliki have parallel objectives for the future of Iraq. As the GAO report shows in great detail, this assumption is fatally flawed.

Prime Minister Maliki has run his government like a shadow factional leader. The United States wants to build a strong national Iraqi army. Maliki wants a militia infiltrated force to protect shadow power. The United States wants the Iraqi Government to pursue a more flexible policy toward low-level members of the Baath party. Maliki has stymied this move at every step, and in so doing has demonstrated to the Sunni population that this government is not their government.

Prime Minister Maliki's shadow first policies have contributed directly to the inability of Iraq's leaders to reach agreement on the critical issues facing their nation. Our witness today, GAO Comptroller General David Walker has called the Iraqi Government dysfunctional. I couldn't agree more.

One only needs to look at the GAO's careful analysis of the current state of affairs in Iraq to understand why. The GAO's conclusions are extremely sobering. Only three of the 18 benchmarks have been fully met, four have been partially met, with the remaining ones not even close to being met. While the White House might have us believe that the troop surge is working, it has become manifestly apparent to all objective observers that it is not, and Prime Minister Maliki's overly sectarian governing style is a key factor in this failure.

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Some will prefer to criticize the GAO's methodology rather than face the harsh realities of this protracted civil war, but the administration's own recently released national intelligence estimate is as scathing as what we will hear today. Our intelligence community predicts that insurgent and sectarian violence will remain high over the next year; that political reconciliation will remain illusive; and that the Iraqi Government will become ever more precarious. So it is not just the GAO handing out failing grades. The administration's own nonpolitical experts are every bit as critical.

Today, I would like to touch on just four of the most important benchmarks: Sectarian violence, Iraqi troop readiness, control of militias, and the Iraqi reconstruction.

The long-awaited administration report next week will undoubtedly say that sectarian violence is declining. It is not. In a desperate effort to show the surge is working, the administration has attempted to cook the books by excluding large numbers of Iraqi civilian casualties from its estimates, arguing that only certain types of death are due to sectarian violence, but the families of the dead know better than to write them off that way.

According to the Government Accountability Office, overall attacks on Iraqi civilians have not dropped, and the administration's own national intelligence estimate states, and I quote: "The level of overall violence, including attacks on and casualties among civilians, remains high."

In the context of this religiously fueled civil war, it is nearly impossible that Iraq's warring factions will be willing and able to make the tough political compromises essential to a stable and peaceful Iraq.

Also on the security front, the Iraqis were due to provide three trained and ready army brigades to support security in Baghdad. Again, this critically important benchmark has not been fully met. The GAO has found that these brigades are trained, but they are hardly ready for battle. Many of the Iraqi force commanders have refused to put aside their sectarian loyalties, spreading deep distrust among the Iraqi public. All of the forces remain completely dependent upon American troops for equipment, transportation, and other crucial logistical support.

Another benchmark asked the Iraqis to ensure that the Baghdad security plan will not provide a haven for outlaws, but according to the Government Accountability office, the reliability of the police and national security forces to do their jobs in a nonsectarian way continues to be undermined by strong militia influence and political interference.

Recent press reports have suggested that even units of Iraq's armed forces sent to support the so-called security plan are riddled with sympathizers of Muqtada al-Sadr, have refused to come to the aid of our troops under fire, and are effectively promoting terrorist safe havens in Baghdad itself.

Finally, the Iraqis were due to allocate and spend $10 billion in Iraqi revenue for reconstruction projects. Again, this benchmark remains partially unmet. More than three-quarters of these reconstruction funds, which would help resuscitate Iraq's oil industry and increase electricity generation, have not been spent. The much beleaguered Iraqi people have less electricity than before the war,

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and their incompetent government is sitting on funds to revitalize this critical sector. Mind boggling indeed.

On all 18 benchmarks, Prime Minister Maliki could have played a critical role in leading Iraq toward political reconciliation, but instead Maliki has remained a shadow factional leader who holds a fundamentally different view of Iraq's future than we do. As long as this remains the case, no number of United States troops will be able to stabilize a civil war-torn Iraq.

I now call on my friend and colleague Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, for any comments she might like to make.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much as always, Mr. Chairman, for this timely hearing. And Comptroller General Walker, I would like to thank you and your staff not only for the hard work that you have dedicated to this assessment, but also for the over 100 other reports that you have worked on concerning our efforts in Iraq.

The developments and the issues covered by this GAO report, and to be addressed by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker next week, are personally important to me as my stepson, Douglas, and my daughter-in-law, Lindsay, having served as Marine fighter pilots in Iraq, contributed to safeguarding United States interests in that country, and to the emergence of a free, democratic Iraqi nation. They are but two among so many brave men and women committed to the successful accomplishment of our mission in Iraq.

Given the gravity of this subject, it should come as no surprise that significant challenges do remain and that all of the benchmarks were not fully achieved within the 3½-month timeframe since the supplemental was enacted. Rather than using my time to give broad rhetorical statements on the Iraq policy, I will raise a few specific questions and issues to the Comptroller General to address during his presentation, if I may, Mr. Chairman.

First, clarification on the methodology used to interpret the benchmarks would be greatly appreciated. Throughout the report, there are footnotes noting how the GAO defined a particular benchmark or a particular subset within the broader benchmark. What were the general parameters guiding the GAO in arriving at such individual definitions? And related to that, I am interested to learn your reasons for classifying certain benchmarks as not having been met, while indicating that progress has in fact been achieved on some of the issues under consideration within a particular benchmark. Should this not qualify under your assessment as partially met?

For example, in the benchmark regarding the formation of a constitutional review committee and completing the constitutional review, your report indicates that the Iraqi legislature formed a Constitution Review Committee in November 2006. Would this not constitute the partial achievement of this benchmark?

Furthermore, would you agree that the fact that the Constitutional Review Committee has received an extension, and will most likely petition the Council of Representatives for another, indicates that the CRC is making forward progress in addressing these issues?

Similarly, what criteria did you utilize to come to the conclusion that the Iraqi Government has failed to comply with the bench-

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mark calling for enacting and implementing legislation establishing an independent high electoral commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections when they have enacted and implementing legislation establishing an independent high electoral commission?

Understanding that—as stated in your report—the benchmark requires more than the establishment of the commission, such as the enactment of supporting laws, under what circumstances, then, would it be considered as partially achieved?

I would also appreciate it if you would elaborate upon your findings regarding the benchmarks requiring and enacting and implementing both the hydrocarbons and the de-Baathification legislation. By the GAO's report's own description, the Iraqi Government had drafted pieces of legislation aimed at ensuring an equitable distribution of Iraqi oil resources.

The report goes on to elaborate upon the legislative process that these bills are subject to, highlighting the review of the Shura Council of one bill, and noting with respect to oil sharing that the Iraqi constitution does not reserve this oil sharing right exclusively for the central government. As such, the regions do have a degree of discretionary authority.

Thus, while we understand when the final assessment on benchmark III and other legislative benchmarks is listed as not met, would you not agree that there is forward movement and progress being made on these issues? Based on the GAO's evaluation, would you be able to extrapolate a potential timeframe for when some of these bills may be enacted?

Of course, as legislators ourselves, we know how unpredictable the legislative process can be, how many different dynamics can alter the estimated time line for adoption and then enactment. And I would also greatly appreciate further clarification, Mr. Comptroller General, on your criteria for assessing other benchmarks.

For example, the report states that the benchmark requiring that the Government of Iraq provide Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute the Baghdad security plan without political intervention has not been met, citing that political intervention in the conduct of some security operations continues. At what level, then, is this interference taking place, and is it the official policy of the Government of Iraq explicit or implied?

Similarly regarding the benchmark concerning enforcement of the law by the Iraqi Security Forces, is this the stated policy of the Government of Iraq or as mandated by Prime Minister Maliki?

Finally, with respect to the benchmark aimed at ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi Security Forces, which particular authorities were involved in making these accusations? Is it isolated to the periphery of the political spectrum, or is it the conduct of the central government?

And pertinent to these issues, I have constituents serving in Iraq, as many of us do, but they have a more positive assessment of the situation on the ground based on their direct firsthand experiences. One just recently sent me an e-mail last week which highlights the immense risks taken by Iraqi leaders at all levels, and the extreme pressure they are subjected to. My constituent wrote

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that in the area where he is stationed, located near Baghdad, and I am quoting him:

> "The key al-Qaeda leaders have fled the area. Families have running water almost all day now and maybe 16 hours of electricity each day. More and more people are opening their shops on the market street as they feel comfortable enough to sell their goods to their neighbors. Iraqi army leaders are taking a genuine interest in securing the area, and helping locals with their day-to-day problems."

He continues,

> "However, al-Qaeda has been attempting to thwart our efforts, to gain control, and batter the community. They have murdered five members of one family because one of the younger sons desired to become an Iraqi policeman. There has been one town mayor murdered who had taken much initiative to form a neighborhood watch group to inform us and the Iraqi army of suspicious activity and enemy intelligence."

This firsthand account raises questions for me about some of the conclusions in the report that we are evaluating today, and it also highlights the need to conceptualize the assessments to provide clarity about whether the problems that remain are due to a lack of will, rather than a lack of capacity. Are they caused by Iraqi inaction or rather by the actions of insurgents, Islamic Jihadists, and rogue regimes neighboring Iraq who are doing everything possible to establish their control over Iraq and the entire region?

In the report, the GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense provide certain information to the President with appropriate caveats. Perhaps the GAO should consider similar steps in formulating future assessments.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank again Comptroller General Walker for appearing before the committee today, and thank him for his insight as to where our energies may be better focused to help the government and people in Iraq in meeting these benchmarks while advocating strong United States strategic security interest there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. I want to thank the distinguished ranking member for her thoughtful comments.

Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Yesterday the GAO presented us with a report card on how the Iraqis are doing on a series of legislative security and economic benchmarks. Of 18 benchmarks, the Government of Iraq completely failed to meet 11, partially met just four, and fully met only three. By any standard, 16 percent is a failing grade.

But before we lay the blame for the mess in Iraq at the feet of the Iraqis, before we condemn them for not completing the constitutional review process or not passing laws on de-Baathification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections or amnesty for insurgents, let us think a little bit about who is ultimately responsible for the failure.

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When it comes to failing schools in the United States, thanks to President Bush's No Child Left Behind Plan, our policies to recognize that widespread underachievement by students is the responsibility of the school districts' administration, not its students. We shift the assets elsewhere. So applying the same principle to Iraq, it appears obvious that the blame lies not with the Iraqis, but with President Bush and the administration.

GAO scored the Iraqis on 18 criteria. I would suggest we judge the Bush administration on just five: Organizing our Government for war; mobilizing our Nation; reconstructing Iraq; developing Iraqi governing institutions; and construction of an effective overall strategy for victory. I would suggest that the administration's grades range somewhere between failure and catastrophic.

First, the subject of organizing the government. One should have expected the President to have established clear lines of authority as the first order of business. The reality has been the opposite from Jay Garner to Paul Bremer to Ambassadors Khalilzad and Crocker to General Doug Lute. The question of who is running America's show has never been effectively answered: State, Defense, the NSC. We all know that the buck stops with the President, the grade F.

Next, mobilizing the nation. When a nation goes to war, seriously goes to war, sending hundreds of thousands of soldiers overseas for years of effort, expending hundreds of billions of dollars and losing thousands of young men and women in the struggle, one would expect the national leadership to work hard to mobilize the country in support of such an endeavor. President Bush, on the other hand, has urged the American people to go shopping and enjoy their tax cuts. The grade F.

Third, the effort of resources for reconstruction. The administration has spent billions of dollars of Iraqi money and even more billions of American tax dollars. Yet Iraqi citizens still don't have access to the same amounts of electricity they had before the war. They don't have clean water or safe streets or any other of life's basic necessities. In the oil sector, the engine that was supposed to power Iraq's economy 5½ years and $2 billion later Iraq produces less oil per day than before our war. The grade F.

Fourth, developing and sustaining Iraq's own governing institutions. Iraq has had elections and it has a Parliament, a cabinet, government ministries. The only problem is they don't work. The Parliament is incapable of making the difficult decisions needed to unite the country. Fifteen of the 37 cabinet ministers have renounced their own government, and Iraq's ministries can't even spend their own budgets much less to deliver services to the Iraqi people. Not only haven't we taught the Iraqis to fish, the fish we gave them are rotting from the head down. The grade F.

Ultimately the fifth test of leadership is strategy, applying all the means of national power to achieve our objectives. From the day the President decided Iraq was the "central front in the war on terror," every power and tool available to him should have been aligned to produce victory. They were not. Our military plans were and remain today detached from the reality that victory is political, not military. Our multilateral and regional diplomacy has been inconsistent, blustery and unconvincing. Our coalition of the willing

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and efforts at burden-sharing are about to wrap up with the withdrawal of the British troops. Our soldiers' bravery and sacrifice is being wasted on a plan that has been always mostly prayer. The grade F.

When the President was campaigning for office back in 2000, he spoke often of what he quotes "as the soft bigotry of low expectations." It is a catchy phrase, one that implies that many of us were willing to tolerate failure because of our own biases. It is a good point. When it comes to tax dollars, there is no excuse for failure, especially sustained failure.

Having seen the report card, we must, as we do with the No Child Left Behind Act, determine that accountability means cutting off the money.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Applause.]

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you. The audience will remain quiet or will be ejected.

Mr. Pence of Indiana.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for calling this hearing, and I welcome our distinguished witness, Comptroller General Walker, whom I admire greatly.

September is certainly a month of decision for this Congress and this Nation on the subject of Iraq, and this report is timely and helpful.

Let me say at the outset I share every American's frustration with the fact that 4½ years into the Iraq war effort there is not a completely stable, capable, farsighted Iraqi Government. I have traveled to this nation five times since the initiation of military hostilities. I have said to Iraqi leaders and I will say again in this committee today, I exhort the Iraqi Government to redouble its efforts to make progress on all of the challenging issues that have been raised in the benchmarks and in this report.

What I also want to say, Mr. Chairman, I hope we don't lose sight of how difficult their job is. Resolving sectarian disputes, resource controversies, potentially rehabilitating Baath party members, these are all extraordinarily daunting tasks, and while I deeply respect our witness today, with all due respect to him and to this body, I can't help but identify with the statements written by Fred Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute. He has testified with distinction before this committee. He wrote yesterday, and I quote:

> "Through no fault of the GAO's, the organization was sent on a fool's errand by Congress. Its mandate was not to evaluate progress in Iraq, but to determine whether or not the Iraq Government had met the 18 benchmarks. As a result, as the report repeatedly notes, the GAO was forced to fit an extraordinarily complicated reality into a black and white yes or no simplicity."

Kagan continued,

> "One of the most striking things about the GAO report is its failure to take adequate notice of the Anbar awakening and the general movement within the Sunni Arab community against al-Qaeda in Iraq and toward the coalition. Anbar ap-

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pears twice in the document. Both times in a comment noting that violence has fallen in that province, but without reference to the turn of the Sunni population against the terrorists."

Mr. Chairman, I witnessed the Anbar awakening in my visit there this past April. I met with Sunni leaders, and General Odiemo on the Marine Corp base in Ramadi. It is an extraordinary development that the so-called triangle of death a year ago now has tribesmen, clerics, and community leaders who are working hand in glove with American Marines, American forces, and as they told me personally, as they are stating publicly, that an attack on an American is an attack on an Iraqi in their mind.

I share Mr. Kagan's concerns that we should be considering whether the Iraqis and our national assets are making progress, not whether they deserve a pass/fail grade on a congressionally created template, and let me say emphatically, we should not lose sight of the genuine progress that has occurred this year that has become more apparent to the American people in recent weeks. Even *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote today, and I quote: "Good news, the surge is tamping down violence." This reality is often lost on the torrent of criticism directed at our involvement in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, I have significant concerns about this report. I look forward to the testimony. I noted that on page A01 of the *Washington Post* today it reads, "Military officials in Iraq fault GAO report." Specifically the Pentagon said, "We absolutely disagree with their characterization of sectarian violence."

Now, such attacks have actually fallen off significantly this year, as have extrajudicial killings. In an effort to rebuke the Iraqi Government and encourage them to do more, which they most certainly must do, I hope and pray that we do not lose sight of the progress that our American forces and the Iraqi forces and political leaders have made and we hope to continue to make.

I look forward to the discussion, and ultimately look forward to finding some consensus in this body for achieving a successful and stable victory for freedom in Iraq. And I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

The chair will recognize all colleagues who wish to make a 1-minute statement. Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Chairman, our Nation is anxiously awaiting to hear from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker this week on the status of the surge or escalation by adding over 20,000 of our soldiers to provide greater security and proper assistance that our Government is giving, hopefully, to Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqi Government.

While we have been debating this issue of the war for the past 5 to 6 years now, whether we should stay or leave, much of the accusations against Prime Minister Maliki for his failures to implement important reforms that still have not been implemented, and for which Prime Minister Maliki, if the media reports are accurate saying that we should leave. Pretty embarrassing for the way we have been attacking him for all this time.

I say, Mr. Chairman, our arrogance and ignorance of the situation in the Middle East and downright incompetence in running this war has caused much suffering and tremendous costs in

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human life, our soldiers and Marines wounded and maimed for life. Our country remains seriously divided because the failed policies of running this way.

I will look forward to hearing from our distinguished director of the General Accounting Office for his testimony this afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Smith of New Jersey? Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for calling this very important hearing. Looking at the preamble, met three, partially met four, did not meet 11 out of 18, I think that it is wrong to characterize the report as the wrong report. The report is to see whether the benchmarks were being reached, and they come out as a failure.

We are awaiting General Petraeus to come before us, and I know he is going to have a difficult time because we have so much respect for him, and we know that he is doing such an excellent job, but I remember the respect we had for Secretary of State Colin Powell, who went to the U.N. and said there are in fact, I have been given information that there are weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, a person that had a tremendous amount of respect worldwide, to find out that what he was told was absolutely wrong.

So I really, when people that I respect so much are given a task really of supporting their leader, I just wonder how much squeezing is going to be done in order to have a report come out. There was supposed to be weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons, regime change, now it is to fight al-Qaeda in Iraq on their soil so we don't have to fight him here. There was not a single al-Qaeda operative in Iraq before we decided to have a preemptive strike, and now it is the training ground for them.

So we have had such a flawed policy, over 3,000 dead. You know, we talked about——

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to the testimony today. I would just throw this out and hope this is something that we should be considering as well as the benchmarks, and that is, what is it that the Iraqi people want at this point, and I have a bill in the hopper that would suggest that there should be a referendum and the Congress of the United States should call on the Government of Iraq to hold a referendum to see if they would like us to stay there with our troops until order has been established, or whether the Iraqi people feel that we should begin an immediate withdrawal of American troops.

I would like to know your impression of that, and hopefully that would be an idea that would be considered, and it would be important for all of us to understand that in making our decisions as to what is good for the people of the United States and the people of the world in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you. Mr. Sherman.

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

We will leave Iraq in either 1 year or in 10 years, and it is not clear at which point Iraq would be in better shape. What is clear

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is that the current policy is harming American national security. The world's sympathy with us on 9/11 has been turned into disdain and hostility. Our army is being broken. What once caused fear in the capitals of our enemies now causes laughter. We are told that we have to worry about humanitarian problems that might arise in Iraq, but the current policy forces us to ignore the humanitarian problems in Congo, Darfur and elsewhere. Terrorists are enjoying sanctuary in Somalia, Yemen and much of Afghanistan and Pakistan because we focus almost exclusively on Iraq. In the nuclear efforts of North Korea, and especially Iran, go forward without an effective counter policy. Our policy is probably not helping Iraq. It is certainly hurting our own national security.

I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Manzullo. Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the hearing. Mr. Walker, thank you for always responding to the request of many Members of Congress.

I, too, want to pursue the line of methodology in this issue, and take it a step further. I would like to have your assessment on the confidence in the work and the work product, because that means a lot to our further assessment.

The example used by my colleague from Indiana about Anbar providence speaks particularly to the diplomacy that was utilized by the military, not necessarily bombs and bullets. And so it is my representation that it is now time to declare a military victory, a success for the military mission—the disposing of the government, the democratic elections, and now time to transition that diplomacy and political reconciliation to the Iraqi Government and it certainly is time now not to issue one single cent for anymore surge of war in Iraq, and I am committed to doing that as I am committed to listening to you. No more money for this war. We are ending it now.

I thank you, and I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Flake of Arizona. Mr. Scott of Georgia.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for having this timely hearing, and to you, Mr. Walker, thank you so much for this report. All along the administration and others here in Congress have said wait until September. We told the American people wait until September, and now September is here, your report is here, and already they are shooting darts through it.

There is much truth in your report, and I commend you highly for it, but I want to mention a few things General Casey has just said. He said our forces are stretched out of balance, the tempo of our deployments is not sustainable, our equipment is used five times the normal rate, and continuously operating in harsh environments.

Major General Benjamin Nixon said last week:

> "I have not seen any improvement really in the year I have been here regarding the Iraq security forces. Progress is slower than it should be inside the Iraqi army in particular."

We are in a no-win situation as long as we are not making this kind of progress militarily on the ground, but certainly at the root of it all, the cure for this problem rests in a political settlement and

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there is nothing in the report, as you have suggested by the benchmarks, that bring us even closer there, and the fact that you have only said out of 18, they have only met three, possibly partially four, and not met 11 at all, and then you have this very stark contrast of what the administration is saying, that in itself says we have got a major, major problem, and a major disconnect between the reality on the ground and the lack of reality in the White House.

Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Boozman. Mr. Barrett. Mr. Fortenberry. Mr. Poe of Texas.

Mr. POE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate this hearing, having this hearing, and our witness before us.

The question is: Where do we go from here? The question, seems to me, is not whether the GAO report or the military report is the most accurate. The question, based on all information, is: Do we stay or do we just go away? America has to resolve the issue of Iraq, and it seems to me success has never come from withdrawal, and I look forward to your comments.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Inglis.

Mr. INGLIS. Mr. Chairman, when I was growing up, I used to tell my mom, you know, "I am in quite a scrape now," and she would say, "Well, if you hadn't done [such and so], Bob, we wouldn't be here." And I would say, "Yes, I know, but now we are in it." It is really where we are, right?

We are in a challenge. It is an American challenge. It is not a Democrat problem. It is not a Republican problem. It is an American problem. And so I hope that here today we start a process of finding solutions to that American challenge.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. We are deeply grateful, Mr. Comptroller General, for your work, for the outstanding job done by your staff, and we are anxious and eager to listen to you. The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAVID M. WALKER, COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, other members of this distinguished committee. I am pleased to be here to represent the outstanding work that our staff has done in connection with Iraq. This is my third hearing on Iraq. I have at least one more this week, and some member briefings as well.

I think it is important to note several things at the outset: That we are reporting as required by law on the status of whether or not the Iraqi Government has met its commitments with regard to 18 benchmarks. We were required by law to do this. We were required by law to report by September 1, so we didn't pick to report at a particular opportune time. We are doing what we were asked to do.

Secondly, it is important to note that we were asked to note whether or not the status was met or not met on each of these 18 benchmarks. However, GAO must use its independent and professional judgment, and in doing so we also want to try to be fair and

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balanced. Therefore, I decided that it would not have been fair and balanced just to use a met or not met criteria, and we used our independent and professional judgment to decide in certain circumstances that it was appropriate to show partially met.

Furthermore, I think it is important for you to understand that just because something is not met doesn't mean there hasn't been any progress.

Furthermore, one needs to understand that it is my understanding that the Congress intended for this to be the first of what is likely to be recurring reports by the GAO, so this would establish a baseline from which one would be able to establish progress or lack thereof going forward.

Finally, it is important to understand that we provided a lot of commentary in order to try to add contextual sophistication with regard to where things are in connection with these 18 items.

I want to say at the outset that irrespective of what we are saying that the current status is as of August 30, 2007, that this should in no way, shape or form detract from the courageous efforts of our military and those of our coalition partners. My son fought in Iraq as a Marine Corps officer, and believe me, we all want to win. The question is: How do you define winning and what is the best way to win? And I think we need to revisit both of those key questions at this point in time.

Now, we, in conducting this work, interviewed officials from the Department of Defense, State, Treasury, Multinational Force Iraq, Defense Intelligence Agency, Central Intelligence Agency, National Intelligence Council, the United Nations, a variety of parties, including Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus.

Let me say I believe that you need to seriously consider this report because it is a professional and independent report. At the same point in time I would also say I think you need to seriously consider what you hear from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus, and what you hear from former General Jones and others, and you need to consider all that information in order to decide what Mr. Poe said, which I think is the right question. What is the best way forward? Where do we go from here?

In doing that, let me show on the first graphic. Chart No. 1 is on page 4 of my testimony. This is the source of the 18 benchmarks. This is not something Congress came up with. The basic source of these benchmarks is commitments that have been made by the Iraqi Government dating back to June 2006.

The next graphic shows what our bottom line assessment on the 18 benchmarks. First, not all benchmarks are equal. We did not attempt, however, to substitute our judgment for that of the Congress or the administration or anyone else to say which ones are the most important, but I think it is important to note not all benchmarks are equal.

Secondly, I think it is important to note that of these there are three categories: Legislative, security and economic. Of the legislative, one was met, one was partially met, and six were not met. Of the security, two were met, two were partially met, and five were not met. And of the economic, one was partially met. Again, as I said, if it is not met, it doesn't mean there has been no progress.

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It just means there hasn't been enough progress to be able to give recognition to at least partially met.

Let me also note in that regard that we have in our report our methodology, which is clearly defined, consistently applied, well documented, and transparent, is on what basis do we decide that something is not met, partially met or met.

Now, I would respectfully suggest that you need to be asking some questions when other people report as to what their methodology is. What is the basis? How did they reach that? Candidly, we were asked to do something fundamentally different than what the President was asked to do. The President was asked to note whether or not progress is being made. Whether or not progress is being made is fundamentally different than where things stand as of a point in time. It is also inherently more subjective. Whether or not progress is being made is inherently more subjective.

Look at the President's management agenda, which I commend. It has two ratings at least twice a year. Where do things stand at that point in time, and what type of progress is being made? I would respectfully suggest you have to consider both. You ought to consider both.

Now, the next graphic will end up showing the legislative factors, the legislative benchmarks, in particular, with regard to de-Baathification, the hydrocarbon laws, the laws with regard to the regions, elections, amnesty, disarmament, and demobilization, and you can see here that in many cases, as in the case of the hydrocarbon law and elections, there are a number of things that have to get done. It is not just one piece of legislation. There are multiple pieces of legislation and/or implementation actions that have to take place. Therefore, when you consider the full picture, I think you might have a better understanding as to how we reach the judgments that we reached.

Next, please. If you look on the security front, you will see that these are the trends in average daily attacks from June 2003 to July 2007. Now, these are average daily attacks. These are not lethality. This is what type of activity is occurring, and obviously February only has 28 days. It has 28 days, sometimes 29 in leap years, and July has 31, and so I think in fairness you need to use average daily rather than going by monthly. And what you will see based on this public information, non-classified, is that attacks had gone up pretty consistently until July where they went down, and in July we had roughly the same level of attacks that we did in February 2007.

Now, we are aware of information through August 15. We asked for information through the end of August. It was not provided to us, but I hope and expect that you will hear something on that when General Petraeus comes before you, and I think you need to consider that. But we also need to keep in mind that this month is Ramadan, and historically there has been an abatement of violence the month before Ramadan, and an increase in violence during Ramadan.

Now, let us hope that that won't be continued. Let us hope that we will see an exception here with regard to Al Anbar province. There is absolutely no question that there has been a dramatic change in Al Anbar province. There is absolutely no question that

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there are several reasons for that, one of which is that the tribal leaders decided that al-Qaeda had gone too far, and they decided that the enemy of their enemy is their friend, and therefore they have allied with us, and there has been a tremendous change. Now the question is: Is that sustainable? Is that transferable? Al Anbar province is not Baghdad. The surge was supposed to be primarily about Baghdad. So it is not that it is not relevant, it is just not necessarily relevant to the benchmarks, which are primarily about Baghdad and political and economic progress, if you will.

There has also been some progress in Baghdad with regard to the surge. there is no question about that. There has, frankly, been more progress on the security front with regard to what we have done, not what the Iraqis have done, but what we have done than there has been on the political front. Probably the biggest gap is the political front, but one must keep in mind what the purpose of the surge was.

The purpose of the surge was to provide breathing room such that political progress could be made. That is the stated purpose of the surge. So far we haven't seen that political progress. Hopefully that will change. But that was the stated purpose of the surge.

The next graphic will show that if you look at our assessment as of August 30, 2007 versus the administration's preliminary assessment as of July 2007—now again they were assessing progress, which is fundamentally different than status. But if you look at that, you will see that there is one area where there is a significant difference where we said not met and they said—you know, they said satisfactory progress, and that was on the first one. But the rest of them are that we agreed or there was a one difference in rating rather than a two difference in rating.

Now, I would expect that the ratings you are going to hear next week are going to probably improve on some of these, but I don't know that for a fact, and we will wait and see.

In conclusion, as of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi Government had met three, partially met four, and not met 11 of 18 legislative, security and economic benchmarks. I think it is important to know that in late August, Iraq senior Shia, Sunni Arab and Kurdish political leaders signed a unity accord, signaling efforts to foster greater national reconciliation. The accord covered draft legislation of de-Baathification reform and provincial powers laws as well as setting up a mechanism to release some Sunni detainees being held without charges.

However, while this conceptual agreement has been reached, we haven't seen progress with regard to the other benchmarks necessary to improve the rating, and hopefully we will see that progress by the next time we report, but only time will tell.

Now, as Congress considers the way forward, as Mr. Poe said, it is not where we have been, where we are, it is where we should go from here. As you consider the way forward, I think you clearly should consider our report. You clearly should consider these 18 benchmarks, but you also should consider the report of others, and you should consider factors that are beyond these 18 benchmarks, and these are not the 18 benchmarks I would write if you asked us to write 18 benchmarks. They are important. You ought to con-

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sider them. But I think there are other things that are important too that aren't contained in these 18 benchmarks.

I think it is also important to note that we made three recommendations which the administration agreed with in our report with regard to providing additional information to the Congress on these benchmarks, more information on the nature of violence, quantitative and qualitatively, and also more information on the loyalty of Iraqi Security Forces. It is not just whether or not you have enough, it is not just whether or not they are ready, it is whether they are loyal, and by loyalty, what I mean by that is, will you discharge your responsibilities in a neutral, nonsectarian fashion? Will you execute your military duties and responsibilities in a neutral and nonsectarian fashion?

We don't have that problem in our country. Other parts of the world do have that problem.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions the members may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Walker follows:]

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United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony
Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery Expected
at 2:00 p.m. EDT
Wednesday, September 5, 2007

SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ

Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks

Statement of David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States

GAO-07-1222T

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to appear today to discuss our report[1] on whether or not the government of Iraq has met 18 benchmarks contained in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007[2] (the Act). The Act requires GAO to report on the status of the achievement of these benchmarks. Consistent with GAO's core values and our desire to be fair and balanced, we also considered and used a "partially met" rating for some benchmarks. In comparison, the Act requires the administration to report on whether satisfactory progress is being made toward meeting the benchmarks. The benchmarks cover Iraqi government actions needed to advance reconciliation within Iraqi society, improve the security of the Iraqi population, provide essential services to the population, and promote economic well-being.

To complete this work, we reviewed U.S. agency and Iraqi documents and interviewed officials from the Departments of Defense, State, and the Treasury; the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and its subordinate commands; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Central Intelligence Agency; the National Intelligence Council; and the United Nations. These officials included Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, and General David H. Petraeus, Commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq. We made multiple visits to Iraq during 2006 and 2007, most recently from July 22 to August 1, 2007. Our analyses were enhanced by approximately 100 Iraq-related reports and testimonies that we have completed since May 2003. We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Summary

In summary, we found

The benchmarks were derived from commitments first articulated by the Iraqi government in June 2006.

The Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and did not meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks. Overall, key legislation has not been passed, violence remains high, and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend $10 billion in reconstruction funds. These results do not diminish the courageous efforts of

[1]GAO, *Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks* (GAO-07-1195) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 4, 2007).

[2]Section 1314 of P.L. 110-28.

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coalition forces and progress that has been made in several areas, including Anbar Province.

The Iraqi government met one of eight legislative benchmarks: the rights of minority political parties in Iraq's legislature are protected. The government has not enacted legislation on de-Ba'athification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament.

It is unclear whether sectarian violence in Iraq has decreased—a key security benchmark—since it is difficult to measure whether the perpetrators' intents were sectarian in nature, and other measures of population security show differing trends.

As the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and with homeland security goals, foreign policy goals, and other goals of the United States.

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Origins of the Benchmarks

The benchmarks contained in the Act were derived from commitments articulated by the Iraqi government beginning in June 2006 and affirmed in subsequent statements by Prime Minister Maliki in September 2006 and January 2007 (see fig. 1). Iraq's commitments to these benchmarks were most recently stated in the May 2007 International Compact for Iraq.

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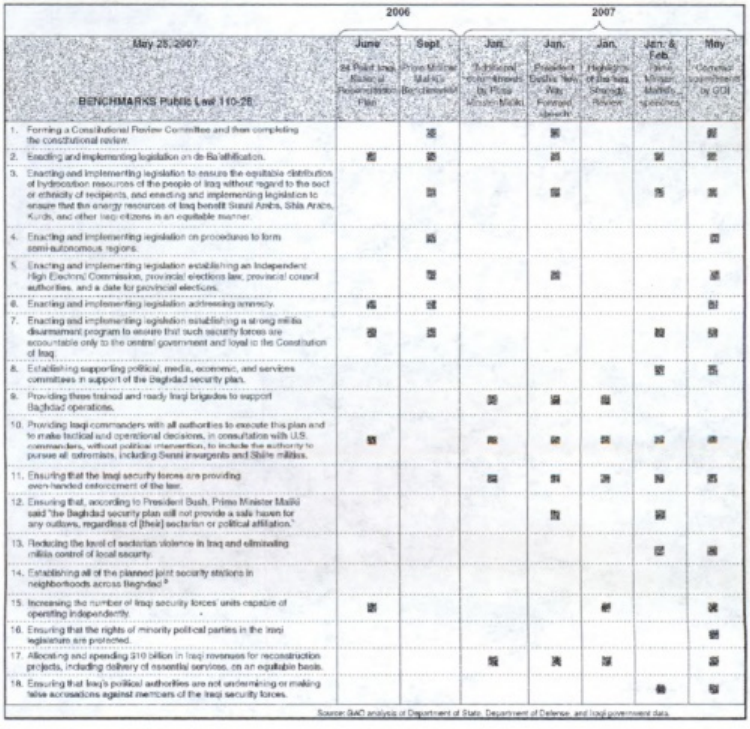
Figure 1: Origin of Iraqi Benchmarks



May 25, 2007 BENCHMARKS Public Law 110-28	2006 June 28 Point Iraqi Plan of Reconciliation	2006 Sept. Prime Minister Maliki's Benchmarks	2007 Jan. 7 National Commitments by Prime Minister Maliki	2007 Jan. President Bush's New Way Forward Speech	2007 Jan. Highlights of the Iraq Strategic Review	2007 Jan. & Feb. Prime Minister Maliki's speeches	2007 May General commitments by GOI
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.							
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de Ba'athification.							
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.							
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.							
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.							
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.							
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.							
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.							
9. Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.							
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.							
11. Ensuring that the Iraqi security forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.							
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."							
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.							
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.[a]							
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces' units capable of operating independently.							
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.							
17. Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.							
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces.							

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Department of Defense, and Iraqi government data.

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[a]Iraq's Policy Committee on National Security agreed upon a set of political, security, and economic benchmarks and an associated timeline in September 2006. These were reaffirmed by the Presidency Council on October 16, 2006.

[b]In December 2006 the Multi-National Force-Iraq and government of Iraq agreed to establish the Joint Security Stations.

GAO Assessment of the 18 Benchmarks

As of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and did not meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks. Overall, key legislation has not been passed, violence remains high, and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend $10 billion in reconstruction funds.

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Figure 2: GAO Assessment of the 18 Benchmarks

Benchmark	GAO assessment	Status
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and completing the constitutional review.	○	Committee formed but amendments not approved by the Iraqi legislature and no referendum scheduled.
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.	○	Laws drafted.
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.	○	3 of 4 components drafted; none being considered by parliament.
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.	◐	Law enacted; implementation scheduled for 2008.
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.	○	Commission law enacted and implemented; however, supporting laws not enacted.
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.	○	No law drafted.
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.	○	No law drafted.
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.	●	Committees established.
9. Providing three trained and ready brigades to support Baghdad operations.	◐	Forces provided; some of limited effectiveness.
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	○	Political intervention continues.
11. Ensuring that Iraqi security forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.	○	Iraqi security forces engaged in sectarian-based abuses.
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."	◐	Militia infiltration of some security forces enables some safe havens.
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.	○	Militias control some local security; unclear whether sectarian violence has decreased.
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.	●	32 of 34 stations established.
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.	○	Number of independent units declined between March and July 2007.
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.	●	Legislators' rights protected; minority citizens' rights unprotected.
17. Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.	◐	Funds allocated but unlikely to be fully spent.
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces.	○	Unsubstantiated accusations continue to be made.

● Met ◐ Partially met ○ Not met

Source: GAO analysis of UN, U.S., and Iraqi data.

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Most Legislative Benchmarks Have Yet to Be Enacted and Implemented

The Iraqi government met one of eight legislative benchmarks: the rights of minority political parties in Iraq's legislature are protected. The government also partially met one benchmark — to enact and implement legislation on the formation of regions; this law was enacted in October 2006 but will not be implemented until April 2008. Six other legislative benchmarks have not been met. Specifically, a review committee has not completed work on important revisions to Iraq's constitution. Further, the government has not enacted legislation on de-Ba'athification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament. The administration's report cited progress in achieving some benchmarks but provided little information on what step in the legislative process each benchmark had reached. We provide that information below.

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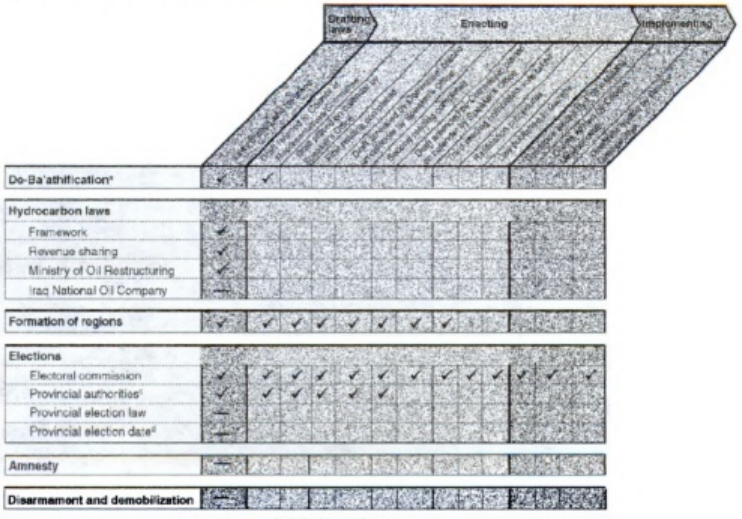
Figure 3: Enactment and Implementation Status of Six Legislative Benchmarks



— No legislation drafted

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Department of Defense, UN and Iraqi government data.

Notes:

[a]The Iraqi legislature is considering several competing drafts.

[b]The Iraqi Constitution exempts the law on formation of regions from following the Presidency Council's ratification process that is set out in Article 138 of the Constitution.

[c]The draft deals with broader federal versus provincial powers, according to the United Nations.

[d]According to State, the Iraqi government may not need a law to set the election date, though to date this is unclear.

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Mixed Results in Achieving Security Benchmarks

Two of nine security benchmarks have been met. Specifically, Iraq's government has established various committees in support of the Baghdad security plan and established almost all of the planned Joint Security Stations in Baghdad. The government has partially met the benchmarks of providing three trained and ready brigades for Baghdad operations and eliminating safe havens for outlawed groups. Five other benchmarks have not been met. The government has not eliminated militia control of local security, eliminated political intervention in military operations, ensured even-handed enforcement of the law, increased army units capable of independent operations, and ensured that political authorities made no false accusations against security forces. It is unclear whether sectarian violence in Iraq has decreased—a key security benchmark—since it is difficult to measure perpetrators' intents, and various other measures of population security from different sources show differing trends. As displayed in figure 4, average daily attacks against civilians have remained unchanged from February to July 2007.

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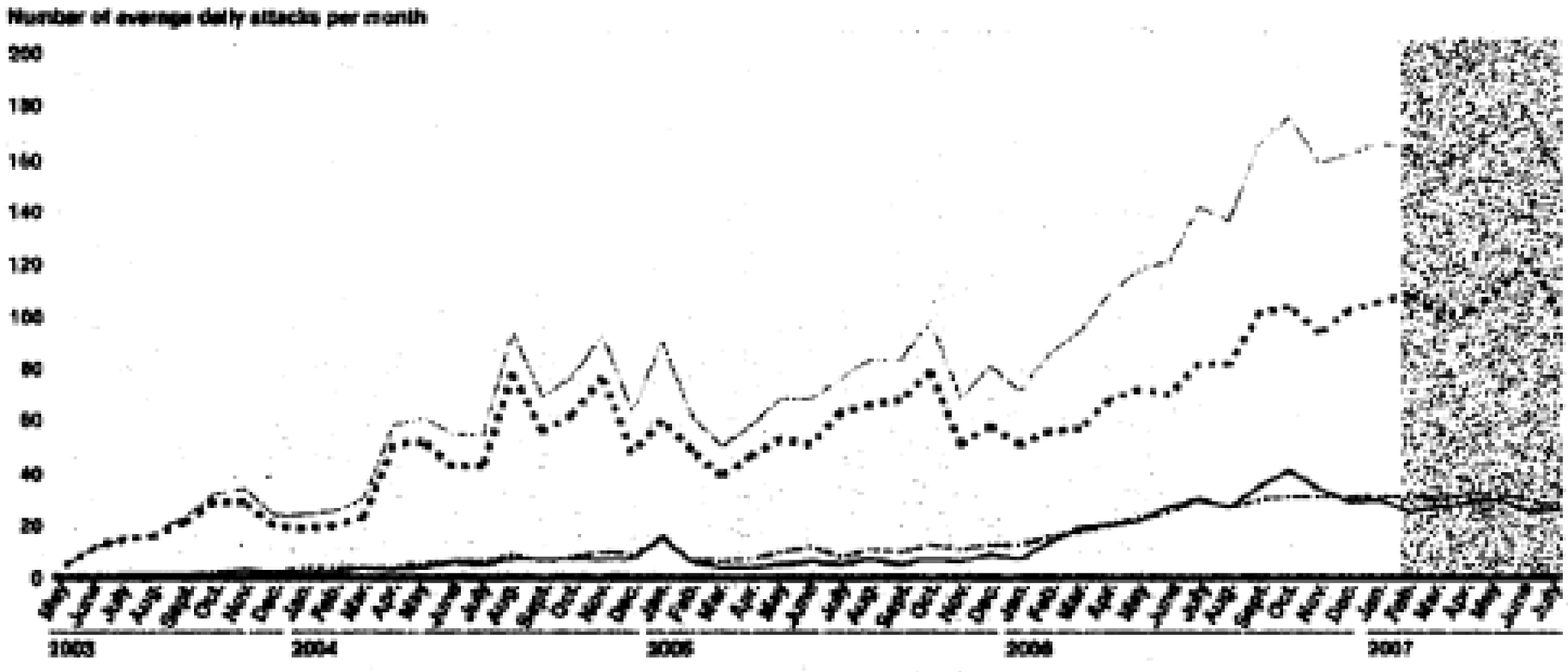
Figure 4: Average Number of Daily, Enemy-Initiated Attacks against the Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, and Civilians (May 2003–July 2007)



Comparison of GAO and Executive Branch Assessments

Public Law 110-28 requires GAO to report to Congress by September 1, 2007,[1] on whether or not the government of Iraq has met 18 benchmarks contained in the Act, and the status of the achievement of these benchmarks. The Act requires the administration to report in July and September 2007 on whether satisfactory progress is being made toward meeting the benchmarks. As stated previously, we considered and used a "partially met" rating in several circumstances. Figure 5 compares the two assessments.

[1]GAO provided this report to Congress on September 4, 2007, the first business day following September 1, 2007.

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Figure 5: Comparison of GAO Assessment with Administration's July 2007 Initial Benchmark Assessment Report

Benchmark	GAO assessment	Administration assessment of progress
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.	○	■
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.	○	□
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon revenues of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.	○	□
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.	◐	■
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.	○	◧
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.	○	*
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.	○	*
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.	●	■
9. Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.	◐	■
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	○	□
11. Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.	○	□
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."	◐	■
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security	○	◧
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.	●	■
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.	○	□
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.	●	■
17. Allocating and spending $10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.	◐	■
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces	○	□
Summary		

● Met ◐ Partially met ○ Not met ■ Satisfactory ◧ Mixed □ Unsatisfactory

Source: GAO analysis of UN, U.S., and Iraqi data.

*According to the U.S. State Department, conditions are not present for these benchmarks.

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Conclusions

As of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and had not met 11 of 18 legislative, security, and economic benchmarks. The Iraqi government has not fulfilled commitments it first made in June 2006 to advance legislative, security, and economic measures that would promote national reconciliation among Iraq's warring factions. Of particular concern is the lack of progress on de-Ba'athification legislation that could promote greater Sunni participation in the national government and comprehensive hydrocarbon legislation that would distribute Iraq's vast oil wealth. In late August, Iraq's senior Shi'a, Sunni Arab and Kurdish political leaders signed a Unity Accord signaling efforts to foster greater national reconciliation. The Accord covered draft legislation on de-Ba'thification reform and provincial powers laws, as well as setting up a mechanism to release some Sunni detainees being held without charges. However, the polarization of Iraq's major sects and ethnic groups and fighting among Sh''a factions further diminishes the stability of Iraq's governing coalition and its potential to enact legislation needed for sectarian reconciliation.

Reconciliation was also premised on a reduction in violence. While the Baghdad security plan was intended to reduce sectarian violence, it is unclear whether violence has been reduced. Measuring such violence may be difficult since the perpetrators' intents are not clearly known. Other measures, such as the number of enemy-initiated attacks, show that violence has remained high through July 2007.

As the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and homeland security, foreign policy, and other goals of the United States. Future administration reports on the benchmarks would be more useful to the Congress if they clearly depicted the status of each legislative benchmark, provided additional quantitative and qualitative information on violence from all relevant U.S. agencies, and specified the performance and loyalties of Iraqi security forces supporting coalition operations.

Recommendations

In preparing future reports to Congress and to help increase transparency on progress made toward achieving the benchmarks, we recommend that:

1. The Secretary of State provide information to the President that clearly specifies the status in drafting, enacting, and implementing Iraqi legislation;

2. The Secretary of Defense and the heads of other appropriate agencies provide information to the President on trends in sectarian violence with appropriate caveats, as well as broader quantitative and qualitative measures of security; and

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3. The Secretary of Defense and the heads of other appropriate agencies provide additional information on the operational readiness of Iraqi security forces supporting the Baghdad security plan, particularly information on their loyalty and willingness to help secure Baghdad.

We provided drafts of the report accompanying this testimony to the relevant U.S. agencies for review and comment, which we incorporated as appropriate. We received written comments from the Departments of State and Defense and technical comments from the Central Intelligence Agency and National Intelligence Council, which are included in the report. State and DOD concurred with our recommendations but disagreed with our assessment of certain benchmarks. Although we analyzed classified data, including the August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate for Iraq, the testimony and report only contain unclassified information, as of August 30, 2007. We issued a classified report to supplement the information discussed in our report.[4]

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Contact and Staff Acknowledgements

If you or your staffs have any questions about this testimony, please contact me at (202) 512-5500 or Mr. Joseph A. Christoff, Director, International Affairs and Trade, at (202) 512-8979. Key contributors to this testimony include Stephen Lord, David Bruno, Howard Cott, Timothy Fairbanks, Mattias Fenton, Whitney Havens, Dorian Herring, Bruce Kutnick, Judith McCloskey, Tetsuo Miyabara, and Kathleen Monahan.

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[4]GAO-07-1223C.

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Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much, Mr. Walker, for your very valuable observations.

One of the most disturbing comments to come out of Iraq over the course of the last 4½ years was Mr. Maliki's observation a couple of weeks ago, he obviously was annoyed by criticism from some members of this body, when he said, "Well, we can find other friends."

Were you aware of that observation? Did you follow that observation?

Mr. WALKER. I read some of his comments.

Chairman LANTOS. Well, let me ask you in view of that comment how would you respond to my basic question? We are establishing 18 benchmarks or whatever the number is. To what extent does Maliki and his government share the view that reaching these benchmarks is in his interest? Because one of the most disconcerting aspects of this period of evaluation, and tomorrow this committee will hear from independent experts outside of government and on Monday we will hear from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, it is reasonable to ask at least whether, in view of Maliki's performance and some public statements, what is your view of the extent to which he shares our objectives?

Is he interested in a unified Iraqi Government, a unified nonsectarian Iraqi military, or is this merely an illusion on the part of some people in our Government while Maliki, in fact, is pursuing, cleverly or less so, his own goals and objectives?

Mr. WALKER. Well, Mr. Chairman, I can't put myself in Prime Minister Maliki's mind. I can say this, that he has publicly stated on more than one occasion his agreement with these benchmarks. He has publicly stated that.

Secondly, I think with regard to Iraq, one has to keep in mind several things. You have the government, which is headed by Prime Minister Maliki. You have the elected representatives in the form of the Parliament, and you have the people. There can be differences of opinion between those three as there are in our country on occasion. The fact is that one also has to keep in mind that even at the government level in additional to elected officials you have the ministers of which there are sectarian factions that are involved with regard to various ministries.

So I think only time will tell, but needless to say, while the Shias control 60 percent—while they have 60 percent of the population in Iraq, and the Sunnis have about 20 percent, and the Kurds have about 20 percent, that 60 percent is not a unified 60 percent. There are factions within that 60 percent and so only time will tell.

Chairman LANTOS. How significant, in your view, is the fact that 15 of the 37 cabinet ministers are boycotting the work of the government?

Mr. WALKER. It obviously shows that there is a significant problem with regard to commitment to this government, and 15 is not a majority, but it is a substantial minority.

Chairman LANTOS. To what extent is that perhaps a crippling handicap on the ability of the Maliki government to function?

Mr. WALKER. Only time will tell. It is obviously a very troubling indicator. It is one that by the way is not one of the benchmarks per se, but it is a very troubling indicator.

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Chairman LANTOS. What is your view of a broader question that wasn't asked of you, it is not part of your assignment with respect to this particular undertaking, but many of us feel that the tremendous focus financially and militarily on Iraq dramatically detracts from the ability of our Government to deal with other potential or future crises, difficulties, because the extent to which resources have been allocated to Iraq has dramatically diminished our capability of looking at our global responsibilities?

Mr. WALKER. There clearly is an opportunity cost associated with Iraq. Iraq costs a tremendous amount of money.

Chairman LANTOS. What is your current estimate of the costs of Iraq?

Mr. WALKER. Of Iraq?

Chairman LANTOS. Yes.

Mr. WALKER. I think about $400 billion so far, but I think the army, in particular, is stressed, stretched, strained, and the current approach is unsustainable with regard to the army.

Chairman LANTOS. What is the psychological cost of a situation wherein the true burden of this undertaking falls on an infinitesimally small segment of our population, estimated at maybe 1 percent or 2 percent? The rest, to some extent, carry a load in terms of the financial burden, but the personal involvement, the personal sacrifice is clearly not widely shared.

At the very beginning of this undertaking when the Deputy Secretary of State met with us, I raised the issue, some 4 or 4½ years ago, that in a major military undertaking the first criterion of evaluation must be shared sacrifice. This clearly has been a military undertaking with minimal shared sacrifice.

What are the psychological, the cohesive costs involved in this?

Mr. WALKER. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to calculate the psychological costs. I will say we now have an all-volunteer force, and that is a very significant difference from what we had, for example, during the Vietnam Conflict, and so I think one needs to keep that in mind.

Secondly, there is not a lot of shared sacrifice because we are not paying for this war. We are debt financing this war and our grandkids are going to pay it off with compound interest.

Chairman LANTOS. Ms. Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

What is the role of the Government Accountability Office? You know, when I am listening to the questions and the answers, and the report, I have great respect for you, obviously, Mr. Walker, but I am used to reading reports from the GAO about student loan compliance, about Medicare programs, and now we have the Government Accountability Office, the Comptroller General, telling us whether the army is stretched or not stretched. Are we meeting these benchmarks? And reading the reports that say, "Democratic leaders jumped on the GAO's conclusions to bolster their calls for a new strategy in Iraq, and Republican leaders dismissed the report as dated and politically insignificant." The GAO report on the war effort and benchmarks?

I realize that this is something we did to ourselves. We passed it because of a lot of horse trading in order to get the supplemental through, and we said, okay, the GAO report is going to give us

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their assessment of whether benchmarks were met or not, and there is something about this whole procedure——

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN [continuing]. That I find so unsettling, as if we would have a GAO report on World War II, and a GAO report on the Civil War, and base our conclusions on that, and there is so much more that is involved here, and I am not saying you are bean counters, and I am not saying that you are out of your realm of expertise, but I just feel uncomfortable listening to a report by the Government Accountability Office about our war effort.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. And about Iraqi benchmarks. It just doesn't seem to fit. We have this round peg and this square hole, and we are just trying to make it fit, and I realize we tasked you with this. It is nothing that you asked for. But it just doesn't seem to fit. It is the round peg and the square hole, whatever the metaphor is, and I just can't get my arms around it.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I have a sense of being very uncomfortable by having you, sir, with great credibility and wonderful service that can give us great insight about student loans and about Medicare compliance, but I can't fathom why you are saying to us the army is stretched too thin. What in the world qualifies you to say that?

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I certainly am not qualified to say it, but yet here you are telling us about the insurgents and all of these incredibly complex issues.

Mr. WALKER. I am not the only person that said that. People at the Pentagon have said that. People in uniform have said that, with stars on their shoulders. So by no means am I the first person to say that.

I think it is important to keep in mind that we are in the fact business, and when Congress wants to try to be able to obtain facts, and to have a professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, and hopefully fair and balanced assessment, who are you going to turn to?

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. But, sir, let me interrupt you. You said the army is stretched.

Mr. WALKER. Right.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Where do you get this fact?

Mr. WALKER. We have issued reports on the subject.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Your general?

Mr. WALKER. This is not new. In fact, we have got more work we are doing right now, work that Congress has asked us to do with regard to what is the current readiness status of U.S. troops. There is a significant difference between our deployed forces and our forces here at home in a variety of areas. We have done work with regard to the operations temp, and the ability of the army to continue to supply the necessary force structure while still maintaining a commitment that people won't be over there for more than a year. And so there are a number of different factors that we have assessed, and by the way, everything that we do we provide the opportunity of the Department of Defense, State, whomever it might be, an opportunity to review and comment on what

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we say. We consider their comments. In some cases, we will make changes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you.

Mr. WALKER. And in other cases, we won't.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you. I just can't imagine at one point during World War II if we would have gotten a report from the General Accountability Office about whether we are meeting the benchmarks, and on D-Day, what that report would have looked at, what it would have said, what it would have done to the American people to issue such a report at that critical time, and I just find it disheartening. I realize that we are the ones who asked for this report, but it would be, I believe, as significant as if the Foreign Affairs Committee would have issued a report on meeting the benchmarks. It is a good guide but I worry that it seems to be having a lot of credibility that I think is unwarranted with the American public.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Green of Texas.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I ask unanimous consent to have a statement placed in the record.

Chairman LANTOS. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Green follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GENE GREEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing on Iraq. I would like to welcome today's witness, Comptroller General David Walker from the Government Accountability Office and look forward to his testimony.

The report released by GAO yesterday on the progress being made on the 18 political and military benchmarks is a stark contrast to accounts of the situation in Iraq coming from elsewhere in the Administration. These findings raise serious questions about the willingness of the Iraqi government to move their country forward and about the Administration's plans to stabilize Iraq.

Most disappointing is that the Iraqi government only met one of the eight legislative benchmarks, which was to protect minority political parties' rights in the legislature. Virtually no progress has been made on laws regarding de-Ba'athification, hydrocarbons, or militia disarmament.

Congress did not pull these benchmarks out of thin air when they were included in the Supplemental Appropriations bill earlier this year. These were all commitments Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki publicly suggested or committed to in remarks over the previous year.

The continued violence is just as troubling. While there has been a slight drop over the last two months, page 11 of the GAO report shows that the number of daily attacks is roughly what it was at the beginning of the year. Many of these findings echo last month National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq.

There is no doubt progress has been made in various parts of the country, such as Al Anbar province, but those parts that have seen a reduction in violence have primarily not been in areas that contain diverse populations, and have not been in areas that have seen intense sectarian violence.

Again and again we have heard from the Administration that their plan for Iraq is working and the Iraqis are making significant progress. This report validates what many of us have realized, that the Administration's plan is not working and we need a major change in course regarding Iraq.

Until our troops are off the street and no long responsible for day-to-day policing, we will continue to be a crutch for the Iraqi security forces, and the various factions of the Iraqi government will have no incentive to compromise and reach the political benchmarks in this report. The Iraqi government needs to act on these and needs to act urgently, but as long as we have 150,000 troops there policing the streets and taking casualties, they have no incentive to do so.

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Congress must take this report, along with the National Intelligence Estimate from last month, and General Petraeus's testimony next week, and work on a new course that will require the Iraqis to stand up and will begin bringing our troops home. Iraq is not a lost cause, but it cannot be won militarily. We should remain in Iraq to fight al Qaeda and protect the American embassy and diplomatic personnel, but we cannot continue to do the job the Iraqis should be doing to secure their country.

Again, I thank the Chairman for holding this hearing, and Mr. Walker for his testimony and work on this report.

Mr. GREEN. Again, I want to welcome our Comptroller General Walker. I know Congress asked you to do this, and I think by questioning your ability, you are attacking the messenger instead of the message, and that is what we here in Washington—you have been here lots of times and you know. I guess for those of us who have been to Iraq a number of times and hearing from a lot of the troops who are coming home, even on the break, even over their 2-week R&R, if you sit down with them, their frustration on an analogy basis mirrors what you are saying, and that is why I am glad we have the report, and I know our committee is going to have a hearing next Monday with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to hear what they are going to talk about, and that is what is important.

Mr. Chairman, I have read the report, and I understand that the GAO may not have the expertise at the Pentagon, but I also know that—I am glad that an outside Federal agency that we depend on in Congress—to look at all parts of the Federal Government, whether it is the Pentagon or HUD or anything else, was willing to do this under our supplemental. Again, if we don't ask you to do it, you wouldn't do it, and you know, don't attack the messenger as well as you need to look at the issues, and that is what I feel that is a problem with this.

I am just glad the GAO did the report, and Mr. Chairman, I don't really have any questions except again thank you for doing it and giving us another perspective, we will hear the Pentagon's perspective and the State Department next week, but we have heard that for 4 years, and I yield back my time.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Chairman, can I just mention real quickly?

Chairman LANTOS. Please.

Mr. WALKER. First, I think it is important to set the record straight. We weren't asked to do it. We were directed to do it. This was a law. The law said GAO shall do this by September 1, and secondly, I think you need to seriously consider what General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker have to say too. I think it is appropriate to consider information from multiple sources and then to be able to make your judgment after you do that.

Last thing, it is really important for every member to read the classified national intelligence estimate, and really important for every member to read our classified briefing slides that supplement our testimony. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you, Mr. Walker, and let me assure you that members of this committee do study and read and contemplate all of these reports very seriously.

The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Inglis.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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Mr. Walker, you said that the benchmarks weren't your own. If you were writing them, what would you write?

Mr. WALKER. Well, without getting into a whole level of detail, I think there are important factors in the benchmarks. I am not trying to say that they are not important, or you shouldn't consider them. I think you should consider them. But I think there are several different angles that you also ought to think about going forward.

One, some of the benchmarks—you might want to unbundle some of the items that are in the benchmarks. For example, sectarian violence, if that is still going to be a benchmark versus militia control, if you will.

Secondly, I think you also ought to think about whether or not the trend in sectarian violence is really appropriate because how do you know if it is sectarian violence or not? If somebody is attacked or something is blown up, how do you know that it was because of sectarian violence? Isn't it more relevant to understand what the overall trend in violence is rather than sectarian violence?

Thirdly, economic factors, what about economic factors? What is going on with regard to, in addition to security, electricity, water, education, things that every citizen of any country care about in order to see that their lives are being changed?

Fourthly, what is being done from a foreign relations standpoint to try to be able to gain cooperation of the neighbors or at least in some situations, to try to prevent or get people agree not to do some things that they may be doing?

And fifthly, just off the top of my head, what is being done to try to get the international community to provide more support in capacity building for the Iraqi civilian ministries to try to help them help themselves to deliver results that can pay dividends? I mean, it is not likely at least that you are going to get other countries to supply troops. If anything, we have seen people moving the other way. But there are a lot of things that should be done and that allies have capacity to do that would help achieve "victory" in Iraq.

Mr. INGLIS. I agree with your assessment that the surge was—in theory, the surge was to give some space for political decision making to take place on the part of the Iraqis, and I think we have got to say it is a military success; that our folks have performed exactly as we asked them to do, and they performed beautifully. Now the question is: How do we get the Iraqi political progress?

I wonder in your work if you could identify any points of leverage we have vis-à-vis the Iraqi leadership. What would urge them on? Any points of leverage you could describe?

Mr. WALKER. I think the biggest point of leverage we have is what are we willing to do and what are we not willing to do. All right. Whether it is financially or whether it is from a security standpoint. And I think one of the things that this body needs to seriously consider is: What is an appropriate role for U.S. forces on the ground? It is one thing to fight al-Qaeda wherever they might be in Iraq aggressively, as was done in the Al Anbar province. It is another thing to train Iraqi forces. It is another thing to provide air support and logistical support to Iraqi forces. It is quite another to be the ones who are actually policing the streets. Those are very

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different things, and I think that is something you all need to debate.

Mr. INGLIS. What do you think about the concept of setting up a whole series of rewards and consequences and trying to establish those as leverage points and dividing them equally among the sects so you have rewards for Sunnis, awards for Shias, awards for Kurds, water projects, electricity projects, whatever, that are laid out very clearly? I would call them success check points, the idea of saying we want you to be successful. Here are rewards if you get the oil law done by such and such a timeframe. If it is month later, you lose this water project.

Mr. WALKER. Right.

Mr. INGLIS. If it is a month later, you lose the sewer project, and finally, you get down into where you start going into military changes such that we no longer are policing your streets. You are seeing us move back to our bases. I mean, that is on down the road. This laying out a series like that, is that a way of gaining leverage?

Mr. WALKER. Well, several things. One, I think the Congress needs to consider what should our goals be, what should our objectives be, what should our roles be, what should our metrics and milestones be in that regard. In general terms without getting real specific, I believe in every area you need to have three things to maximize the chance of success.

Number one, incentives for people to do the right thing. That doesn't necessarily mean financial incentives. It could be a legal infrastructure, whatever. Incentives for people to do the right thing. Number two, transparency to provide reasonable assurance that people will do the right thing because somebody is looking; and number three, accountability if people don't do the right thing. Those three principles can apply to everything, including in this area.

Mr. INGLIS. There is some that say though that is an American concept or Western concept that isn't well applied in the Middle East. True or false?

Mr. WALKER. Well, it depends on what you mean by incentives. When you talk about financial incentives and things of that nature, I think that is not a concept that is as widely used in that part of the world, but I think that incentives can either be positive things you will do if certain things are achieved or things you won't do if things aren't achieved, so there is lots of way to structure it.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Walker.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Ms. Sheila Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to Mr. Walker for his testimony and the work of the GAO.

I indicated in my opening remarks that I would be interested in the methodology, but more particularly in the confidence in the work that was produced. So let me pose my questions along those lines.

I don't think that we should be pitting the GAO against the administration, the White House, in terms of one upmanship. Frank-

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ly, I think it is very important to make the point that this was a directive from the Congress and that we have three branches, separate, independent branches of government, and I would think that the constitution views them as equal even though we do know that there are extensive executive powers.

But I think the most important responsibility that we have—and I thank Chairman Lantos for this line of hearings that really are crucial to making the next step decision, which I think in your remarks you may have captured: What do we do next? I do think it is important for this Congress to respond to the fallen soldiers on the battlefield whose lives have been lost already, those that we put in harm's way prospectively as we continue to follow this line of thought, this line of direction.

So I hope, Mr. Walker, in our questioning, and I think you have been before the Senate, you will in no way, in essence, retreat from the concreteness of this report. The administration will have every opportunity to present its case through General Petraeus and, of course, through Ambassador Crocker, but I think the record should reflect the reason why we have the GAO, the reason why we have allegedly the Congressional Budget Office are supposed to be two distinct objective creatures of government that respond in equal terms to the majority, whoever it might be in Congress, and to the executive, whoever it might be.

So with that being said, I think that this is an indicting report. Frankly, no matter how you try to cover it up or make silk out of a pig's ear, frankly, 15 of the benchmarks have not been completely met. There is hedging of 11 versus 8, or 11 versus 7, but frankly, I think the more direct number is 15.

My point that I made earlier was the question about Marines doing diplomatic work. So I ask you in this report, do you feel confident, first, and two, the main question that we have seen and frustrate us is the sectarian violence which causes a continued loss of life of our soldiers, does this report in any way suggest that we have been successful in that way?

Mr. WALKER. I read the *Washington Post* article this morning that presumably all of you read. My view is that there is only one area of strong disagreement between us and the military on this report, and that one area of strong disagreement is on sectarian violence. And if you look at benchmark No. XIII, you will see that it says, "Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security."

We are in agreement that there has not been elimination of militia control of local security. We are in agreement on that. General Petraeus will say that based upon his data, which is classified, that sectarian violence has gone down. We are not comfortable with the methodology that they use for determining that, and one can debate whether or not it is really even the relevant measure because if violence overall is high, then how much significance is there as to whether it is sectarian versus not sectarian, and how do you know if it is sectarian versus nonsectarian?

So candidly, we stand behind this report. We made changes in what we were asked to do to try to provide a more fair and balanced perspective. My opinion is that you shouldn't just consider where things stand as of a point in time. You need to consider what

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progress is being made. Furthermore, you also need to consider factors that aren't reflected by these benchmarks, some of which I have already talked about, in trying to understand what is the best way forward from here.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well, let me just say that it is at what cost that we consider the next steps? More American lives over and over again. So let me suggest that I think we can declare a military victory, success story on the instructions given to our military starting in the spring of 2003, and with that yield the diplomacy and the further political reconciliation to the Iraqi Government and surrounding states. It is at what cost do we continue this path, and I think there is no basis for us to continue, and if we look at this report and look at the maintaining of the sectarian violence, which is a major criteria for peace in Iraq.

I thank the distinguished chairman. I think Mr. Walker for his testimony, and I yield back.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Flake.

Mr. FLAKE. I thank the chairman. I thank the witness.

The surge was basically premised on the need to give the political actors in Iraq needed space to act and achieve a lot of what we outlined in the benchmarks. In your opinion, or in your report, do you feel that that is giving them that, or if security, or lack thereof, is the major hindrance, or is it something else?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, I think our military is performing brilliantly. They are doing everything we ask them to do. They are making a difference. But again, they were a means to an end.

Mr. FLAKE. Right.

Mr. WALKER. They are not an end in and of themselves. Heretofore, the progress that the military has made, our military working in partnership with Iraq, has not resulted in significant political progress.

Now, the question is: Will it over time? Some will tell you that the Iraqis right now might be able to pass some of this legislation but the price of passing that legislation might be a further alienation of the Sunnis, and I think that is something that you may well hear from Ambassador Crocker, and that is something that you need to keep in mind.

So in the end, I think there is broad-based agreement that you must achieve a political accommodation in order to achieve unification if your objective is a unified Iraq that is stable within its borders and can defend itself against its neighbors. I do think, as I said before, Mr. Flake, I think it is time to redefine what is success. What should our goals be?

I am not telling you what they should be. What should they be? What should our roles and responsibilities be to achieve that? How can we ensure that we have incentives, transparency, and accountability to make sure that we are making progress in connection with those goals and objectives?

Mr. FLAKE. Let me just say for the record I think this is a valuable report. I think Congress; we commissioned GAO to study a lot of things as the ranking minority member mentioned. Some are clear-cut. Some are as easy as the DAR program that we fund every year worthwhile. GAO comes back, says no, it isn't. We continue to fund it. In fact, we raised the funding for it. It happens

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all too frequently here. I understand it is much more difficult with something like this, and I take the point that you wouldn't want GAO to study the D-Day invasion to see what could have gone better. There are limits, but this is important.

Back to security, when I was in Iraq in 2004, it struck me that in Basra where the British were in control, it was relatively violence free. They were there in the city but without much to do, frankly, at that time. Now Anbar province and other areas have become safer, but Basra is now somewhat of a mess. Do you get the sense that we are kind of squeezing a balloon here, and where violence retracks, it expresses itself somewhere else?

Mr. WALKER. Well, obviously there is a limit as to the number of forces that we can commit, and you can speak with the Pentagon about that. I think only time will tell what the impact of the British withdrawal from Basra and the surrounding area will be. The demographics are different down there than they are in Al Anbar, fundamentally different. It is primarily Shia down there; on the other hand you have different factions of Shia down in Basra area. So we will see with the passage of time what the impact is.

Mr. FLAKE. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Walker, let me start off with the reduction of the level of sectarian violence, and again, I commend you for the report and reiterate again the importance of you fulfilling the edict of the law. This wasn't a report you chose. It was a report that was mandated that you made, and I think we have to accept that.

On the question of sectarian violence, how do you arrive at the conclusion that sectarian violence has not decreased while the White House reaches a different assessment?

Mr. WALKER. First, let me say that it is very important that you read our classified briefing slides on this because there is a limit as to what I can say in open session.

Mr. SCOTT. All right.

Mr. WALKER. But let me at the same point in time say that there is no question that the data that is maintained by MNF–I, General Petraeus, et al., will show that according to their data and their methodology sectarian violence has gone down. We have seen their data through August 15. We asked for the data after August 15, but we didn't receive it.

However, there is also no question that we could not get comfortable with their methodology because it is different to be able to understand with a degree of certainty and reliability which type of violence relates to sectarian violence versus nonsectarian violence. Therefore, we have used the overall trend in violence, average daily attacks, which you have, as the primary basis.

So we are not saying that sectarian violence hasn't decreased. We are saying we are not comfortable with the methodology they use in order to be able to say that it has, and a more relevant question is: Is that even a relevant measure? Should one be concerned with sectarian violence or overall violence? And I think that is an example of something that Congress needs to think about when you are reviewing and considering these benchmarks going forward.

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Mr. SCOTT. Right. It is violence against coalition forces, violence against civilians?

Mr. WALKER. Well, on the chart that is in my testimony shows that violence was on an upward trend until July, overall violence until July. It went down in July. Hopefully you will hear from General Petraeus as to what happened in August. We have not received the data in August. But as of July, we were about the same level of violence that existed in February 2007. So it went down in July, but it was about the same level of violence that existed in February 2007.

Again, this month is Ramadan, starting within, I think, the next couple of weeks or so, and let us hope that the past is not prologue with regard to violence during Ramadan.

Mr. SCOTT. Let me also point out that again I think that as we look at going forward we are going to be faced with something beyond any of our controls, which I think are going to play a determinant factor just where we go and how we go. Our options are going to be fixed by the fact of the matter which everybody is saying—it is not just you or it is not just me—it is General George W. Casey, our Army Chief of Staff, it is Major General Benjamin Nixon, those individuals I talked to earlier, it is every general. Our army, our military has had it. I mean, it is at a point of severe diminishing returns, and certainly within the next 7 months, by next April, these folks are going to definitely have to start coming back from Iraq.

I mean, there is a point of diminishing returns that have set in and the strain of our military that in effect really puts this Nation and the world at greater national security risk. There is a cost/benefit analysis here that I think we definitely need to look at, and with the GAO being an organization that is familiar with cost/benefit analysis, I would just like for you to give me a brief cost/benefit analysis on the war in Iraq, and especially going forward and the fact that we are going to hit that wall. We don't have an unlimited supply of young men and women to continue to use as cannon fodder in this civil war. We can no longer afford $3 billion every week of borrowed money that our grandchildren have to pay. At some point the chickens come home to roost.

Mr. WALKER. There is clearly an opportunity cost associated with our involvement in Iraq above and beyond the direct cost in dollars, above and beyond the direct cost in lost lives and wounded, above and beyond whether and to what extent it has an impact on our foreign relations and our relations with certain parties in that particular region. There are other opportunity costs. It is money and capabilities that you cannot do something else with.

Let me note that from a fiscal standpoint that our fiscal challenges will escalate within the next several years because boomers start retiring, and when boomers start retiring in big numbers, the costs associated with Social Security and Medicare escalate, and we are not well prepared.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Smith of New Jersey.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

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Mr. Walker, let me ask you a few questions, and thank you for your testimony here today. It seems to me the most superficial view of the benchmarks reduces the benchmarks to a win, loss, or met or unmet analysis, and some of the news reporting that I have read has already done that. But since all benchmarks aren't equal, I wonder if you can give us some insights as to those to which you and the GAO give more weight as being more important.

Second, what considerations should be given as to when, not if, but when certain benchmarks ought to be met, particularly in the political area? It seems to me that amnesty, benchmark number VI, and militia disarmament, benchmark number VII, both have language in the report that said that the conditions were not right. Having worked with a number of people who were involved with commissions around the world, whether it be in South Africa or in El Salvador, for example, general grants of amnesty usually comes at the end of a reconciliation process, not in the beginning. Premature issuance of amnesty could be profoundly counterproductive if folks are let out on the street or at least given the ability or the thought that they might be let out on the street.

Third, is there a benchmark that today adequately captures the extraordinary cooperation with tribal leaders in combating al-Qaeda? Is that contained in any of this reporting or is that more recent or are the benchmarks not configured in a way that would capture that data?

Fourth, you mentioned progress in several areas, including Anbar province. I wonder if you could define what you mean by several areas and define and quantify what you mean by progress.

Finally, and you did allude to this earlier, are there any benchmarks not enumerated in GAO's mandate that you would suggest to the Congress that would be necessary to give us more adequate and more incisive insight as to what is really going on on the ground?

Mr. WALKER. That is a lot, Mr. Smith. Let me try to address some of it, but I think they are all excellent questions. I would not want to say which ones I think are more important than others without having to have enough time to really think about that, but let me give you a general description of what I think would be relevant.

Obviously, to the extent you are talking about the Iraqis being able to police their own streets, the Iraqis being able to do so not only in an effective manner but an even-handed manner, those are, I think, of particular importance in order to achieve not only security but broader reconciliation objectives over time.

Secondly, legislative actions that demonstrate both in form and in substance that it is one country operating for the collective best interest of all rather than the narrow interest of a few obviously are ones that have more importance, and they also provide the infrastructure to make sure that it is not just something that is going to happen one time, it is going to happen on a recurring basis. Like for example, I heard in one hearing yesterday, well, some money is being provided to Al Anbar province this month by the government. Well, maybe that is true. Maybe it is not true. The question is: Who gets the money, what happens with the money, and what

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assurance is there that it will happen next month, next year, or 5 years from now?

I do believe that you ought to consider our report and these benchmarks, but I also believe that you ought to think about whether or not you raise this up to a little higher level and talk about what should our goals be at this point going forward, what should the objectives be, what should the metrics and milestones be, including what should our role be going forward. That would incorporate some of these benchmarks, but it would also incorporate other things that aren't in these benchmarks. I have talked about economic factors. I have talked about foreign relations factors. I have also talked about trying to get more cooperation of our allies with regard to capacity building. Those are some examples, and as I said before, the House Armed Services Committee this morning, I said that we would be more than happy to work with the Congress on a bipartisan basis to try to help come up with something if you thought that would be helpful, but I want it to be a bipartisan request. It is not something I would want to do on our own nickel. It is something I would want to be asked to do on a bipartisan basis by appropriate members of committee or overall leadership.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Just briefly on the amnesty issue.

Mr. WALKER. Oh, on the amnesty?

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. That is one of the benchmarks that remains unmet.

Mr. WALKER. Right. That is correct.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. That could be premature.

Mr. WALKER. Yes, I understand your point.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. There needs to be a layering and a time line that takes those kinds of considerations.

Mr. WALKER. I understand your point, and I think your point is well taken, and that is why I think you have to look at where do we stand, what progress are we making, which ones are most important, what is a realistic amount of time that it should take to achieve those metrics and milestones, okay.

Chairman LANTOS. Gentleman from California, Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and the ranking member, for what is again, I think, an excellent hearing. I look upon this hearing and the subsequent hearings that we are going to hold as very key and critical, I think, for the majority of Members of Congress, certainly for myself, as we try to determine over the course of the next month what should be the best strategy for our involvement in Iraq, and where we go from here because I think again that is the most appropriate question.

So I look at this GAO report in terms of the totality of the other briefings that we will have before this committee and others as we debate and discuss, appropriately so, before the American public, with the American public as to what is in America's best interests in the short and long term in the Middle East. I have several questions I would like to ask you, Mr. Walker, and we appreciate the good work that you have done on this. It has already been said.

First of all, I think it is important, and on your last point I think we should direct you in a bipartisan fashion as to, one, what are realistic goals in the next 18 months. What would your priorities

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be if not these 18 benchmarks? These were agreed upon as a part—as had been mentioned before—a political discussion that had taken place on the supplemental funding. They were supported by the administration. If you believe other priorities should be included or different benchmarks, I would like to hear what they should be.

And I am glad to hear that you got to the bottom line on how do we define success and not victory, because the victory, I think, as had been mentioned again before, was achieved in 2003. There is no army to defeat here. There is no navy to sink. We are now in the middle of a sectarian civil war and we are asked to be the policeman on the street.

So my eyes just roll when we have these discussions, which I think are political, on whether or not we maintain the surge indefinitely, which we know we can't because it has already been stipulated. Both those in the Department of Defense and the Pentagon, as well as other experts, indicate that our limitations are fast approaching with our ability to maintain our military commitment.

Or the second false choice is surrender. We are not going to do that. We have a whole reason to be in the Middle East from Iran to the situations with Syria, with Israel and Palestine. We are going to be in that neighborhood for a long time as far as I can determine.

So let us separate the political rhetoric in terms of these two false choices. We are not going to maintain the surge indefinitely and we are not going to surrender because we are going to be in the neighborhood for a long time. Let us begin to talk about, in a bipartisan fashion, where do we go from here.

In that case, when I visited Iraq last year, and I would like to get your take on this, Mr. Walker, Prime Minister Maliki said then what he is saying now, and that is that his unity government is going to eliminate the militias to significantly reduce the violence, to get the economy going, and of course he is still saying that today and I have come to the conclusion he is either incapable or unwilling to do what needs to be done.

So my question to you is about the role of this government, and part of the benchmarks speak to those roles. It is my sense in a part of the world where I hate to say this, but corruption, and we haven't talked about that yet here this afternoon, corruption in this country, in this part of the world is, if not a way of life, seems to be endemic. Having said that, it seems to me democracy as we look upon it and democracy as the Iraqis look on it is a totally different concept. I mean, I think for the Shia community democracy is a vehicle to regain power and wealth, and if I am a Sunni and I am looking at democracy and we are wondering how this government functions, it is a vehicle for paybacks when I was in charge.

So I am wondering, do you think this democracy can work with this corruption that continues to be pervasive?

Mr. WALKER. Corruption is a major problem in Iraq. Corruption is a problem in other countries in the region. Corruption is a problem in other countries in the world. It is something that I have talked to my counterpart about both in Iraq on more than one occasion as well as here in the United States on more than one occa-

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sion. And while clearly I think it is something that inhibits the ability to make progress, I don't think it is the major issue.

I mean, part of the issue is the Sunnis dominated through a dictator for a number of years. The Sunnis only represent 20 percent of the population of this country. One person, one vote. Figure it out, okay? So therefore, the issue is each of the key players—the Sunnis, the Shias, the Kurds and the subdivisions there are because there are different power points within each of those—have to decide what they believe is in their collective, and in some cases individual, interest over time.

I think one of the reasons that you may not have seen more progress there is not because people aren't trying very hard, not because the Prime Minister may not want to make progress, but have enough of the players committed that they want to do what is right for the collective best interest of all rather than their narrower interest? I can't put myself in their head.

Mr. COSTA. Until we get past that, it seems to me it is going to be tough sledding.

Mr. WALKER. Well, there has to be incentives and/or consequences for their doing certain things and failure to do others, and I think the other thing we have to keep in mind is this is a tough neighborhood. It has been a tough neighborhood for centuries. This is a neighborhood that has strategic interests for the United States. We are going to have a presence in this neighborhood for awhile. But the question is: What size presence, where, doing what, and for what contingencies?

Mr. COSTA. Thank you. My time has expired but I will have subsequent questions.

Chairman LANTOS. Gentleman from Nebraska, Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Walker, for appearing today. I believe this is a professional and independent assessment as mandated by Congress and I have stayed here quite a long time to listen to you impact quite a bit of nuance here, but in that regard I would like to make some comments and then have you comment on the comments.

You have pointed to some inherent weaknesses here. The first one being are these the correct benchmarks? While not dismissing these, are these wholly adequate to tell a complete story?

The second is it is a snapshot in time, and I do appreciate the liberality you took in measuring progress in some areas.

The third is, and more to the point, is it possible to create another evaluation mechanism that would perhaps be more dynamic—and I know you have addressed this in spots, particularly with Mr. Smith and Mr. Inglis—that would look at increasing the probabilities of good outcomes given current trends and/or changes in policy? Perhaps Congress ought to mandate to you that you study the next study's parameters before we mandate the study, and it might get us to that point of clarity. I would like you to comment on that.

Secondly, I am curious as to how this report indicated up in the *Washington Post* prior to it being given to Congress.

Mr. WALKER. All right. First, I think that these benchmarks should be considered, but I don't think they are the only things

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that ought to be considered. I think you ought to look at other factors other than these benchmarks.

Secondly, I don't think you ought to just look at status as of a point in time. I think you have to look at progress.

Thirdly, I think you have to recognize that all benchmarks are not equal, and therefore one has to focus on trying to determine which ones might be more important than others. I think we need to step back and look at goals and objectives, metrics and milestones, we are happy to help. Yes, sir, go ahead.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Did you do any of that type of quantitative analysis——

Mr. WALKER. We have not done it but we would be willing to do it if we get a bipartisan request to do it because we want further progress, not to wade into waters where we are not wanted.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Yes.

Mr. WALKER. Secondly, on the *Washington Post*, copies of the report were not provided to the Hill. Copies of the report were only provided to the Executive Branch. The Executive Branch, I don't know who, but somebody in the Executive Branch leaked the report to the *Washington Post*. I personally called, and the reason I say that is because it wasn't provided to the Hill, and I know darn well it didn't come from the GAO.

Secondly, I talked to the *Washington Post* myself. I was on business in Korea, and I called the *Washington Post* myself and urged them not to run that article because I knew it had not completed a sensitivity review and that some of the data therein might be classified. In fact, one of the things in their article was classified.

Secondly, that some of our preliminary assessments could change, and I knew as of that point in time we had already decided to change one before we even got comments back from the Defense Department, and in fact when they provided us other information we decided to change another one.

So, I don't know who leaked it but I do know it was leaked, and I don't think that was in our interest nor do I think that was in the Congress' interest, but it happened.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Well, I appreciate your comments. As the chairman said earlier, we take this responsibility very seriously. I looked forward to this report, assuming we would be on the front lines of review of it and to find out is basically in the general public before we have had time for review as well as question is frustrating and difficult.

Back to the earlier point though, if I could make it, clearly a goal I think that is shared widely, I can't speak for everyone, I won't be presumptuous in that regard, but as a stabilized Iraq with a potential for self-government, a diminishment of our casualties, increasing Iraqi responsibility for their own future that would empower a draw down at some point in time, hopefully the near term, those are the type of parameters obviously that benchmarks are geared to assess. Those would be the type of parameters that I would assume could be a part of the dynamic analysis, looking more at current trends, shifts of policy, major or minor shifts of policy, change of mission as well. So I leave that for your contemplation should we come up with some bipartisan agreement to further study the issue.

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Mr. WALKER. That supplemented with scenario analysis. We use scenario analysis in the military all the time. We at GAO have started using scenario analysis in nonmilitary applications and I think it has application here.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. That is what I imply by probabilities without——

Mr. WALKER. Right, right. No, I hear you.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is always a pleasure to have you, Mr. Walker, testify before this committee.

Back to the question of benchmarks, I noticed also that this is a consultation also with Prime Minister Maliki's government, and I am curious if Prime Minister Maliki's government made their own assessment in terms of how we as a counterpart to this whole effort in the Iraq war, if he has given any assessment of how our conduct, what we were able to—our failures as well as successes, the same what that we are making assessments toward his government.

Mr. WALKER. Well, I haven't asked my counterpart, Dr. Abdul Basit, who is head of the Board of Supreme Audit in Iraq, whether he has been asked to do anything, but I would doubt it.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. I don't know if the media reports are accurate, but as I recall it, before the President made his decision to have this surge, if the *Washington Post* article and the other major papers have made statements to the effect that Prime Minister Maliki advised our President not to send 20,000 soldiers to Iraq, and I don't know if this is accurate. Is there any truth to that?

Mr. WALKER. I don't know if there was any truth to that or not, and I don't know that we have done any related work. No, we haven't.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. You had indicated earlier that the 15 million people that live in Iraq 60 percent are Shiites and that the reason or the underlying reason we are in Iraq is because of the nuclear issue and nothing else. It was the idea of democratizing or a regime change and all these others may have been supplemental, but wasn't the number one reason why we waged war against Saddam was because of the nuclear issue and nothing else?

Mr. WALKER. Weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Well, okay, weapons of mass destruction. Is that the same as——

Mr. WALKER. At the time that was the primary reason that was given. That was in 2003.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. It is my understanding that Saddam Hussein, the 20- or 30-year period that he was the dictator in Iraq, he tortured and murdered and killed well over 300,000 Shiites in that period during his reign. And given the fact that 20 percent of the population is Sunni, the other 20 is Kurds, would it be safe to say that there is just no way that this government is going to give some bounds to the Sunni representation? This is going to be a dominated shadow government no matter how we look at it simply because of the population factor.

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Mr. WALKER. Well, the question is: How much are they willing to give? And that is yet to be determined.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. You had indicated earlier also to say that U.S. forces are currently strained. Now, I know the media reports have always quoted generals and our military leaders, but I am curious if any of the people at the Department of Defense, civilian authority over this military officers, have made any assessments or statements to affirm what you say, that our military definitely is strained——

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA [continuing]. Because of the Iraq war?

Mr. WALKER. There have been a number of people from the Pentagon as well as in uniform who have made very similar statements. General Casey is one. What I am saying is not new.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Yes, there seems to be some question of that. But anyway, you had indicated earlier also that right now we are debt financing this war. Can you elaborate a little further on that?

Mr. WALKER. We are running large deficits. The deficits are larger than advertised because we have spent every dime of the Social Security surplus on other government operating expenses. We are not saving any of that. We are replacing the cash with IOUs, and the deficits are scheduled to get worse when baby boomers start retiring and there are other factors that will affect what the deficits might happen going forward both on the spending side and the tax side.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Yes, there has been a lot of numbers given in terms of exactly how much is the dollar value that we have put into this Iraq war since its beginning. I have heard estimates that $600 billion, but I don't know how accurate that is.

Mr. WALKER. No.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. What is the figure?

Mr. WALKER. Well, it depends on how you define the war. Well, first, let me say Congress has not declared war. Only Congress can declare a war. Last time that was done was World War II. But depending upon whether you talk about the global war on terrorism, which would include Iraq, Afghanistan and other activities beyond that, you get a higher number. It is my understanding Iraq, and again I will provide something for the record, about $400 billion to date just for Iraq.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Just for that. All right.

Mr. WALKER. That is financial cost. There are other non-financial costs obviously.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. There has been some indication of success that we have made in the Anbar province, but that is only one province. How many other provinces do we have in Iraq?

Mr. WALKER. Seventeen provinces.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Have there been any assessments in the other provinces besides Anbar? I mean, we are making such a high pitch to say that we are very successful in Anbar, but what about the other 17 provinces?

Mr. WALKER. As we have reported on the past, there are different degrees of security concerns in different provinces. Some don't have serious security concerns, and haven't for awhile. Others

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have very serious security concerns. I think why people focus on Anbar province is it is a total turnaround, and it is not Baghdad. It is close. It has been a province where there has been a sanctuary for al-Qaeda, and where it was a place where al-Qaeda could go to and use as a launch point to go other places, and clearly there has been a dramatic change there.

But I come back and say how much of that is because of the surge? How much of that is transferable? How much of that is sustainable, and how does it relate to our goals, objectives? It is reality. I am not debating that.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM THE HONORABLE DAVID M. WALKER TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

DOD has reported obligations of about $462 billion for the Global War on Terror from fiscal year 2001 through July 2007 (this is the latest data available)

- about $353 billion is for operations in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom).
- about $81 billion is for operations in Afghanistan, the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, and elsewhere (Operation Enduring Freedom).
- about $28 billion for Operation Noble Eagle.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Rohrabacher.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and again thank you for your very responsible leadership in dealing with this and other foreign policy issues. I appreciate your leadership tremendously.

General Walker, you had done an admirable job in a very stressful and difficult assignment, and you have my accolades for that. What does GAO stand for now, by the way?

Mr. WALKER. The Government Accountability Office.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. What was it before that?

Mr. WALKER. The General Accounting Office, even though we were never in the accounting business.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. And your folks are more inclined toward accounting degrees and——

Mr. WALKER. Actually not. No.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay.

Mr. WALKER. Only about 10 percent of our staff have accounting degrees. Ninety percent of our staff have master's degrees or higher in about anything you could name.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay, because generally people go to their accountant not for leadership, policy leadership.

Mr. WALKER. Right.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. But for things such as auditing and numbers.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. But right now let me just say that I appreciate your taking on this very difficult and politically charged task. I mean, you have mentioned about the violence that is going up. Do you happen to know historically whether or not in the final days of wars whether the violence is increasing or decreasing historically?

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Rohrabacher, I haven't done work on that and I don't know that we have either, so for me to be able to give an opinion.

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Mr. ROHRABACHER. The assumption here is if indeed the number of violent attacks has not gone down, that that must mean that we are stuck in a deeper quagmire. That isn't necessarily the case historically, but you haven't looked into that so I wouldn't ask. You just commented on that.

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I will say my reading of history suggests that during the ends of major conflicts there actually are eruptions of more violence and more killing and more casualties due to the fact that one party believes it is about to lose the battle, and that could well be what is going on here. I am not saying that it is, but it could be.

You are not suggesting in any way today with your testimony that liberating the Iraqi people, having the United States use military force to liberate the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussein's dictatorship was not a noble effort, endeavor in and of itself.

Mr. WALKER. I am not saying that at all. My son was part of that.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. All right. So I think that needs to be very well understood. And you are not suggesting that that goal in and of itself was not an unobtainable goal, are you?

Mr. WALKER. That goal has been obtained. Saddam Hussein is gone.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right. Sure. Saddam Hussein is gone.

Mr. WALKER. But the question is: Where do we go from here?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right, and the question is: How did we screw it up in the sense that we aren't ready just to walk out right now, and have you compared Afghanistan to Iraq in that regard?

Mr. WALKER. With regard to where we are in Afghanistan versus Iraq?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. We eliminated a totalitarian group——

Mr. WALKER. Right.

Mr. ROHRABACHER [continuing]. That controlled Afghanistan, and they are gone, and they are not going to come back. Even though they are still around, there is no thought that the people of Afghanistan are going to turn back to the Taliban or in some way turn to even an anti-American regime necessarily. But instead we did that with—people always talk about the boots on the ground. We didn't have enough boots on the ground to accomplish the mission. Well, the mission was accomplished in Afghanistan, which has about an equal population to Iraq, and almost an equal size, if not bigger, and we did that with about 200 boots on the ground.

Mr. WALKER. Right, but I would respectfully suggest, Mr. Rohrabacher, that Afghanistan is very different than Iraq.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Mr. WALKER. And history shows that Afghanistan is different than Iraq, as well as the fact that recent activities in Afghanistan are a matter of concern.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right. Let me just note that we won the military objective in Iraq with our military achieved their objective. We achieved our objective in Afghanistan. What brought about the chaos after Iraq was not a lack of troops during the liberation, just as we had very few troops in Afghanistan.

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If there are some criticism of this administration, I think it is totally justified in what we have done since to ensure the success. In Afghanistan, the political decisions that were made were made in a way to ensure the success. We actually made deals with the various power groups within that society. We did not do that in Iraq, and instead we tried to transform that society, which was not necessarily the goal that would be achievable.

Finally, let me just note this. There were people who have opposed our efforts in Iraq from the first minute that the President sent troops toward Baghdad. There was a sand storm, and I remember people saying how we are going to get tied down in that. There are others who are motivated, and I believe very well motivated people, who for more reasons are opposed to all war.

Now, frankly, I don't really pay a lot of attention to either one of those opinions because I am trying to be practical, and I want us to achieve our objectives and leave as soon as possible. But we have a lot of things to work together on, and I again compliment the chairman, and hope that in this week as we move forward, Mr. Chairman, that we can do so in the same bipartisan spirit among those people who are actually trying to find a practical solution to the quagmire that we are in, and Mr. Walker, I appreciate and thank you for the information and the assessment that you have given us to try to help us do our job.

Mr. WALKER. And Mr. Rohrabacher, I would respectfully suggest, to piggyback on something you said, you talked about goals and objectives, and I think it is time to reassess goals and objectives, and I think that they need to be appropriate, realistic, attainable, and sustainable. Where are we? The real question is: Where do we go from here?

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Right.

Mr. WALKER. And it is time to——

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Mr. Chairman, would you indulge me one more question?

Did you at all assess the amount of foreign assistance from the Saudis, for example, that is going into Iraq? I understand, for example, 90 percent of all the suicide bombers are Saudi citizens. Did you do any assessment of the amount of foreign assistance going into the military operations?

Mr. WALKER. Not in connection with this analysis.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay.

Mr. WALKER. No, Mr. Rohrabacher, we did not.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. Okay. Thank you very much.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. I was one who opposed the war at the beginning. As Mr. Rohrabacher said, some opposed it even before it began. I was one, because the inspectors were there who knew Saddam Hussein had no weapons of mass destruction. He knew he had no chemical or biological weapons, said let the inspectors go where they want to go. And when that announcement was made, the President ordered the Hans Blitz inspectors out in 48 hours.

So if we were trying to have an avoidance of war, because it is easy to get in, drop some bombs, hard to get out, and if there had been a little more foresight about weapons of mass destruction that

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were not there, if that was the purpose for the war, then why didn't we allow the inspectors to continue to find these weapons of mass destruction that they showed pictures of at the U.N.? So that is where all that is.

I just wanted to real quickly, one, do you feel that the—since governments run on power, people like revenue or revenue sharing, power of the government—do you believe that it is possible for Iraq to share in the power or do you believe in regional separation in three parts?

Mr. WALKER. I don't really think it is appropriate for me to be able to say what I think the answer to that is.

Mr. PAYNE. All right. Let me ask you then do you think that they will be able to create a government then that will satisfy all three? I mean, is that the same kind of question?

Mr. WALKER. Only time will tell. I mean, the fact of the matter is if you go one person, one vote, the Shias obviously have the votes, but keep in mind a big footnote, the big footnote is that all Shias don't necessarily have the same interest. There are different factions within the Shia community. The resources in that country are not distributed evenly among the geographic regions. So the ultimate test will be is how much are those that have a majority of the votes willing to give up in the interest of national unity? That is the ultimate question. And some of these factions have more of a willingness to see a strong central government than others do. Kurdistan is doing fairly well at the present point in time.

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. In regard to that with the PKK and the rumors that weapons have gone into them from the Kurds, do you feel that this question on the border with Turkey and the PKK is something that will also tend to create a problem in the future?

Mr. WALKER. I know that is a matter of concern, especially with regard to the neighbors in the region.

Mr. PAYNE. In regard to the army, you mentioned it was stretched, I guess more of my questions are about where we are going in the future. We have an all-volunteer army. Even with high bonuses that they are giving for reupping, as they call it, do you feel that we can at this current rate continue to get recruits in the all-volunteer army to sustain this ongoing battle?

Mr. WALKER. Well, the question is: At what price? I mean, in a free market economy if you are willing to pay enough money you can get enough people. There is no doubt about that. But the question is: What does the opportunity cost?

Mr. PAYNE. Yes. Do you have any notion of the number of contractors that are used for military purposes, not work-related, as opposed to regular army or regular military?

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Payne, it depends on how you define "for military purposes." Clearly we are seeing, and we have done work on this and other work is ongoing, clearly we have seen an unprecedented use of contractors for security as well as nonsecurity activities in Iraq.

Mr. PAYNE. About how many? Do you have any idea? Fifty thousand?

Mr. WALKER. DoD is still trying to get a sense for how many contractors are there. I will see if I can provide something for the

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record based on what we have already done just to give you a sense.

[The information referred to follows:]

WRITTEN RESPONSE RECEIVED FROM THE HONORABLE DAVID M. WALKER TO QUESTION ASKED DURING THE HEARING BY THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE

According to a July 2007 DOD report, the number of DOD contractors is about 130,000. DOD reports that about 9,000 of these contractors work in the security area. This number does not include State Department or other U.S. government contractors (data not available).

Mr. PAYNE. Okay. Yes, we have been asking them and they don't seem to know; you know, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000.

Mr. WALKER. Oh, no, it is much higher than that, just contractors.

Mr. PAYNE. Finally, since I still have an orange light before it gets red, the big Embassy we have, I mean, it is gigantic I understand, I haven't seen it, they don't encourage us to go there as much as we used to. We used to be able to drive in to Baghdad to the green zone. Now they want to fly in. Now they don't really want you to go. So I assess that things can't be getting too much better.

What is the potential of that massive Embassy if we are going to have so much uncertainty in the city and in the country in general?

Mr. WALKER. It is my understanding it is our largest Embassy obviously in size and staffing. It is intended to be our largest Embassy. Obviously there is a tremendous amount of money that has been spent, not just because of size, but also because of security concerns. One would expect that we are going to have relations with Iraq for a number of years, but we will have to wait to see how things turn out. I mean, we are going to have an Embassy in Iraq. I can't imagine that we are not going to. There are more fundamental concerns, frankly, right now with regard to the government and the security and stability that exist in that country.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Burton.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I watched your interview on *60 Minutes* on the Medicare prescription drug bill, and I just want you to know I agreed with that. I think it was a terribly fiscally irresponsible bill, and I think it is going to cause a lot of problems. So before I start taking issue with some of the things you said, I want you to know that there are some of the things that you have done with which I agree.

How many years were you in the military?

Mr. WALKER. None as——

Mr. BURTON. That is okay.

Mr. WALKER [continuing]. I had appointments to the naval and air force academies. However, I have got a bad left ear that kept me out.

Mr. BURTON. But you weren't in the military. You have not had any military service?

Mr. WALKER. No, I wasn't.

Mr. BURTON. How many years were you in the Foreign Service?

Mr. WALKER. I have not been in the Foreign Service.

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Mr. BURTON. Okay. Well, I want to make sure I understand this. You are giving opinions on Foreign Service issues for which you really don't have any experience. I mean, you weren't in the Foreign Service. You are an accountant.

Mr. WALKER. Right. This is not my opinion.

Mr. BURTON. No.

Mr. WALKER. This is the institutional opinion of GAO, and we do have people that have been——

Mr. BURTON. But listening to your——

Mr. WALKER. Right, right.

Mr. BURTON [continuing]. Responses, you gave an awful lot of opinions, a lot of opinions. If you want me to, I will get a——

Mr. WALKER. Yes, sure. Go ahead.

Mr. BURTON. You gave a lot of opinions, and I just want you to know that I think you are a very bright guy and you have done a good job as Comptroller General, but you just simply aren't qualified to give some of these opinions that you are giving. You are not a military man. You never were. You are not a person who has been in the Foreign Service. You never were.

So I would like for you in the future when you appear before the committee to confine your remarks to facts from your report and your investigation, not giving opinions on the Shias, the Sunnis, or what is going to go on over there because you don't have any expertise in that area.

I mean, I read your biography.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. BURTON. It is very impressive. You have got a number of honorary doctorates and that sort of thing, and I think that is great, and you are obviously an honorable student, Jacksonville University, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. I think it is great. But it always bothers me when we have people before committees who really have had no experience in a given field acting like or giving opinions on issues for which they really have very little knowledge.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Burton, I am not the only person that hasn't been in the military that has expressed opinions about military matters.

Mr. BURTON. I don't really care. I don't really care.

Mr. WALKER. And it is not my opinion. It is based on our work.

Mr. BURTON. But you see I really don't care about other peoples' opinions. You are the guy at the table.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. BURTON. And you are the guy giving opinions for which you have no expertise, no knowledge, and no experience. And so I just would like to say to you from now on when you are testifying——

Mr. WALKER. What?

Mr. BURTON [continuing]. And I have dealt with you before in other committees.

Mr. WALKER. Sure. Sure.

Mr. BURTON. Government performance and so forth. I just wish you would confine your remarks to the facts and to the issues as you see them. But as far as going into opinions on issues like Shias, Sunnis, what is going on over there, what the military posi-

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tion ought to be and that sort of thing, I just wish you would leave it to the people who do have some experience.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Burton, the only thing I would say is you need to be more specific because what I——

Mr. BURTON. I think you need to be more specific.

Mr. WALKER. What I say, what I say is based upon work that we have done, okay, and it is not my opinion. I am conveying my thoughts based upon work that we collectively have done based upon questions that I am getting.

Mr. BURTON. Let me just say this.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. BURTON. I would like for you to read the transcript because I listened to every word you said, and you gave a number, a large number of personal opinions, not stuff that was in your report or facts that were acquired by your compatriots there. These were your opinions, and you are not qualified to give those opinions, and you shouldn't. I think the report is fine, and I have great admiration for your qualifications, but when you are testifying before a committee, if I were chairman—I used to be——

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. BURTON [continuing]. I would try to confine your remarks to the facts instead of opinions for which you don't have any experience.

Mr. WALKER. Well, let me say, Mr. Burton, that I will be happy to look at the transcript. I always do every hearing. Secondly, let me also say that when I answer questions, I don't answer questions just based on the reports that are coming before you. We have issued over 100 reports and testimonies on Iraq.

So if somebody asks me a question, and we have done work on it, that I have directly been involved in many cases, I will answer it based on what we have done, which may not be the report that is before you now, but it doesn't mean that it is not based on facts.

Mr. BURTON. That is what I want you to do.

Mr. WALKER. Right. Good.

Mr. BURTON. But I want you to do it based on facts and not your opinions, and I hope you will read the transcript.

Mr. WALKER. I will. I absolutely, positively will.

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much.

Mr. WALKER. And I would be happy to talk to you separately about it if you want.

Mr. BURTON. We have already talked.

Mr. WALKER. All right.

Chairman LANTOS. Ms. Woolsey of California.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Walker. I, for one, when I knew we were going to have a GAO report relaxed and I was relieved because I didn't know what you were going to say until we started reading it in the paper, but I felt certain that you would be fair, you would be unbiased, and if we asked you a question, you would answer it, and that is what has happened today, and thank you for answering our questions and not dodging them and acting like you had never thought of, and GAO had never thought of any of the issues that you were asked about today, so thank you for that.

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You have reconfirmed to me what I think ought to be our goals and objectives from this point on in Iraq. I am not going to go back to all the—I, too, am a person that was against being there before we even voted to go there. But one of the things I think we need to be absolutely sure about is that we are clear, we are not going to abandon Iraq and the Iraqi people because we have certainly caused them enough chaos and a lot of tragedy, and we are not going to abandon our troops when it comes time to bringing them back.

So my three major goals, I am going to ask you about, and I guess I am going to ask you your opinion about two of them. The first one, I am just going to tell you. I believe our step right now is to fully fund the safe and organized redeployment of our troops and our military contractors, and I know it will take time, and I don't see using our taxpayer dollars in any way in Iraq other than to bring our troops and the contractors home safely.

But I also think we need to assist the Iraqi people and their government in rebuilding their infrastructure, both their economic and physical infrastructure, and I think that we should be responsible. Both of these, working with the international partners, with helping with reconciliation. So starting first with reconciliation, what do you think reconciliation would look like? And do you think that we can and should encourage it, and how would you suggest we weigh in? As part of that, is violence getting in the way of reconciliation? I know that is kind of like a four-way question, but any parts of that you would feel confident in answering, I would appreciate it.

Mr. WALKER. Right. First, to reiterate, we have done hundreds of reports and testimonies on Iraq, not just the one you have gotten today. So anything I say is based upon work that we have done not just with regard to this report, but others.

I think the Iraqis have to decide whether or not they want reconciliation. We can't decide that for them. Okay?

Ms. WOOLSEY. But can we help?

Mr. WALKER. And they have to decide what they are willing to do in order to achieve reconciliation, and that is why I step back and say I think the Congress needs to consider, since the Congress has the power of the purse, what should be the appropriate goals and objectives going forward, and what should be our role versus the Iraqis' roles in achieving that? I don't know ultimately what the Iraqi people will decide, and I don't think anybody knows what the Iraqi people will decide, but that would be my comment.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Well, speaking of power of the purse, we have allocated funds that haven't been spent in the Congress for—$10 billion actually for reconstruction projects in Iraq, and we do that for projects in our own districts. Unfortunately, we allocate the money but we don't spend it.

Where do you see the greatest need for reconstruction? What should be or would be the top priorities?

Mr. WALKER. We have issued a number of reports in the past with regard to what has happened with regard to the electricity sector, the oil sector, water treatment plants, and things of that nature. Clearly the economy is driven by energy resources, and that is the primary form of revenue that their government has. And so

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you want to not only be able to get production back, but you also want to be able to have adequate security over what you are producing because there is a lot that has been stolen, if you will, with regard to that.

But you also need to make sure that you have reliable and equitably distributed electricity. You need to try to make sure that you have clean potable water and obviously the Iraqis were also concerned with regard to having a safe and effective place for their children to be taught as well as basic things like the trash picked up.

We have issued reports on many of these things, and unfortunately, because of the lack of adequate security, even when progress has been made, sometimes these facilities haven't been able to be maintained and adequately secured, and so security is central. It is not the only thing that needs to be done, but it is central to trying to achieve progress in a number of fronts, including the reconstruction.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Gentleman from Texas, Mr. McCaul.

Mr. MCCAUL. I thank the chairman and Mr. Walker. Thank you for being here today. I also want to say at the beginning that I agree with you that this is ultimately the struggle is up to the Iraqi people at the end of the day.

I am all for benchmarks and accountability, but there is a little bit of—it is subjective on a lot of counts. I am looking at a lot of shades of half circles and full ones and squares, partially met, satisfactory, mixed, sufficient progress. There are a lot of shades of gray in between all this. Wouldn't you agree that it is a subjective process?

Mr. WALKER. Well, what we did do, Mr. McCaul, is we were originally asked to do met or not met, and we used our independent and professional judgment to say in some cases we used partially met, and by the way, when we say not met, that doesn't mean no progress because we weren't expressly asked to assess progress, although we did try to provide some context on that in the narrative that we have in the report in the commentary section.

Mr. MCCAUL. That is a good point. So in some of the categories where it was not met, there could be some progress?

Mr. WALKER. Oh, yes. We are not saying there is no progress. In some cases there is a little, and in some cases there is a modest amount, but not enough to say partially met, and in some cases there are some of the questions that don't even lend themselves to partially met. Increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces, units capable of operating independently, you either increase it or you don't increase it, okay?

Mr. MCCAUL. Okay, because I am going to be limited in my time, and I just want to——

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. MCCAUL [continuing]. Keep going because they are legitimate questions I want to know the answer to, and that is, number XIII, and I think this is where you seem to break from the administration in terms of your finding.

Mr. WALKER. Yes.

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Mr. MCCAUL. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating more control of local security. Yet we are hearing, and I want to know objectively what your view is on this.

Mr. WALKER. Sure.

Mr. MCCAUL. We have heard a lot of reports of Baghdad as more secure, the Anbar province is more secure, that al-Sadr has ordered a 6-month suspension of activities, will no longer attack the U.S. and coalition troops. We are hearing the local involvement with the Shakes is much more significant than it was even 6 months ago, and that the Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish political leaders have signed a statement aimed at fostering reconciliation among the ethnic and religious factions.

Did your findings in any way take into account what we are getting reports on in terms of reduction of violence?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, there is a difference between overall violence and the lethality of those attacks, and whether or not those attacks are sectarian or nonsectarian in nature.

Number XIII, which is your specific question, we don't have a disagreement with the administration on eliminating militia-controlled local security. We both agree it has not been eliminated. Where we do have a difference of opinion with the military is General Petraeus, and I am sure he will articulate it next week, does have a methodology that he uses to calculate sectarian violence. We haven't gotten comfortable with his methodology. His methodology does show a reduction in sectarian violence, but we have not gotten comfortable with his methodology.

We are not saying that his numbers don't show that. We are jut saying that we are not comfortable with the methodology, and we think it is also something that Congress needs to think about is, is it more important to focus on sectarian violence or total violence, and how do you know if it is sectarian or not?

Mr. MCCAUL. Maybe you can educate. What is it that you question about General Petraeus' methodology?

Mr. WALKER. His ability to determine with certainty that violence relates to sectarian interest versus nonsectarian interest, for example, and I would commend to you, Mr. McCaul, our classified briefing document. We have more information in that with regard to our concerns and other information that I would commend to you that might be helpful.

Mr. MCCAUL. But you would agree that the level of violence has gone down. The question that you have is whether it is "non" versus "sectarian" violence.

Mr. WALKER. Well, the question is: As of what point in time? Violence in July went down. We have yet to hear the formal reporting for August. Violence from February to July went up such that violence at the end of July was about the same as February. My understanding is it has gone down further in August, but then again Ramadan starts this month. Two months does not make a sustainable trend even for determining a recession.

For recession, you have to have more than one quarter of consecutive negative growth. So I think it is important to see what the trend is, but is also important to have enough time to get a sense that it truly is a trend and is sustainable.

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Mr. MCCAUL. Since the time that the surge has been fully operational, since this summer.

Mr. WALKER. June.

Mr. MCCAUL. Right.

Mr. WALKER. June.

Mr. MCCAUL. There is a correlation there between the times that the surge was in full force and effect and the reduction in the level of violence.

Mr. WALKER. I don't debate that.

Mr. MCCAUL. Okay. And I appreciate the chairman's indulgence.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you. Gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Delahunt.

Mr. DELAHUNT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and General Walker, thank you for your forthrightness, your honesty, and your very, very talented support staff. They do an outstanding job, and I know that the opinions you are providing us today are not the personal opinions of yourself. They are the opinions of a first-rate staff.

But I think it is important, given what we have heard from some members today in terms of their questions, that it being noted that your opinion coincides with the opinion of many in the military, key players in the military.

There was a report in the *Washington Post* just recently where it was stated that senior U.S. military and government officials acknowledge that it will take years for the Army and Marine Corps to recover from what some officials privately have called a "death spiral" in which the ever-more rapid pace of war zone rotations have consumed 40 percent of their total gear, weary troops, and left no time to train to fight anything other than the insurgencies now at hand.

This is coming in a report not from the Government Accountability Office, but from senior defense officials. Specifically, this is a quote from General Shoemaker who happens to be the Army Chief of Staff, who I am sure is well versed in the needs of his army: "We have a strategy right now that is outstripping the means to execute it." He testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee. I presume he knows what he is talking about.

The Army's Vice Chief of Staff, General Richard Cody, described as "stark the level of readiness of army units in the United States, which would be called on if another war breaks out. The readiness continues to decline of your next-to-deploy forces and those forces, by the way, are your strategic reserve." These are the words of the vice chair, not from a GAO report.

General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staffs, was asked at a House hearing just recently if he was comfortable with the preparedness of the army units in the United States. His response was, "No, I am not comfortable." He warned that the Nation faces increased risk because of shortfalls in troops, equipment, and training. The Commandant of the Marine Corps testified similarly, General Conway.

So I dare say that we can conclude that our military forces are indeed stressed out, but let me move on.

There will be another report that will be issued by an independent commission created by this Congress, chaired by a former general, General Johnson, and it has been reported that one of the

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recommendations will be that the Iraqi police, those units should be scrapped and we should start from scratch. Now, that is really disturbing news, and by the way, on the Jones Commission, it is all former military retired, law enforcement officials, people with presumably the expertise which gives them some credibility in this matter.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Chairman, would the gentleman yield just in case?

Mr. DELAHUNT. Sure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Maybe it was too subtle or maybe I was too blunt, and it is not getting through to some members. The point I was making is that absolutely all of those individuals whom you named are absolutely qualified to give assessments about whether our army is stretched or not. They are valid assessments whether we agree with them or not, but those are the people who make those statements. Our great esteemed witness is a wonderful man. He is not qualified to make those assessments, and I am just saying if he gives his opinion by citing sources who are knowledgeable sources, I understand that. But it seems to me that he has given a lot of opinions that don't have that qualifying——

Mr. DELAHUNT. Reclaiming my time. I presume after the issuance of some hundred reports on this, that he and his staff have had more than ample opportunity to discuss these issues with General Pace, with General Conway, with the vice chair, and the chair of the Army, General Shoemaker. But I want to get to the point about the police.

Who has been in charge of police training? Now 4 years subsequently we are talking about starting from the beginning. What have we been doing for 4 years, Mr. Walker, because after the surge it was a critical component of the equation to provide security that the police would take on that role? Now we are going to hear from another independent commission that we have got to start all over again after 4 years. What a disgrace. General Walker.

Mr. WALKER. Well, several things. Any comments that I make are based upon work that GAO has done. They are not my personal opinion. It is not appropriate for me to give my personal opinion. I can't separate myself from my position as Comptroller General of the United States and head of the GAO. So they are not my personal opinion, and they are based upon work that GAO has done.

We have people with military experience, with foreign policy experience, with a variety of other things that work in GAO. The President and the Vice President have no active duty military or foreign policy experience. Does that mean I don't respect their opinion? I do. They have got a lot of people who work for them who do.

So I think it is a false claim to say we are not qualified to do this work. We are eminently qualified to do this work, and all the work that we do is based upon looking at hard data, interviewing qualified individuals, and the appropriate parties have an opportunity to review and comment on our work, and we consider their comments before we issue our reports. So I stand behind everything I have said.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would ask the chair for an additional minute so that the Comptroller General could respond to my question about police training and the report by the Johnson Commission

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that the training has been so lacking that we ought to scrap all of the existing police units and begin all over again after 4 years.

Mr. WALKER. Well, it was a shared responsibility between the United States and the Iraq Government.

And secondly, for the record it is my understanding that Secretary of Defense Gates does not have any military experience either, so frankly, I think we need to stick with the facts.

Mr. DELAHUNT. I would ask one final question, Mr. Chairman. I would ask that those Americans that have been responsible for the training of the police be identified, and that information forwarded to the chairman of the full committee so that we can ask those individuals to come forward and pose to them the question as to why this conclusion by this independent commission headed by General Jones that we have to begin all over again after 4 years. I thank the gentleman.

Mr. WALKER. The question is: What, if any, accountability will there be?

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Walker, I know I speak for every member of this committee in expressing to you and your singularly able staff our deep appreciation. We are much in your debt. This hearing is concluded.

[Whereupon, at 5:24 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for convening today's hearing. An objective assessment of progress toward the eighteen benchmarks should form the cornerstone of our discussions in the coming weeks, as we work toward resolving the ongoing war in Iraq. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ranking Member of the Committee, and to welcome our distinguished witness, the Honorable David M. Walker, Comptroller General of the United States, U.S. Government Accountability Office.

Mr. Chairman, the GAO report on Iraq, ordered by Congress as part of our push for greater accountability over the Iraq war, clearly demonstrates what my colleagues and I in Congress have long argued: ever-increasing American military engagement has not led to the enactment of key legislative, economic, and security initiatives. We are here today because this Congress believes in the importance of accurately evaluating Iraqi progress toward meeting the targets set by this Administration.

The resulting GAO report flies in the face of the administration's ongoing insistence that President Bush's policy in Iraq is working, instead painting an extremely disturbing picture of an Iraq where violence remains endemic, where key legislation has not been passed, and where Iraqi economic commitments remain ambiguous and uncertain. With only three of the eighteen benchmarks met, the report clearly indicates that, despite the US military surge, the Iraqi government has failed to achieve the required reforms.

Last week, the Washington Post reported that, despite these finding by the GAO and the similar National Intelligence Estimate issued earlier this year, President Bush is planning to ask this Congress for an additional $50 billion to fund his disastrous Iraq policy. This is not in line with *either* the findings of these two non-partisan studies or the will of the American people, who last November resoundingly called for a new direction in U.S. policy.

This is why, on July 12th, the House passed H.R. 2956, the Responsible Redeployment from Iraq Act, which I was proud to cosponsor. This legislation, sponsored by Armed Services Committee Chairman Ike Skelton, would begin the responsible redeployment of U.S. troops within 120 days and complete redeployment by April 1, 2008. The President would have to report to Congress why troops should remain in Iraq for limited purposes such as to fight terrorism or to train Iraqi forces.

The Iraq war continues to cost a great deal in American lives, funds, and resources. As of yesterday, the Department of Defense had confirmed a total of 3740 U.S. casualties, with two further deaths awaiting confirmation. In addition, more than 27,660 have been wounded in the Iraq war since it began in March 2003. June, July, and August have marked the bloodiest months yet in the conflict, and U.S. casualties in Iraq are 62 percent higher this year than at this time in 2006. This misguided, mismanaged, and misrepresented war has claimed too many lives of our brave servicemen; its depth, breadth, and scope are without precedent in American history.

In addition to this tragic expenditure of the lives of young Americans, the war has brought an enormous financial burden to U.S. taxpayers. Congress has already appropriated nearly $477 billion for the war in Iraq since March 2003, and, according to the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the U.S. is spending an estimated $10 billion per month in Iraq. This $10 billion a month translates into $329,670,330 per day, $13,736,264 per hour, $228,938 per minute, and $3,816 per second.

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These huge quantities of funds could have been spent on important domestic programs, or on securing our homeland against real threats. We could have repaired the more than 70,000 bridges across America rated structurally deficient ($188 billion), potentially averting the tragedy that occurred August 1st in Minneapolis, Minnesota. We could have rebuilt the levees in New Orleans ($50 billion), protecting that city from future hurricanes which could bring Katrina-like destruction upon the city. We could have provided all U.S. public safety officials with interoperable communication equipment ($10 billion), allowing them to effectively communicate in the event of an emergency, and we could have paid for screening all air cargo on passenger planes for the next ten years ($3.6 billion). We could have enrolled 1.4 additional children in Head Start programs ($10 billion). Instead of funding increased death and destruction in Iraq, we could have spent hard-earned taxpayer dollars on important progress here at home.

Given the enormous amount of resources involved, coupled with the catastrophic costs in human lives, we would certainly expect adequate oversight and management of U.S. funds and military supplies. We would expect clear records of exactly where those $10 billion a month is going, and to whom it is being given. And yet, the GAO reports that the Pentagon has lost track of over 190,000 weapons, given to Iraqis, particularly in 2004 and 2005. The report's author stated that the U.S. military does not know what happened to 30 percent of the weapons the United States distributed to Iraqi forces from 2004 through early this year as part of an effort to train and equip the troops. These weapons could be used to kill our American troops.

Stemming the chaos in Iraq requires more than opposition to military escalation: it requires new thinking. This is why I have introduced H.R. 930, the Military Success in Iraq and Diplomatic Surge for National and Political Reconciliation in Iraq Act of 2007. This legislation would make diplomacy and political reconciliation the first, rather than the last, resort as has been the case for the past four years. It declares that the objectives for which military force in Iraq was authorized have been achieved, and therefore the authority to use this force has expired. All Americans share the goal of bringing about peace and stability in Iraq, and that will require a surge rather than a military escalation.

It is time to be realistic and pragmatic, to recognize that our troops achieved what they were initially sent in for and that continued U.S. military engagement is not bringing about the desired results. We must accept the facts of the situation, whether or not they are in line with political objectives. The GAO report presented to us today is not bound by party lines or party loyalty, and it confirms many of the findings of another bipartisan study, the National Intelligence Estimate. We continue to wait for the report of General Petraeus, to be delivered to Congress next week, but we cannot ignore the crucial findings of this GAO report.

Mr. Chairman, President Bush and Vice-President Cheney have been given numerous chances and ample time by the American people and the Congress to straighten out the mess in Iraq. They have failed. It is little wonder that the criticism of the Administration's failed policy in Iraq is mounting by the day. Respected military leaders, like Lt. General William Odom, have spoken forcefully. According to Lt. General Odom: "No effective new strategy can be devised for the United States until it begins withdrawing its forces from Iraq. Only that step will break the paralysis that now confronts us."

Key Republican senators are joining the chorus of Democratic critics who have led the opposition to this mismanaged war. Recently, Senator John Warner (R–VA), a former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, joined the ranks of Republicans increasingly unwilling to give the President a blank check to continue the war. In addition to Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Senator Richard Lugar (R–IN), some of the President's allies in Congress have spoken out. Senator Pete Domenici (R–NM) says: "There's no reason to wait . . . [I am] trying to tell [Bush] that he must change his ways because there is nothing positive happening." Senator Elizabeth Dole (R–NC) says: "It is my firm hope and belief that we can start bringing our troops home in 2008." Senator Lamar Alexander (R–TN) says: "The president needs a new strategy."

These Republican politicians are increasingly in line with U.S. public opinion. More than 70% of Americans favor the removal of almost all U.S. troops from Iraq by April 2008, leaving a limited number for counter-terrorism efforts, according to a Gallup poll.

Mr. Chairman, the results of the GAO report are clear. It is pure fantasy to imagine that President Bush's military surge has created the necessary safety and security to meet economic, legislative, and security benchmarks. It is time for a new strategy, a new plan that will encourage Iraqis to take charge of their own destiny,

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seek constructive and sustained regional engagement, and which will substitute the ill-advised military surge for a thoughtful diplomatic one.

I look forward to the informative testimony of our witness. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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