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BEYOND THE SEPTEMBER REPORT: WHAT'S NEXT FOR IRAQ?

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

AND THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

SEPTEMBER 6, 2007

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BEYOND THE SEPTEMBER REPORT: WHAT'S NEXT FOR IRAQ?

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, DC.

The committees met, pursuant to notice, at 9:08 a.m., in room 345, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Tom Lantos [chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs] presiding.

Chairman LANTOS. This joint meeting of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and the House Committee on Armed Services will come to order. Our two committees will come together again next Monday to hear from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. It would be refreshing if these two capable and dedicated men would outline a new plan that would redeploy our troops and bring them home from Iraq. But I expect instead that the September report—written not by one of our great military leaders and one of our most capable diplomats but by administration political operatives—will be a regurgitation of the same failed Iraq strategy. I expect this report will be replete with the same litany of requests—more troops, more money, more patience—and all in the unlikely belief that our intervention in a bloody, religiously-based civil war will bear fruit.

The administration won't listen—not to Congress, not to the American people and not to the military and foreign policy experts who have repeatedly told both our committees that the current course in Iraq is failing and failing miserably. When the September report lands on our doorsteps next week, it will be a political document drafted in Washington by those who see Iraq not as it is but as they would like it to be.

As we heard in great detail yesterday from the Government Accountability Office, Iraq has met only 3 of the 18 benchmarks for political and military progress in Iraq. By any standard, this is a failing grade. Constitutional reform failed to meet the goal. Iraqi military units operating independently failed to meet the goal. Reducing sectarian violence, reversing de-Baathification, passing new oil laws: Failed, failed, failed on every single count.

More than 6 months into the President's troop escalation, it is readily apparent that it isn't working, either in promoting political change in Iraq or in increasing security. In July and August alone, more than 150 American soldiers lost their lives and more than 1,000 of our brave men and women were injured. The horrific casualty rate for Iraqi civilians has also remained largely unchanged.

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With his visit to Anbar province, the President trumpeted our new cooperation with tribal militias. This alliance may contribute to peace in the short term but will inevitably escalate the intensity of the Civil War which will ensue once American forces leave the province.

According to a report released this morning by General Jones, we should not expect the Iraqi police to help. They are so riddled with corruption and incompetence that he recommends they be completely disbanded.

Republicans and Democrats in this room can all agree that we would like to see peace and good government in Iraq. But our increased troop presence is not contributing to achieving this goal; rather, it is undermining it. Our troops have become a rallying point for militant sectarian groups and terrorists of all types and an excuse for failing to make tough political compromises about Iraq's future.

There will be no peace and stability as long as key elements in Iraqi society want to continue to fight: Shia, to solidify their new found power; and Sunnis, to regain it. There will be no peace and stability as long as Iraq's neighbors, particularly Iran and Syria, actively promote militant groups as a means to counter American troops in Iraq. And I for one doubt seriously that we will see any movement in the direction of a political settlement until such time as Prime Minister Maliki is informed that our troop transports have landed in Baghdad ready to begin bringing home our men and women in uniform.

Until then, Prime Minister Maliki will continue to run his government like a Shiite factional leader. He will obstruct efforts to build a strong national Iraqi Army in favor of a militia-infiltrated force protecting Shiite power. He will sign the initiatives to reverse de-Baathification and in so doing demonstrate to the Sunni population that this is not their government.

Without meaningful progress in Iraq and an effective partner in Iraqi Government, the majority of Congress will continue to insist on a reasonable and responsible withdrawal plan that presents the least bad option for Iraq, the region and our national security interests. By definition, this will involve training Iraqi security forces, attacking terrorist cells in hot spots and shielding important Iraqi infrastructure facilities.

I wish Congress would have the President's cooperation in this effort. But absent a September surprise, we won't have it. But we will continue to do what is right; reach out across the aisle to our friends and colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle to push for a bipartisan consensus toward wise redeployment of our forces in Iraq. The American people have asked us to accomplish this task, and we will not rest until it is done. It is now my great pleasure to turn to my dear friend and distinguished colleague, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Ike Skelton of Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you so much to my friend, Tom Lantos, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee. It is a real pleasure for us to join you today on this historic occasion. A good number of years ago, there was a stage play and a song that came from it: On a clear day, you can see forever. And it looks like it is a clear

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day because I think I see General Jack Keane; I think I see General John Batiste; and I think I see Secretary Bill Perry off in the distance. And we hope that your testimony in the speed of sound will reach us in a timely fashion this morning. This is a bit unusual to have it. Gentlemen, we do thank you for being with us.

Our committees are trying to get a clear picture of where the United States policy stands regarding Iraq and what path should be followed there. The testimony provided by the GAO yesterday made clear that, despite the valiant efforts of our military serving in that country, the Iraqi Government has not taken advantage of the opportunity to move toward true national reconciliation. And needless to say, to those of us who heard the testimony yesterday, it was quite disturbing news. It is not clear to me that this reality will change in the coming months. And I suspect General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will have insight on this question next week. But I will appreciate the witnesses today giving us their thoughts on the prospects for political progress in Iraq. Beyond this issue, I am struck with the fact that all three of our witnesses have experience leading the United States military and dealing with the strategic challenges posed by managing our forces. One of my primary concerns, gentlemen, is considering the right way forward for involvement in Iraq and its impact on the effort of the overall readiness of our forces, particularly on the ground forces. I am concerned that the current deployment schedules and overall strain on those serving pose a strategic risk, both now as well as in the future.

We currently have over 160,000 American troops in Iraq patrolling the streets and fighting and dying on behalf of the Iraqis. I cannot tell you how much I, and I am sure other members of this committee, appreciate their sacrifice. We are doing the best we can. We simply cannot thank them enough. But to the extent that they are in Iraq, they are not free to carry out other missions. And these troops who are in Iraq are not in Afghanistan pursuing al-Qaeda who attacked us on September 11th. Looking ahead, gentlemen, we know that we cannot see around corners.

The threats and miscalculations of tomorrow are not necessarily clear to us today. In my 30 years in Congress we have been involved in 12 military contingencies, some of which were major in size, most of which were not foreseen. And I am deeply concerned that our military will not be adequately prepared to prevail in the next conflict, which we don't see, we don't anticipate. But that was the case on some 12 occasions in the past 30 years. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the remainder of my statement be placed in the record in toto.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Skelton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI, AND CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED FORCES

The House Armed Services Committee has joined with the Foreign Affairs Committee today to further our exploration of Iraq policy. For the members of the Armed Services Committee, this is the second of four hearings on the subject. I would like to thank Chairman Lantos for taking the lead on this hearing, and the witnesses for agreeing to appear. It's wonderful to see a panel of old friends with us today. Gentlemen, thank you for your testimony and for your service.

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Our committees are trying to get a clear picture of where U.S. policy stands in Iraq and what the path forward should be. The testimony provided by GAO yesterday made clear that despite the valiant efforts of our military serving in Iraq, the Iraqi government has not taken advantage of this opportunity to move toward true national reconciliation. It is not clear to me that this reality will change in the coming months. I suspect General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will have insight on this question next week, but I would appreciate the witnesses' thoughts on the prospects for political progress in Iraq.

Beyond this issue, I am struck by the fact that all three of our witnesses have experience leading the United States military and dealing with the strategic challenges posed in managing our force. One of my primary concerns in considering the right way forward for our involvement in Iraq is the impact of this effort on the overall readiness of our forces—particularly the ground forces. I am concerned that the current deployment schedules and overall strain on those serving pose strategic risk both now and in the future.

We currently have over 160 thousand US troops in Iraq patrolling the streets and fighting and dying on behalf of Iraqis. I cannot tell you how much I, and I am sure every member here, appreciates their sacrifice. They are the best we have, and we simply cannot thank them enough. But to the extent that they are in Iraq, they are not free to carry out other missions. Those troops who are in Iraq are not in Afghanistan, pursuing the Al Qaeda who attacked us on September 11th.

Looking ahead, we know that we cannot see around corners. The threats and miscalculations of tomorrow are not necessarily clear to us today. In my 30 years in Congress, we have been involved in 12 contingencies—most of which were not foreseen. I am deeply concerned that our military will not be adequately prepared to prevail in the next conflict.

So my questions are these. First, what impact does the war in Iraq have on our long-term struggle against those elements of al Qaeda that are focused on attacking the American people and the homeland—particularly on our effort to ensure Afghanistan and Pakistan are not terrorist safe havens? It was widely reported a few years ago that Special Forces troops were pulled out of Afghanistan and sent to Iraq. We continue to make the same sort of choice today when we send 100 thousand more troops to Iraq and many fewer in pursuit of Osama bin Laden and other key members of al Qaeda. Does this sort of prioritization serve our national interests?

Second and more generally, what considerations must be made in our Iraq policy to ensure the long-term readiness of our military—particularly our ground forces?

I hope the witnesses can take a moment to address these points.

I would like to again thank Chairman Lantos and our witnesses.

Chairman LANTOS. Without objection.

Mr. SKELTON. And I welcome my distinguished witnesses before us today. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. I am delighted to turn to my good friend and distinguished colleague, the ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you Chairman Skelton and members. As all of us know, the administration will soon release the Iraqi benchmark assessment report enumerating the Iraqi Government's progress on security and political fronts. And this Monday, Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus will be appearing before our committees to discuss their findings. We should therefore ask ourselves why we would be holding a hearing with a private panel to discuss the findings of a report that has yet to be provided to Congress, and why we should be speculating on policy beyond the September report without again having received the report or the testimony by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. The title of this joint hearing, after all, is "Beyond the September Report: What's Next for Iraq."

I prefer to focus my remarks on the assessment and the information that we already have. The National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) released last month reports measurable but uneven improvements in Iraq's security situation and says that a shift from

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counterinsurgency operations to efforts simply to train Iraqis would erode security gains achieved so far. On the other hand, the estimate is grim on the prospects of the Maliki government remaining in power. It assesses that the situation for the Maliki government will become more precarious over the next 6 to 12 months. The surge has thus been unable to facilitate legislative progress on the part of the central government to meet the benchmarks enumerated by the Congress. But important political progress has been taking place in Iraq. The turn of so many Sunni tribes and organizations away from al-Qaeda and in support of the Iraqi Government and coalition forces is a crucial political development, and not one that we should discount because it happened, in a manner, and on a timetable, that no one in this body had predicted. It is also critically important to consider the developments in context, to look beyond just the NIE and the assessments by the GAO, and consider the next steps only after we have reviewed all of the pertinent reports and presentations. It is also necessary to listen to our troops, who can provide us with firsthand accounts on the progress being achieved. One constituent of mine currently serving in Iraq wrote to me recently to provide his assessment of the situation on the ground in the area where he is located. He underscored, and I quote:

> "We have accomplished a lot in the past 2 months. Before we arrived, these neighborhoods had not received rice, flour, sugar and tea from the government for the last 10 months because al-Qaeda had strong pointed the area and claimed the city as the Islamic State of Iraq, sentencing people to death in the Islamic courts on a regular basis. Now more and more people are opening their shops on the market streets 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 better the community."

This last statement was particularly striking to me as I recalled what the recent NIE stated on Iraq. And it said:

> "Perceptions that the coalition is withdrawing probably will encourage factions anticipating a power vacuum to seek local security solutions that could intensify sectarian violence and intrasectarian competition."

I will be interested to hear from our witnesses their views regarding these findings. We must therefore proceed with extreme caution and ensure that timetables for the implementation of certain political and economic requirements do not become the determining factor for U.S. military decisions. Further, using these benchmarks as a measure of progress toward national reconciliation also ignores other significant factors that both impact the Iraqi political landscape as well as our own United States security interest. And I am specifically referring to the threats posed by the regimes in Tehran and Damascus.

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In this respect, I would appreciate if our witnesses would comment on the findings of the NIE that state:

> "Over the next year, Tehran, concerned about a Sunni reemergence in Iraq and U.S. efforts to limit Iranian influence, will continue to provide funding, weaponry and training to Iraqi Shia militias."

And the IC now assesses that Damascus is providing support to non-AQI groups inside Iraq in a bid to increase Syrian influence. We must also be careful not to confuse long-term and short-term political progress. In the long term, a national unity government fairly representing all segments of Iraqi society will clearly help ensure stability. However, in the short term, the assumption that a national unity government is required to pacify the Sunni insurgency or to challenge Shia militias has turned out to be false. The Sunnis have turned against al-Qaeda and are gradually switching sides in the absence of any oil, federalism or de-Baathification deal coming out of Baghdad.

The NIE notes:

> "Coalition military operations focused on improving population security, both in and outside of Baghdad, will remain critical to the success of local and regional efforts until sectarian fears are diminished enough to enable the Shia-led Iraqi Government to fully support the efforts of local Sunni groups."

Concurrently, there is evidence of an increasingly moderate Shia block within the central government emerging out of the conflict raging in the south of Iraq. Significant challenges remain, and no one should have anticipated that all of Iraq's problems would be solved by September 15th. The questions we must ask, therefore, and I would appreciate if our witnesses would elaborate on it, are: Has the new strategy succeeded in accomplishing the goals it set out to achieve up to this point, and are the trends positive or negative?

I thank the distinguished witnesses for appearing before us today, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to receiving their testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Lantos.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much. I am now pleased to turn to my good friend and fellow Californian, distinguished ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, Duncan Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you Mr. Chairman. And what a nice thing to be here with my great chairman, Ike Skelton, and with you and Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and these two outstanding committees. I think this is the first time I have been in a hearing in this big room that accommodates so many people, so many people interested in this very, very critical issue.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for having the hearing. I want to thank my chairman, Mr. Skelton, for co-chairing this hearing. Mr. Chairman, I have exactly the opposite position, I think, going into this hearing on what I think you stated. The hallmark of the International Relations Committee and the hallmark of the Armed Services Committee and I think all committees whose work turns

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around the testimony of our men and women in uniform is that when people come and sit in that witness chair, as our witnesses do today, two distinguished retired generals and one distinguished former Secretary of Defense, their candor and their integrity is their trademark. And that is what makes us effective; being able to elicit testimony from people that have a lot of experience and a lot of insight and know that we are getting their testimony.

Now, you stated a couple of minutes ago that this testimony that we are going to get from General Petraeus will not really be his testimony. I think that is wrong, Mr. Chairman. I think that the trademark of General Petraeus is his candor; the fact that Democrats and Republicans can ask him the tough ones and he tells it like it is, regardless of fear or favor. And I think that is the integrity and the candor that produced a near unanimous vote when he was confirmed. So the gentlelady to my right, the distinguished ranking member of the International Relations Committee, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen, said, "What is the purpose of this hearing?" I hope the purpose of this hearing is not to discredit General Petraeus before he takes a stand. We have all been, over the last 4 years or so as the Iraq operation has unfolded, we have all interacted with former members of the United States military. And I, myself, find myself tempted at times, when people who have worn the uniform don't agree with me, I like to refer to them as "armchair generals," and then when they agree with me they are "retired statesmen." And they probably have the same opinion of me. But they are an enormous asset.

The two gentlemen sitting in front of us, who have distinctly different opinions on this issue, are an enormous asset to this country. Similarly, General Petraeus coming to this body with integrity, with candor, with insight and, most importantly, with war-fighting capability, is an enormous asset for this country. And I just absolutely disagree with your description of this testimony to come as somehow not being his own testimony. Maybe that is a first question we should ask him.

Mr. Chairman, I have looked at these benchmarks with respect to political activity by the Iraqi Government, a government which has freshly stood up, which is clumsy, as most new governments are. But there are a couple of metrics that I didn't see. One metric was the 74 percent reduction in violence against civilians. One was the reduction of attacks in Anbar province from 1,350 last October to one-fifth of that today. I didn't see any slot for that metric to be manifested. And from my perspective, the most important element in a successful transition of the security burden in Iraq is this: A reliable Iraqi military; a reliable Iraqi military that can rotate into the battlefield and displace American heavy combat forces and allow our forces after they have made that hand-off, to come back to the United States or go elsewhere in CENTCOM where they are needed.

Now, I can recall a couple of years ago when my son was in Fallujah and I was out there talking to a couple of his friends—and at the first battle of Fallujah, those Marines had brought in some Iraqi forces, brand new green forces, to participate in that battle. And they didn't show up for formation the next day. But when I was there the last time, they not only showed up for forma-

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tion, but right down to the corporal level of U.S. Marines, we had testimony and off-the-record discussions that these guys were standing and fighting. And they are rallying to be inducted into both the Iraqi Army and the national police force which is remarkably working together with the Iraqi Army in Anbar province. I never thought I would see the day when a Sunni national police leader would sit side-by-side with a brigade commander from the Iraqi Army, a Shiite, and they would discuss together how they were pushing back against al-Qaeda. The U.S. Marines have accomplished that with blood, sweat and tears.

And one of the frustrations, I think, of any member here who has been over there is to see the little attention that has been given that. So I think the most important metric is being met, and that is that we are standing up the Iraqi forces. Now, you had 129 battalions a couple of months ago, we've got 131 now. And I would like to hear from our witnesses, especially their evaluation of the maturity level of the Iraqi Army at this point. And so, Mr. Chairman, thank you for teeing up this hearing. I appreciate it. And I appreciate my great friend, Mr. Skelton, for participating and Ms. Ros-Lehtinen and all the other members of the committee, and I look forward to the testimony of our distinguished witnesses.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much. We are fortunate to have with us today three distinguished individuals with exceptional qualifications to speak to us on military and defense issues. Dr. William J. Perry, who served as Secretary of Defense, is currently a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and is a professor at Stanford University. In addition to his service in government and academia, Dr. Perry had an outstanding business career. Among other things, he was founder and president of ESL, president of Hambrecht and Quist, and chairman of Technology, Strategy and Alliances.

Dr. Perry received his bachelor's and master's degrees from Stanford University in my neck of the woods and his Ph.D. from Pennsylvania State. In 1946 and 1947, he served as an enlisted man in the United States Army and, between 1948 and 1955, as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserves.

Dr. Perry, we are delighted to give you the floor.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. PERRY, SENIOR FELLOW, HOOVER INSTITUTION, AND PROFESSOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

Dr. PERRY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a written testimony which I would like to submit for the record.

Chairman LANTOS. Without objection.

Dr. PERRY. In January, President Bush rejected the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group and announced a new strategy in Iraq, which has been called a "surge strategy." The surge strategy called for adding about 30,000 additional troops and, with this new strength, working aggressively to stem the violence in Iraq, especially in Baghdad. The hopes were that the reduction in violence would give the Iraqi Government the breathing space it needed to strengthen its own security forces and to effect the political changes needed to reduce the impetus for the ongoing violence between Shias and Sunnis.

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By June, the full complement of about 30,000 additional troops were operational in Iraq. Based on reports already available, it appears to me that there are three positive developments in Iraq. First, wherever American troops are present and patrolling in force, violence does subside. This is a great tribute to the courage, discipline and unit cohesion of our troops. But it has come at a cost of almost 2,000 American casualties this summer.

Second, violence continues to be at relatively low levels in Kurdistan as the Kurds have managed to stay largely apart from the sectarian violence that has plagued the mixed sectarian regions in central Iraq and the struggle for control between Shia tribes in southern Iraq.

And third, a new dynamic had been developing in the Sunni regions in the Al Anbar province. A little over a year ago, Sunni tribal leaders began cooperating with Americans in fighting al-Qaeda in Iraq, which previously had gained a strong foothold in that region. The decision of the Sunni tribal leaders not only has resulted in effective actions against al-Qaeda forces but also in reduced attacks against American forces in Al Anbar.

All of these are positive developments. The first of them is directly related to the surge. The second is largely unrelated to the surge. And the third was well under way before the surge began. But the additional American forces sent to Al Anbar have likely accelerated its progress. But the surge was intended to buy time for actions taken by the Iraqi Government to strengthen their security forces and to effect political reconciliation. So it is fair to ask: How well have they made use of that time, and how much more time will they need?

The GAO report released earlier this week painted a discouraging picture of how well the Iraqi Government has made use of their breathing space. Of the benchmarks established well over a year ago by the Iraqi Government, a progress they themselves thought necessary, only a few of the 18 have been met with little or no progress on what I consider the most important of these benchmarks, those that are intended to effect a reconciliation between Shias and Sunnis. If this reconciliation cannot be achieved, all of the progress made at great cost this past summer could be overturned. In particular, the strengthening of the Sunni tribal militias in Al Anbar, which are an important asset in the present fight against al-Qaeda, could become a liability if they were to be turned against Shia militia or even against Iraqi Government forces. These and other negative developments can be prevented as long as there is a strong American military presence. But that raises a fundamental question: How much longer can American forces be kept at or near present levels in Iraq without damaging the readiness of our ground forces?

I estimate that if present ground force levels are maintained into next year, they can only be achieved through substantial changes in personnel policies such as further extending deployments, recalling guard forces that have already served, or reducing training between deployments. A combination of those policies maintained during the coming year could do substantial damage to our ground forces.

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It took many years after the Vietnam War to build up our ground forces into the best trained, most effective force in the world, and it could take many years to recover that capability if we were to lose it. Given the uncertain world in which we live, any substantial loss in capability of our ground forces could reduce our capability to deal with plausible military contingencies, while at the same time making those contingencies more likely.

Next week the Congress will get a report on the surge strategy, including a report from General Petraeus. Let me say that I have no doubt that General Petraeus is an outstanding military officer and is carrying out a well-conceived military strategy in Iraq. But solutions to the violence in Iraq cannot be military alone, nor can they be coming from coalition forces alone. The Iraqi Government must be taking political actions on an urgent time scale. And a heavy American military commitment in Iraq cannot be sustained many more months without taking serious risks of reducing the capability of our ground forces, thereby making them less capable of meeting other security problems we face.

While it is possible at some future date to make increases in the level of American ground troops, that resource is fixed today and for some time to come. Therefore, we have to choose what risks to take when we determine how to use that resource. We can state with some confidence the risks to American security if our troop readiness suffers because we have maintained large troop levels in Iraq through 2008. We cannot state with the same confidence the risks to American security if the level of violence in Iraq increases as we begin troop reductions early in 2008. But in the absence of real progress in political reconciliation in Iraq, the level of violence in Iraq is likely to increase whether we begin those reductions 5 months from now or 5 years from now. Let me state that, again, since it is my principal point here: In the absence of real progress in political reconciliation, the level of violence is likely to increase whether we begin those reductions 5 months from now or 5 years from now.

Consequently, I suggest that after hearing the Iraq progress report next week, that Congress should ask the following questions: First, since the surge began earlier this year, how well has the Iraqi Government used the breathing space it provided? Secondly, how much longer will the coalition forces be needed to provide breathing space for the Iraqi Government? Third, in order to achieve American goals in Iraq, how much longer will American forces be needed at or near present levels in Iraq? Fourth, is the readiness level of American contingency forces today adequate to meet plausible contingencies? And finally, if present or near present levels of troops are needed in 2008 in Iraq, how will the replacement forces be provided, and what will that do to the readiness levels of our contingency forces?

I believe the continuing congressional support for the surge strategy should be based on the answers to those questions and the considered evaluation of how well this strategy meets global American security requirements. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Perry follows:]

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PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE WILLIAM J. PERRY, SENIOR FELLOW, HOOVER INSTITUTION, AND PROFESSOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY

In January, President Bush rejected the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group and announced a new strategy in Iraq, which has been called a "surge strategy." The surge strategy called for adding about 30,000 additional troops and, with this new strength, working aggressively to stem the violence in Iraq, especially in Baghdad. The hopes were that a reduction in violence would give the Iraqi government the breathing space it needed to strengthen its own security forces and to effect the political changes needed to reduce the impetus for the ongoing violence between Shia and Sunnis. By June the full complement of about 30,000 additional troops were operational in Iraq.

Based on reports already available from Iraq, it appears to me that there are three positive developments in Iraq.

First, wherever American troops are present and patrolling in force, violence does subside. This is a great tribute to the courage, discipline, and unit cohesion of our troops, but has come at a cost of almost 2,000 American casualties this summer.

Second, violence continues to be at relatively low levels in Kurdistan, as the Kurds have managed to stay largely apart from the sectarian violence that has plagued the mixed sectarian regions in Central Iraq and the struggle for control between Shia tribes in Southern Iraq.

And third, a new dynamic has been developing in the Sunni regions in Al Anbar province. About a year ago, Sunni tribal leaders began cooperating with Americans in fighting Al Qaeda in Iraq, which previously had gained a strong toehold in that province. The decision of the Sunni tribal leaders not only has resulted in effective actions against Al Qaeda forces, but also in reduced attacks against American forces in Al Anbar.

All of these are positive developments; the first is related directly to the surge; the second is largely unrelated to the surge; and the third was well underway before the surge, but the additional American forces sent to Al Anbar have likely accelerated its progress.

But the surge was intended to buy time for actions taken by the Iraqi government to strengthen their security forces and to effect political reconciliation. So it is fair to ask: "How well have they made use of that time; and how much more time will be needed?"

The GAO report released earlier this week paints a discouraging picture of how well the Iraqi government has made use of its breathing space. Well over a year ago the Iraq government established 18 benchmarks for progress they themselves thought necessary. Only 3 of these have been met, with little or no progress on the most important of these benchmarks—those that are intended to measure progress in reconciliation between Shias and Sunnis. If this reconciliation cannot be achieved, all of the progress made at great cost this past summer could be overturned. In particular, the strengthening of the Sunni tribal militias in Al Anbar, which are an important asset in the present fight against Al Qaeda, could become a liability if they were to be turned against Shia militia or even Iraqi government forces.

These and other negative developments can be prevented as long as there is a strong American military presence, but that raises a fundamental question. How much longer can American forces be kept at or near present levels in Iraq without damaging the readiness of our ground forces? I estimate that if present ground force levels are maintained into next year, they can only be achieved through substantial changes in personnel policies, such as further extending deployments, recalling guard forces that have already served, or reducing training between deployments.

If such policies were maintained during the coming year, it would do substantial damage to our ground forces. It took many years after the Vietnam War to build up our ground forces to be the best-trained, most effective force in the world, and it could take many years to recover that capability if we were to lose it. Given the uncertain world in which we live, any substantial loss in capability of our ground forces could reduce our capability to deal with plausible military contingencies, while at the same time, making those contingencies more likely.

Later this month, the Congress will get a progress report on the surge strategy, including a report from General Petraeus. I have no doubt that General Petraeus is an outstanding military officer and is carrying out a well-conceived military strategy in Iraq. But solutions to the violence in Iraq cannot be military alone, nor can they be coming from coalition forces alone. The Iraqi government must be taking political actions on an urgent time scale, and they must be effectively preparing to take charge of their own security. A heavy American military commitment in Iraq cannot be sustained many more months without taking serious risks of reducing the

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capability of our ground forces, thereby making them less capable of meeting other security problems we face.

While it is possible that at some future date the US will make increases in the level of American ground troops, that resource is fixed today and for some time to come; therefore we have to choose what risks to take when we determine how to use that resource. We can estimate with some confidence the risk to American security if our troop readiness suffers because we maintained large troop levels in Iraq through 2008. We cannot estimate with the same confidence the risk to American security if the level of violence in Iraq increases as we begin significant troop reductions early in 2008, as recommended by the Iraq Study Group.

But, in the absence of real progress in political reconciliation in Iraq, the level of violence is likely to increase whether we begin those reductions five months from now or five years from now.

Consequently, I suggest that, after hearing the Iraq progress report next week, the Congress should ask the following questions

- Since the surge began earlier this year, how well has the Iraqi government used the breathing space it provided?
- How much longer will coalition forces be needed to provide breathing space for the Iraqi government?
- In order to achieve American goals in Iraq, how much longer will American forces be needed at or near present levels in Iraq?
- Is the readiness level of American contingency forces today adequate to meet plausible military contingencies?
- If present or near-present levels of troops are needed in 2008 in Iraq, how will the replacement forces be provided, and what will this do to the readiness levels of our contingency forces?

I believe that continuing Congressional support for the surge strategy should be based on the answers to those questions, and a considered evaluation of how well this strategy meets overall American security requirements.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Our next witness is Major General John Batiste, who retired from the U.S. Army in November 2005 and had 31 years of military service. Between August 2002 and June 2005, General Batiste commanded the First Infantry Division, conducting peace enforcement operations in Bosnia, and combat operations in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom II. In Iraq, his division included 22,000 soldiers from active and Reserve components from all over the United States. General Batiste is a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy and the Army War College. He holds a master's degree in financial management from the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.

General Batiste, we are delighted to have you, and the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JOHN BATISTE, USA, RETIRED, PRESIDENT, KLEIN STEEL SERVICES, INCORPORATED

General BATISTE. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

As an American citizen, it is an honor to be here today, and it is a distinct pleasure to be on a panel with two gentlemen for which I have enormous respect. On 27 of June of this year, I testified that our national security for the global war on terror lacks strategic focus; our Army and Marine Corps, at a breaking point with little to show for it. The current surge in Iraq is too little too late. The Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to their responsibilities. Our Nation has yet to mobilize to defeat this very serious threat with implications well beyond Iraq and it is past time to refocus our national strategy in the Middle East.

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Since late June, with the exception of the outstanding performance by our military, nothing has changed. Our troops are mired in the complexity of a brutal civil war and we have lost sight of the broader objective of defeating worldwide Islamic extremism. The Iraqi Government is ineffective and exhibits no inclination or capacity to reconcile the Rubik's Cube that defines Iraq.

Years ago I was taught that a military organization should only be used for its intended purpose and only within its capabilities. Our Government has yet to articulate a focused Middle East strategy and the military is operating with an ill-defined purpose well beyond current capabilities. Our leaders apparently do not appreciate that only Iraqis can sort out Iraqi problems and only Islam can defeat Islamic extremism. A successful national strategy in Iraq is akin to a four-legged stool with legs representing diplomacy, political consideration, economic recovery and the military. The glue holding it all together must be the mobilization of the United States in support of the incredibly important work to defeat worldwide Islamic extremism. The only leg on the stool of any consequence today is the military. The best in the world, solid titanium, high performing.

After almost 6 years since September 11th, however, our country is not mobilized behind this important work and the diplomatic, political and economic legs are inconsequential and lack leadership. Most Americans now appreciate that the military alone cannot solve the problems in Iraq. The administration failed to call the Nation to action in the wake of 9/11 and is now virtually dependent on the military leg of the stool to accomplish the mission, and has yet to frame the solutions in Iraq within the broader context of the region to include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Syria and Jordan. In this situation, the stool will surely collapse.

Indeed victory in Iraq is relative in an environment where tactical victories can quickly become irrelevant. The real measure of success is whether or not one can venture out at night alone without an armed escort. The perceived successes in Iraq today are taken out of context and overstated at best. Despite the unbelievable performance of our military, the current surge in Iraq is too little too late. The so-called surge really amounted to nothing more than a minor reinforcement, a number which represented all that our military could muster at the time. Our counterinsurgency doctrine requires 20 soldiers for every 1,000 in the indigent population. Assuming there are 6 or 7 million people in Baghdad, the requirement to properly secure the city as a precursor to the rule of law would be over 120,000 combat troops. There are less than 80,000 combat troops in all of Iraq today, even with the surge. What we are seeing is the myth of Sisyphus being played out over and over again. Today's battles in places like Baghdad and Ba'qubah are not new. We have been down this road before but lack the number of coalition and competent Iraqi forces to clear, hold and build. The number of combat troops matter and we have never had the right numbers.

Further, success in a counterinsurgency is more about relationships, improving people's quality of life, and the hard work to change people's attitudes to give them alternatives to the insur-

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gency and less about the application of lethal force. Numbers mattered in March 2003 and they matter today.

The current administration drove this Nation to war without the military planning and capability required to be successful. Sectarian violence continues despite the surge that was supposed to calm Baghdad and set the conditions for national reconciliation. The number of Iraqi civilian deaths in July 2007 was higher than in February 2007 when the surge began. Shia are now dominant in the once mixed capital, a trend that will not be reversed. The coalition is abandoning Basra to a number of militant Shia groups. We are arming and equipping Sunni militant groups in the Anbar province, which is risky at best, equivalent to sticking a sharp stick in the eye of the Shia. Rival Shia militias have killed scores of Iraqis in recent months. At worst, the surge has had little effect on country-wide violence. At best, Iraq is in a holding pattern dependent on the United States military to control the violence. This is a no-win situation.

When the surge culminates, and culminate it will, the civil war will intensify. The current Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to its responsibilities. According to the recent GAO report, the Maliki government is meeting only 3 of 18 military and political goals set by our Congress for Iraq. These benchmarks include tough milestones dependent on reconciliation. With respect to the Government of Iraq's responsibility to increase a number of Iraqi security force units capable of operating independently, we ignore the reality that, historically, armed forces in the region have been perpetually ineffective due to sectarian divides, social factors deeply rooted in Arab culture to include secrecy and paranoia, crippling class differences and no individual freedom of action or initiative. Why would we think our efforts in the 21st century would be any different than other nations' efforts in past centuries? Further, the world has committed inadequate resources to build effective Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi Army and police still require heavy weapons, helicopters, counter-IED technology, light-armored vehicles and radar-assisted counter battery artillery to control the insurgency. The Iraqi security forces have taken horrendous casualties but they do not have the tools to replace United States combat formations. Whether we can trust these Iraqi formations is another question. Our experience over the past 4 years is that most Iraqi formations will either not show up for the fight or will not hold their ground in the face of the insurgent for a myriad of reasons.

America has ignored the lessons of history. The Bush administration strategy lacks focus. General John Sheehan said it best when he recently said, "There is no agreed upon strategic view of the Iraq problem or the region." The current Washington decision-making process lacks a linkage to a broader view of the region and how the parts fit together strategically. Our current Iraqi measures of effectiveness fell deep into the details of Iraq's national reconciliation and de-Baathification. These measures are incredibly important for Iraq but may matter little to United States strategic interests in defeating al-Qaeda. When and how will we complete the work in Afghanistan and root out the terror networks in other parts of the world like northern Pakistan? Indeed, history will rate Iraq as a side show that is diluting our focus. Through most of this

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century, we will face expanding Islamic extremism, competition for decreasing energy resources, the effects of the haves and have-nots driven by globalization, global climate change, unstable population migration, et cetera. What Americans desperately need now is a diplomatic framework defined by an ever-expanding global alliance of equals; disciplined diplomacy on a vision that is focused on long-term objectives.

The security implications are staggering, and Americans expect our Government, both the Executive Branch and the Congress, to address our real enemies: Islamic extremist groups, to include al-Qaeda-type organizations and the nation states that support them. This enemy is worldwide in at least 60 countries, respects no national boundaries and is concentrated in areas well outside of Iraq. Unfortunately, the current administration's nearsighted strategy remains focused on Iraq and is all but dependent on the military component of strategy. Diplomacy and the critical political and economic components of a successful strategy are dangerously lacking.

Clausewitz cautioned us that war is the extension of policy by other means. In other words, America should never commit our young men and women into battle when all other means have not been exhausted. The administration ignored this proven advice and we are paying a heavy price. Our all-volunteer military cannot continue the current cycle of deployments for much longer and certainly not much beyond April 2008. Our Army and Marine Corps are at a breaking point at a time in history when we need our strong military. The cycles of deployments are staggering. We have no strategic Reserve. Not surprisingly, the insurgency in Iraq is fighting us asymmetrically, avoiding our strength and confronting our weakness. American formations continue to lose a battalion's worth of dead and wounded every month with little to show for it. The current recruiting system falls drastically short of long-term requirements and our all-volunteer force cannot sustain the current tempo for much longer.

The Army recently stepped away from important standards and is now enlisting 42-year-old privates. The military is spending billions of dollars a year on incentives in a last ditch effort to keep the force together. Young officers and noncommissioned officers are leaving the service at an alarming rate. Units in Iraq are at full strength because the rest of the force back home has been gutted. Officer basic courses have been reduced to 4 months. Doctrine writers are not keeping up with events on the ground. Equipment is in dismal shape, requiring hundreds of billions of dollars to refit the force to pre-invasions. Army depots are currently utilized at over 100 percent capacity but are not making a dent in the backlog of maintenance and repair. Deploying units are pulled together at the last moment in pick-up teams without proper training and deployed with little unit cohesion. Active duty companies preparing for deployment to Iraq within the next 6 months are at less than 50 percent strength and are commanded by young and inexperienced lieutenants. They also lack the equipment needed for training.

In the Reserve component, the situation is even worse. Military families are at a point of no return. Our military is no longer training for the conventional fight. We are setting the conditions for the

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next "Task Force Smith" disaster at a time in our history when we are facing a serious worldwide threat.

The way ahead is clear: In 8 short months, we will be incapable of maintaining the surge or current pace of deployments. America must rethink its Middle East strategy to encompass all the nations of the region with a focus on diplomacy and political reconciliation to defeat worldwide Islamic extremism. Within the context of this strategy, we must clearly define our military's mission and ask the question: Is our military resourced to accomplish this and all other assigned tasks?

Based on the current state of our military and the continued failure of Iraqis to reconcile their differences, I believe that the answer is a resounding, No, and it is time to transfer the burden of Iraq to Iraqis. We must come to grips with the notion that the coalition cannot resolve sectarian differences by training and equipping combatant formations. Rather, it is time to announce a redeployment and a repositioning of forces and place the onus on Iraqis to come up with Iraqi solutions.

This withdrawal would require over 12 months to complete with a transition to a residual force with a mission to accomplish specific tasks related to Iraq in the context of the entire region. The first step in this process is to announce and begin the deliberate withdrawal of United States forces from Iraq. It is in America's best interest to rethink our Middle East strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq with a transition to a residual force, re-arm and refit our military, get serious about homeland security and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle against worldwide Islamic extremism.

The bottom line: We have put our strategic interests in the hands of an incompetent government in Iraq and we are waiting to see if they can settle their differences. This is unacceptable. Our two vital interests in the region are that Iraq cannot become a launching pad for worldwide Islamic extremism or become a source of regional instability. Secondary interests are that our withdrawal cannot create a humanitarian disaster or an Iraq dominated by other states in the region. This may require a residual force in the region of up to some 30,000 or so U.S. troops for decades to protect the United States mission, provide a counterbalance to unintended consequences of Iran and a greater Kurdistan, and to take direct action against al-Qaeda within the region. The missions and locations of the residual force would be based on an analysis of the regional strategy. We cannot walk away from our strategic interests.

It did not have to be this way, but we are where we are. The bottom line: America's national strategy for the global war on terror lacks strategic focus. Despite a remarkable performance—remarkable—our Army and Marine Corps are at a breaking point with little to show for it. The current surge in Iraq is too little too late. The Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to their responsibilities. Our Nation has yet to mobilize to defeat a serious threat which has little to do with Iraq. And it is past time to refocus our national strategy for the Middle East. The way ahead is uncertain at best, but it is time for America to put America's vital interests first. From this point forward, America's strategy must focus on the mission to defeat worldwide Islamic extremism. Thank you.

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[The prepared statement of General Batiste follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL JOHN BATISTE, USA, RETIRED,
PRESIDENT, KLEIN STEEL SERVICES, INCORPORATED

On 27 June of this year, I testified that our national strategy for the global war on terror lacks strategic focus; our Army and Marine Corps are at a breaking point with little to show for it; the current "surge" in Iraq is too little, too late; the Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to their responsibilities; our nation has yet to mobilize to defeat a very serious threat with implications well beyond Iraq; and it is past time to refocus our national strategy in the Middle East. Since late June, with the exception of the outstanding performance by our military, nothing has changed. Our troops are mired in the complexity of a brutal civil war and we have lost sight of the broader objective of defeating world-wide Islamic extremism. The Iraqi government is ineffective and exhibits no inclination or capacity to reconcile the Rubrics Cube that defines Iraq. Years ago, I was taught that a military organization should only be used for its intended purpose, and only within its capabilities. Our government has yet to articulate a focused Middle East strategy and the military is operating with an ill-defined purpose, well beyond current capabilities. Our leaders apparently do not appreciate that only Iraqi's can sort out Iraqi problems and only Islam can defeat Islamic extremism. The following testimony will address the current strategy, the status of the surge, the impact of sustained deployments on our military, and the way-ahead.

A successful national strategy in Iraq is akin to a four legged stool with legs representing diplomacy, political reconciliation, economic recovery, and the military. The glue holding it all together must be the mobilization of the United States in support of the incredibly important work to defeat world-wide Islamic extremism. The only leg on the stool of any consequence today is the military—the best in the world, solid titanium and high performing. After almost six years since September 11, however, our country is not mobilized behind this important work and the diplomatic, political, and economic legs are inconsequential and lack leadership. Most Americans now appreciate that the military alone cannot solve the problems in Iraq. The administration failed to call the nation to action in the wake of 9–11, is now virtually dependent on the military leg of the stool to accomplish the mission, and has yet to frame the solutions in Iraq within the broader context of the region, to include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Syria, and Jordan. In this situation, the stool will surely collapse. Indeed, "victory" in Iraq is relative in an environment where tactical victories can quickly become irrelevant. The real measure of success is whether or not one can venture out at night, alone, without an armed escort. The perceived successes in Iraq today are taken out of context and overstated at best.

Despite the unbelievable performance of our military, the current "surge" in Iraq is too little, too late. The so-called surge really amounted to nothing more than a minor reinforcement, a number which represented all that our military could muster at the time. Our counter insurgency doctrine requires 20 soldiers for every 1,000 in the indigent population. Assuming there are 6 or 7 million people in Baghdad, the requirement to properly secure the city as a precursor to the rule of law would be over 120,000 "combat" troops. There are less than 80,000 "combat" troops in Iraq today, even with the surge. What we are seeing is the myth of Sisyphus being played out over and over again. Today's battles in places like Baghdad and Ba'qubah are not new—we have been down this road before, but lacked the number of coalition and competent Iraqi forces to clear, hold, and build. The number of "combat" troops matter and we have never had the right numbers. Further, success in a counter insurgency is more about relationships, improving the people's quality of life, and the hard work to change people's attitudes to give them alternatives to the insurgency, and less about the application of lethal force. Numbers mattered in March 2003 and they matter today. The current administration drove this nation to war without the military planning and capability required to be successful. Sectarian violence continues despite the surge that was supposed to calm Baghdad and set the conditions for national reconciliation. The number of Iraqi civilians killed in July 2007 was higher than in February 2007 when the surge began. Shia now dominate the once mixed capital, a trend that will not be reversed. The coalition is abandoning Basra to a number of militant Shia groups. We are arming and equipping Sunni militant groups in the Anbar province which is risky at best, equivalent to sticking a sharp stick in the eye of the Shia. Rival Shia militias have killed scores of Iraqis in recent months. At worst, the surge has had little effect on country-wide violence. At best, Iraq is in a holding pattern, dependent on the US military to control the violence. This is a no-win situation. When the surge culminates, and culminate it will, the civil war will intensify.

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The current Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to its responsibilities. According to the recent GAO report, the Maliki government is meeting only three of 18 military and political goals set by our Congress for Iraq. These benchmarks include tough milestones dependant on reconciliation, to include completing a constitutional review, enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification, enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity. With respect to the Government of Iraq's responsibility to increase the number of Iraqi security force units capable of operating independently, we ignore the reality that historically, armed forces in the region have been perpetually ineffective due to sectarian divides, social factors deeply rooted in Arab culture, to include secrecy and paranoia, crippling class differences, and no individual freedom of action or initiative. Why would we think our efforts in the 21st century would be any different than other nation's efforts in past centuries? Further, the world has committed inadequate resources to build effective Iraqi security forces. The Iraqi army and police still require heavy weapons, helicopters, light armored vehicles, and radar assisted counter-battery artillery to control the insurgency. The Iraqi security forces have taken horrendous casualties and do not have the tools to replace US combat formations. Whether we can trust these Iraqi formations is another question. Our experience over the past four years is that most Iraqi formations will either not show up for the fight or will not hold their ground in the face of the insurgent for a myriad of reasons. America has ignored the lessons of history.

The Bush administration's strategy lacks strategic focus. General John Sheehan said it best when he recently said, "there is no agreed-upon strategic view of the Iraq problem or the region . . . the current Washington decision-making process lacks a linkage to a broader view of the region and how the parts fit together strategically." Our current Iraqi measures of effectiveness delve deep into the details of Iraq's national reconciliation and de-Ba'athification. These measures are incredibly important for Iraq, but may matter little to US strategic interests and defeating Al Qaeda. When and how will we complete the work in Afghanistan and root out the terror networks in other parts of the world like northwestern Pakistan? Indeed, history will rate Iraq a side-show that is diluting our focus. Through most of this century, we will face expanding Islamic extremism, asymmetric demographics, competition for decreasing energy resources, the effects of the "haves and have nots" driven by globalization, global climate change, and unstable population migration. What American desperately needs now is a diplomatic framework defined by an ever expanding global alliance of equals—disciplined diplomacy based on a vision that is focused on long-term objectives. The security implications are staggering and American's expect our government, both the executive branch and the Congress, to address our real enemies—Islamic extremist groups to include Al Qaeda type organizations, and the nation states that support them. This enemy is world-wide in at least 60 countries, respects no national boundaries, and is concentrated in areas well outside of Iraq. Unfortunately, the current administration's near sighted strategy remains focused on Iraq and is all but dependant on the military component of strategy. Diplomacy and the critical political and economic components of a successful strategy are dangerously lacking. Clausewitz cautioned us that war is the extension of policy by other means. In other words, America should commit our young men and women into battle only when all other means are exhausted. The administration ignored this proven advice and we are paying a heavy price.

Our all-volunteer military cannot continue the current cycle of deployments for much longer and certainly not much beyond April of 2008. Our Army and Marine Corps are at a breaking point at a time in history when we need a strong military. The cycle of deployments is staggering. We have no strategic reserve. Not surprisingly, the insurgency in Iraq is fighting us asymmetrically, avoiding our strength and confronting our weakness. American formations continue to loose a battalion's worth of dead and wounded every month with little to show for it. The current recruiting system falls drastically short of long-term requirements and our all-volunteer force can not sustain the current tempo for much longer. The Army recently stepped away from important standards and is now enlisting 42 year-old privates. The military is spending billions a year in incentives in a last ditch effort to keep the force together. Young officers and noncommissioned officers are leaving the service at an alarming rate. Units in Iraq are at full strength because the rest of the force back home has been gutted. Officer basic courses have been reduced to four months. Doctrine writers are not keeping up with events on the ground. Equipment is in dismal shape, requiring hundreds of billions of dollars to refit the force to pre-invasion conditions. Army depots are currently utilitized at 110 percent capacity, but are not making a dent in the backlog of maintenance and repair. Deploying units are pulled together at the last moment in pick-up teams without proper train-

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ing and deploy with little unit cohesion. Active duty companies preparing for deployment to Iraq within the next six months are at less than 50 percent strength, are commanded by young and inexperienced lieutenants, and are lacking the equipment needed for training. In the Reserve Component, the situation is even worse. Military families are at the point of no return. Our military no longer trains for a conventional fight. We are setting the conditions for the next "Task Force Smith" disaster at a time in our history when we are facing a serious world-wide threat.

The way-ahead is clear. In eight short months, we will be incapable of maintaining the surge or current pace of deployments. America must rethink its Middle East strategy to encompass all the nations in the region with a focus on diplomacy and political reconciliation to defeat world-wild Islamic extremism. Within the context of the strategy, we must clearly define our military's mission and ask the question "is our military resourced to accomplish this and all other assigned tasks?" Based on the current state of our military and the continued failure of Iraqi's to reconcile their differences, I believe that the answer is a resounding "no" and it is time to transfer the burden of Iraq to Iraqi's. We must come to grips with the notion that the coalition can not resolve sectarian differences by training and equipping combatant formations. Rather, it is time to announce a redeployment and reposition of forces and to place the onus on Iraqi's to come up with Iraqi solutions. This withdrawal would require over 12 months to complete with a transition to a residual force with a mission to accomplish specific tasks related to Iraq in the context of the entire region. The first step in this process is to announce and begin the deliberate withdrawal of US forces from Iraq. It is in America's best interest to rethink our Middle East strategy, deliberately disengage from Iraq with a transition to a residual force, refit and rearm our military, get serious about homeland security, and prepare to win the next phase of the struggle against world-wide Islamic extremism. Bottom line, we have put our strategic interests in the hands of an incompetent government in Iraq and we are "waiting to see if Iraqi's can settle their differences." This is unacceptable.

Our two vital interests in the region are that Iraq can not become a launching pad for world-wide Islamic extremism or become a source of regional instability. Secondary interests are that our withdrawal can not create a humanitarian disaster or an Iraq dominated by another state(s) in the region. This may require a residual force in the region of up to 30,000 US troops for decades to protect the US mission, provide a counter balance to unintended consequences of Iran and a greater "Kurdistan," and take direct action against residual Al Qaeda within the region. The missions and locations of the residual force would be based upon an analysis of the regional strategy. We can not walk away from our strategic interests. It did not have to be this way, but we are where we are.

Bottom line, America's national strategy for the global war on terror lacks strategic focus. Despite a remarkable performance, our Army and Marine Corps are at a breaking point with little to show for it; the current "surge" in Iraq is too little, too late; the Government of Iraq is incapable of stepping up to their responsibilities; our nation has yet to mobilize to defeat a serious threat which has little to do with Iraq; and it is past time to refocus our national strategy for the Middle East. The way-ahead is uncertain at best, but it is time to put America's vital interests first. From this point forward, America's strategy must focus on the mission is defeat world-wide Islamic extremism.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much General Batiste.

Our final witness is General John M. Keane. He currently serves as senior managing director of Keane Advisors. He is also a national security analyst for ABC News and a speaker throughout the Nation on national security issues. At the request of senior Defense officials, he has conducted several personal assessments of the security situation in Iraq. We are delighted to have you General Keane. The floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA, RETIRED, KEANE ADVISORS, LLC

General KEANE. Chairman Lantos and Chairman Skelton, ranking members and other distinguished members of the committee, thank you for having me here today. I am also impressed with this group, the size and scale of it, and I wish you could see it from my

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side of the table. You are an impressive lot. And I am honored to be here with my distinguished colleagues, Secretary Perry and General Batiste. And let me just say a couple things in reference to their testimony.

I associate my remarks with Secretary Perry in some of the progress that we have made. I also think the questions that he is asking are certainly noteworthy and should be asked, and there are answers to them.

General Batiste, who I have great admiration for, I couldn't disagree with more. He is mired in the realities of 2006 and is not in the world of 2007 in Iraq. That is the harsh reality of it. When we talk about stress and strain on an army—for the life of me, when you fight a war, there is going to be stress and strain on armies. That is what happens to armies when you fight wars. That is the reality of it. And for the life of me, I don't know how throwing the towel in and losing a war somehow would help us strategically in the world. I don't know how losing a war would help us with radical Islam. I don't know how losing the war in Iraq helps us with the regional instability that it would create in that region of the world and certainly how it will assist Iranian hegemony in the region.

The strategic implications of losing a war in Iraq is what energized me in the summer of 2006 to break faith with the strategy that I had been supporting for 3 years. In August 2006, I realized we had a failed strategy in Iraq. I should have realized it sooner. I did not. That is the reality and I have to live with that myself. But in August 2006, I decided to do something about it. I was on Rumsfeld's policy board, so I got myself together and went to see him. And I talked to Pace and Rumsfeld, and I told them the strategy is wrong; we are failing; here is why we are failing; and here is what we need to do about it. As a result of that, I found myself, eventually, in the Oval Office telling the same thing to the President of the United States. And I was recommending, and my judgment and my analysis showed, the only alternative we had to stop us from what the harsh reality of 2006 was, is to stop the violence. The Government of Iraq, the fledgling government that it was, was being pushed off a cliff by the violence that the Sunni insurgency and the al-Qaeda provoked on the Shia at the Samarra Mosque bombing and the assassination squads. They got the predictable overreaction that they desired and the Shia militia came out and inflamed Baghdad. And it did have remnants of what a civil war portends for sure. And this government was moving toward the edge of the cliff, and the only thing we could do was to stop that violence.

Our military tried twice to do it in two operations in that summer and failed miserably. Why? We did not have enough forces, nor did the Iraqis. It was as simple as that. And we never committed ourselves to (1) defeat the insurgency. Never did we ever give that mission to the United States military forces. And (2) we never protected the population, which is the only way that you can stop that level of violence. So this operation has been about some simple objectives. One is to stop that violence that was taking place in 2006, bring the level of violence down by protecting the people; buy some time, as Secretary Perry eloquently said, for the Iraqi Government

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to make some political progress after we are able to provide some economic assistance; and also to buy some time for the Iraqi security forces. It is not a military solution to the problem in Iraq. It was never intended to be a military solution. It is intended to buy time. The time we are talking about is 12–18 months. There has never been any mystery to this. That is the reality of it. The President, I don't think, ever said that. But it was well known to those of us who were dealing with this that this mission was going 12–18 months, that is it. It was always temporary.

So, sometime in 2008, those forces are coming back to 2006 levels, pre-surge levels. That is the reality of it. The issue is: In that period of time, could we accomplish what we set out to do and make some progress so that we could stop that violence and assist the country economically and also in making its political reconciliation? And that is at heart the issue here. And you are going to get some pretty frank, direct and very honest answers from General Petraeus and certainly Ambassador Crocker, who I have spent a lot of time with. I just returned from a 2-week visit to Iraq and I had been there for 2 weeks in May and 2 weeks in February. The characterizations of my visits are, I spent time with Iraqi and United States officials to be sure, both military and civilian. I spent most of my time on the street. Maybe that is because I grew up on the streets of New York, I don't know, but I am comfortable on the street. So I spend most of my time with the Iraqi people and why—I get all the briefings that you get. But the only way I can judge what is happening is what is happening to the lives of the people; to the women, the children, the grandparents, and what is going on out there in their lives. And that is where my time is and that is where my focus is.

So what do I think is happening? Where are we now? Well, I believe there has been remarkable progress. Some of it is quite unforeseen, to be frank about it, and we have had some disappointments to be sure, and we have got plenty of challenges remaining. We are on the offensive. The enemy was on the offensive in 2006; we were on the defense in 2006. We are on the offensive, and we have momentum.

I want to make six points about where we are, and the first one is that security has dramatically improved, not just a little bit, it has dramatically improved. The trends—and the Generals will tell you this, but you can see it as well—the trends are all moving in the right direction. The number of attacks is down. Sectarian killings: 75 percent reduction since 2006. Suicide car bombs are coming down.

We knew U.S. casualties would go up because we are conducting a counteroffensive. Normandy was a counteroffensive. Incheon, Korea, was a counteroffensive. The island campaigns in the Pacific were a counteroffensive. When you conduct a counteroffensive, casualties are going to go up because you are on the offensive. We knew that was going to happen.

Now the U.S. casualties are starting to come down. We knew they eventually would, and certainly, we would like that to be a trend. We will see. It has been going on for a couple of months. We will see if it is a trend. Our judgment tells us that, over time, this will continue to come down.

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Most importantly, in my judgment, on the streets of Iraq is where you can see the difference. I have been in every neighborhood in Baghdad. It takes time to do that. I have been in all of the communities of any size and scale in the suburbs around Baghdad, to use an American term. They do not refer to them as that.

And what do I see? Schools are open. All schools are open. Marketplaces are open. Not all of them are up to 100 percent of capacity, but in the Sunni neighborhoods, where they were all on a diet in terms of services, they are coming back. Some are at 40 percent, some at 60. But every time I have taken a snapshot—in February, May and now August—there has always been improvement and continuous progress. Clinics and hospitals are open. The normal shops away from marketplaces are open.

Very, very important characteristic: In the evening, when the heat is starting to go down—and it is insufferable there, as you know, in the summer—in the evenings, at cafes, pool halls, places where people gather, people are gathering.

None of this was going on in 2006. In 2006, the schools were closed, the marketplaces were not operating, the people were afraid to go out on the streets. That was the reality of it.

So, in terms of the quality-of-life experience of people, there have been some dramatic changes, and I think it is an important denomination that we have to realize.

And when you talk to Iraqis—and I have talked to hundreds of Iraqis—the fact is that security has improved and they feel better about the situation. They do not want us to go, for sure, because they know we were a catalyst in doing this. They also take great pride in the Iraqi Army because (1) it is theirs and (2) they know the Iraqi Army is making a difference. And I will come to that later.

My second point is the al-Qaeda—the al-Qaeda is seriously hurt. They are on the defensive and this is the first time we are able to say that in 2007. They have lost Anbar province, which was their sanctuary. This, militarily, is very significant. They had moved to Diyala province in a community called Baqubah, and they established a stronghold and a sanctuary there. We took it away from them in late July in one of our most successful military operations we have ever conducted in Iraq—high casualties to them and very, very low casualties to our own forces.

The Sunnis, themselves, are isolating the al-Qaeda. I have been convinced since the beginning—and it is true of radical Islam, as well, worldwide—why you have to hold their behavior accountable and liable and you have to kill and capture them, to use the right terms. That will never defeat them, because it is an ideological movement. It is rooted in political objectives. And they can regenerate; the people that you are killing and capturing.

The only way you are going to defeat them is to reject them and isolate them by the people themselves. That is happening in Iraq. The Sunnis, who were their base of support, are rejecting them. And this is very important because that leads to the defeat of al-Qaeda.

Right now, we are conducting a military operation in a place called the Diyala River Valley. It is where they fled out of Baqubah, which is the provincial capital of Diyala, too. That oper-

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ation is going very well and the al-Qaeda are on the run. They are still dangerous. They are capable of doing a suicide bomb here and there, to be sure, but they are not the same organization.

I have gathered with a number of analysts who work this full-time in our Government and some of them believe that, if you look back on this from the perspective and prism of 2009, some of them would say the al-Qaeda has actually been defeated in Iraq in 2007. I would at least say they are on the way to being defeated in Iraq in 2007, and that is for sure. So this is a very significant undertaking.

The other thing is that the al-Qaeda has not been able to provoke a Shia response despite their desperation to do it all throughout 2007 as they have successfully done in 2006, and this is important. That is an important conclusion. The Shia have not responded in any way, shape, or form in the way that they did in 2006. Why is that? Because we are protecting Sunnis and we are also protecting Shias ourselves.

The third point: The Sunni insurgency is rapidly fading away. I will say it again: The Sunni insurgency is rapidly fading away. In my judgment, this is this most dramatic change since the 2003 invasion in Iraq. It is significantly misunderstood in terms of the significance back here in Washington, DC.

My judgment for that is because (1) it was unforeseen that this was going to happen and the scale of it, and (2) it is unaccounted for in any of the national benchmarks, so it does not get anywhere near the degree of attention. It is almost a side-bar to think something positive is going on in Anbar province, but let me tell you what this really is. First of all, it is a tribal revolt against the al-Qaeda. It has led to the Sunni insurgency conversion from fighting us to helping us. It is a political movement and a social phenomenon that is changing the security and political landscape of Iraq.

Look at tribes. These are not people that live remotely out in some desert someplace. Tribes in Iraq, as David Kilcullen, a noted Australian counterinsurgency expert, has put it, you know, tribes are a powerful interest group in Iraq that touch the fabric of Iraqi society somewhere between 80 and 90 percent. The allegiance to tribes is more important than the allegiance to a religious sect—a religious sect being Sunni or Shia—and it certainly is more important than any allegiance to a provincial government and, most certainly, to a central government or sense of a state. So a tribe is very important in this culture in the region and also in Iraq. So the significance of it is real.

It started in Anbar province, to be sure. It has now spread and I can attest to this as a result of my visit to Diyala province, to Nineveh province, to Babil province, and to Salah ad-Din and also to Baghdad. These are four additional provinces, to include Baghdad. It is now touching 40 percent of Iraq and it is in all of the contested areas. It is also—fascinating—spreading to Shia tribes who are beginning to revolt against the harsh Shia militia—and that is just an editorial comment—back to the Sunnis and the tribes.

We now have 30,000 people who are fighting with us who were fighting against us a number of weeks and months ago. That is un-

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believable. The surge alone is about 30,000. We just picked up an additional 30,000 who were fighting us—who were fighting us—and that is significant.

We have not armed them. You do not have to arm anybody in Iraq; they have arms. But what are we doing with them? We fingerprint them. We photograph them. We give them a retina scan. We know who they are. I have spoken to a bunch of these people myself. I have spoken to some of these tribal sheiks and leaders.

Make no mistake about it: Some of them, a few weeks ago, were fighting us. Some of them, a few months ago, were fighting us, to be sure, and that is a fascinating reality that is taking place.

So what is really happening? At the tactical level, to use a military term—I apologize for it, but I am who I am—at the tactical level, they are preoccupied with the al-Qaeda. The al-Qaeda was brutal and repressive in gaining their support, I mean, with the horrific killing of children and women and leaders. And I will not get into the details of it, but it is barbaric, in terms of what they have been doing to them.

And, of course, they have been imposing Sharia law and mores on them that they find very offensive. The thing they found particularly offensive is forcing marriages because they force marriages in the northwestern region of Pakistan and have been very successful in integrating into those northwestern tribes for almost 25 years now. And when you force marriages, that is how you become part of that tribe and part of that culture even though you are a radical Islamist and you can turn that whole tribe. And eventually, the Sunnis were resenting these forced marriages by these foreign fighters and other al-Qaeda members. That became a catalyst for the revolt.

But at the strategic level, it is very significant, because the leaders themselves are making political moves. And what they are doing is they have come to the realization of a couple of things. One is they cannot win the insurgency. Remember, the Sunni insurgency started the problem that we have been dealing with in Iraq. Then the al-Qaeda fell in on it. They wanted to get their regime back. It was Baathist-oriented, former regime element-oriented.

And we have been fighting the most sophisticated insurgency the West has ever faced by leaders who used to run a government, who had a tremendous amount of military skill. This is not some charismatic leader who comes down out of the mountain pressing for agrarian reform and gets a lot of working-class people to help him in the fight. These are very skilled people who have access to money, who have unlimited access to weapons and who have political savvy and military skills themselves.

They realize that they cannot win in Iraq. That is the harsh reality of it. They have been fighting us and the Iraqi security forces. They had been fighting Shia in 2006 and now they are fighting the al-Qaeda. They cannot handle all of that.

So what is going on? They are looking for a deal. That is what is happening. That is the reality of it. Who do they want to deal with? They want to deal with a Shia-dominated government. That is who they want to deal with. And they are using us as leverage

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to get that political deal, and that offers a tremendous opportunity for us.

What do they want in the near term? In the near term, they want to participate in the Iraqi security forces. This is a very good initiative on their part. We have reason to be concerned about this movement, and I will talk to that in a minute. But the fact that they want to be part of the Iraqi security forces, as opposed to setting up a separate militia, is very instructive because they are participating in the fabric of the Iraqi Government. They want to be Iraqi police and members of the Iraqi Army. They want money for essential services and for infrastructure in their communities.

What is the challenge here? The big challenge is to link the Maliki government and its resources to this political action and to maintain the momentum so it will pull toward an overall national reconciliation.

So what has Maliki done? Look, I have been a critic of Maliki in testimony ever since he became the head of the state, and I have always had concerns, reservations, doubts. I still get frustrated by the fact that he does not move fast enough, et cetera. But when Maliki does something right, you have to give him some credit.

Here is what he has done here: He has gone to Anbar province three times to visit and to sit down with these sheiks and tribal leaders. Understand what he is doing: When he is sitting in the room with these sheiks and tribal leaders—these are the men who were fighting him and trying to overthrow him, and he is sitting down and talking to them. He has put $107 million into Ramadi for construction. He has signed up and is paying 18,000 of these sheiks and tribal leaders' fighters who were fighting Maliki's government. He is paying them, and they are on the police payroll.

We have given them some basic training, not as good as we normally give them. We have done some basic vetting and there is always some risk involved here. I have talked to a lot of these 20- and 30-year-old kids who are doing this. Make no mistake about it: I mean, they wanted us out of there, but they are fed up with violence. One of the ways you defeat insurgencies is people get exhausted. They get exhausted by the violence, and I am telling you some of that is happening right before our eyes. And that is good news, and we have to, obviously, leverage it and take advantage of it.

The other thing—I told you we drove the al-Qaeda out of Baqubah and released the stranglehold that they had on the people there. Maliki drove up there right after that. Within 2 weeks of that event, he sat down again with the sheiks and tribal leaders. He just put $38 million, in the last 10 days, into Baqubah. It has touched 70 percent of the people.

This is real money in Iraq—$38 million—and when they transfer the $38 million, it is in a convoy, and it is in cash. That is the way they do it in Iraq. It is a little different than our system, but that is the way they do it.

He just delivered 560 tons of wheat to that same community in 21 trucks because they need food.

Now, this is good. These are good initiatives on Maliki's part. And what he is trying to do is to keep the momentum going in

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terms of what the Sunnis are doing and the conversion that is taking place.

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane, could you try to wind up?

General KEANE. I will wind up. I will wind up.

Chairman LANTOS. Because I want to give equal time to all of our witnesses and I want to get to my colleagues who have questions.

General KEANE. I will wind up here. I am sorry, Mr. Chairman.

There is risk to this operation, for sure, and that risk is that these people can flip back to where they were, but it is much harder to do, obviously, given where they are in their involvement in the government and the fact that we have I.D.s on all of them. The Maliki government and some people in this Government are paranoid about this because they think this is just a strategic pause that the Sunnis are doing so they can eventually take over the state.

Who knows if that is true or not? I think there will be attempts to take over the state in Iraq for years to come, but we should not turn a deaf ear to this and we should take advantage of it and use the opportunity it presents. That is for sure.

The Shia militia in Iraq is still a problem; make no mistake about it. And we are concerned about the Iranian influence. We are concerned about the fact that they are still killing U.S. forces. We are concerned about the sectarian influence in the government and also in the police.

A brief word about the Iraqi security forces—and I know General Jones will be here this afternoon, and he will be able to elaborate on it for sure. In my judgment, the Iraqi Army has really made some progress. Ask General Petraeus when the last time was that an Iraqi unit has been a combat refusal in Iraq. Ask him that question. I am not sure what the answer is, but I think it has been a long time.

The Iraqi Army is improving. It has serious logistic infrastructure problems. It has a shortage of leaders, but the progress is real.

Look, the transition is already taking place. The Iraqi Army essentially runs northern Iraq. I am not talking about the Kurdish region. I am talking about up in Mosul, in that area up there. They are in charge, and we are in a very support role. We are going to pull out of Anbar province here, you know, pretty soon, and they will take charge in Anbar province.

And they are in charge in the south. And we have problems in the south and they need to be reinforced to mitigate the British's leaving and some of the challenges that are taking place there. But they are going to be in charge there, and I think they will be able to handle it, with some additional Iraqi special operation forces.

In the central region, where the problem is, in Baghdad and in the suburbs, our leaders have plans to transition there. And they want to do that deliberately and methodically based on what the enemy situation is there and also on the capacities of the Iraqis. I think this is a good-news story. It is moving in the right direction.

The national police are fundamentally broke—the national police, nine brigades. You know, they fired all nine brigade commanders and 17 of the 24 battalion commanders, and they are still broke after all of that. And I am not sure what the answer is. I think

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it is a hopeless situation for the national police. General Petraeus and General Odierno still want to try. They want to get them out of Baghdad and get them into the provinces and see if they can make something out of them. I think that is what General Petraeus will tell you.

The local police, or the Iraqi police themselves, are certainly mixed. They are uneven in their performance. That is the reality of it. But listen to me about this: In most counterinsurgencies, the police are the last to get fixed and it normally takes a generation because of their cultural biases and the closeness that they have with the people. You will wind up having to take a generation to get through this culture of corruption and fraud and abuse that is in there. You cannot just change the leaders and change it overnight. It does take some time. And I think we are going to give it a surge to do something about it, to be sure, but I still think it will be a while before we are able to fix it.

The political progress, you know, is mixed in Iraq. The national benchmarks have not been achieved. I think we are so fixated on them it is like an old vinyl record that got stuck. And it is called "national benchmarks," and we cannot see some of the other things that are taking place in Iraq and that this bottom-up political movement, I think, has got an enormous opportunity to push Maliki in the right direction. You are going to get straight answers from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker when he comes in here.

Let me tell you, I have been very critical of the International Relations Committee here specifically. I have been very critical of this effort that the Embassy has been undertaking for some time in Iraq, but Crocker is absolutely first-rate. And he has put together a first-rate team that has just showed up there in the last few months. They are committed. They have passion for what they are doing. They are experienced. And for the first time, they truly want to win, and that is making a difference. And they are willing to take some personal risk themselves to get out there and understand what is taking place. So I am very encouraged by that team that is there.

The security progress on——

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane, could you wrap up, please? Because we are anxious to move on.

General KEANE. I will.

The last thing I would say to you is that I know there is significant disagreement on this committee, on these two committees combined, and I would trust that you would understand that there is significant progress being made in Iraq, and there are lots of challenges to be made in the future. And we have had some disappointments, and we are going to have some more disappointments in the future, but the momentum has significantly shifted here, and there is real opportunity for success. Make no mistake about it, in my view.

I wish you would consider that reality and take a bipartisan approach to that so that we could go forward into 2008 with bipartisan support for what this effort is in Iraq. And I am absolutely convinced we will reduce our forces in 2008 and we will reduce them probably further in 2009. We will do that based on the condi-

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tions that take place in Iraq, and the progress, I think, will continue to be made.

Thank you very much.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much, General Keane.

And I want to express thanks on behalf of the members of both committees, to all three of our distinguished witnesses.

If I may, I will begin with a general question to all three of you, and I would appreciate a concise answer.

What is your recommendation for U.S. policy over the next 12 months?

Secretary Perry?

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I think our policy should be, first of all, global in scope. We should look not only at what is going on in Iraq but at what is going on with other security issues around the world.

It should be, therefore, designed to restore our ground forces to a high level of readiness again so they can deal with other contingencies. That is going to require, then, a phased withdrawal from Iraq.

In particular, I would think we should need to get down to a level of 30,000 or 40,000 troops in Iraq by the end of 2008 and begin then to rebuild our forces. I believe that can be done consistent with maintaining the momentum that General Keane was describing, certainly in the Anbar province and probably in Baghdad as well. I am very skeptical that we will have much influence of what is going on in southern Iraq in the Shia regions there.

In general, though, I would say that in 2008, the Iraqis are going to have to take over responsibility for their own security and sort out the problems as best they can.

Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste?

General BATISTE. Mr. Chairman, I believe that the American people deserve a comprehensive, focused, regional strategy that gets beyond the myopic focus and preoccupation with Iraq—it is much bigger than that—and a strategy that is focused beyond the military and the diplomacy/political reconciliation and economic development well beyond Iraq, regionally, globally.

When we went into Bosnia in 1995—I was a brigade commander—we did it right. Diplomatically, we had set the conditions for success. We had the right numbers on the ground. When the Serbs tested us, they backed down immediately. There were a lot of lessons to be learned on how to do things right.

We need to mobilize this country behind what we are doing. There are serious disconnects. The American people are not at war; the military is at war. Our leadership needs to pull this together on multiple dimensions, to include our industry to get moving with the equipment that our soldiers and Marines desperately need and deserve.

We do not have an option; we need to start redeploying our troops. They are at a breaking point. We have strategic interests in the region. This is not about defeat; this is about winning. This is about a long-term view to be successful. And I am advocating a redeployment and repositioning. I am saying nothing about a time

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line. We have responsibilities in the region and it will require U.S. forces, for decades, to be successful.

I am, obviously, networked with a number of soldiers—active duty, Reserves—that have been called. I do not share the optimism that some of you have that things are going as well as they are. True, we have made incredible advances. Our military is phenomenal. It is well-led; David Petraeus is the best. But it is more than that. This solution is not military. It requires a whole lot more. And we are not firing on all cylinders, not as a government, not as a nation. We need to get behind our troops.

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane?

General KEANE. Well, I agree about the lack of a global strategy dealing with it. The most significant ideological threat facing our Nation is certainly radical Islam, and the last time we faced something like this it was called "communism" and we were in an ideological, political struggle. And that strategy was containment and it transcended Presidents and administrations. We do not have something like that. I would certainly agree with that.

I do not believe our regional strategy is quite what it should be, as well. Even as it relates to Iraq, I do not think it is right in terms of Syria and Iran, et cetera, but I think your question deals with the policy as it pertains to Iraq.

In my judgment, what needs to be done is to establish a long-term security relationship with Iraq where they know that their future, in terms of their neighbors and their role in that region, is somewhat guaranteed by their ally, the United States of America. I think, as a result of that, it helps you with near-term and immediate solutions, also, like national benchmarks.

I do believe that the military situation is part of our national policy. We should continue to provide security and stabilize Iraq into 2008. It will take that effort to do that. And I also believe that, as a result of that security improvement that is going to take place, we will be able to reduce our forces in 2008.

I also think that the national benchmarks are somewhat unrealistic. In Iraq, the political situation and their time line is different than ours but they are what they are and we should be honest with ourselves.

We say these are the Iraqis' benchmarks. Look, we browbeat the Iraqis for these national benchmarks, and we have to remember that we did that, and now we are beating them up for not achieving them in the time frame that we want them to be achieved.

We need to work with this government. Ambassador Crocker, I think, will be able to give you some sense of what he thinks the art of the possible is with it. But I do believe some patience has to be shown with them to continue to get them to move in the right direction at the national level and to take advantage of what is happening at the local and provincial levels.

Chairman LANTOS. Chairman Skelton.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

I could not agree more, General Batiste, that America is not at war. If you are wearing the uniform or if you are the family of someone wearing the uniform, you are at war, but reflecting elsewhere, it does not seem to be happening.

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My main concern, gentlemen, is the future. Someday, we will solve Iraq. It may not be pretty and it may work out that we may be very, very lucky, but we do not know what is around the corner. We could not anticipate 11 of the 12 military contingencies we have had in the last 30 years, and, sure as God made little green apples, we are going to have some in the future. It is, hopefully, a long way away.

But I am truly concerned about the readiness of our forces both in training and in numbers and in equipment, to handle any unforeseen, heaven forbid, military contingency. They are out there, and I do not want to even guess as to what they would be.

My question of each of you is: Given the present efforts in Iraq, how strained will our forces continue to be that (A) undermine our efforts in Afghanistan to complete the job, the very difficult job, of the terrorists and the Taliban, and (B) to be prepared for those unforeseen military contingencies that will come to pass?

I would ask each of you to comment on that, please.

Mr. PERRY. Mr. Chairman, I think we are not now adequately prepared with adequate readiness levels for the kind of contingencies you are envisioning. And if we maintain the size of the deployment in Iraq through 2008, we will be less prepared.

I believe we need to do two things: Phase down the deployment in Iraq and begin the retraining of our forces and, secondly, we have a big due bill on getting our equipment back to an acceptable state of readiness. And both of these need to be focused on in order for us to meet our global contingencies in the world.

General BATISTE. Mr. Chairman, in my view, and based on continuous and frequent feedback from a number of soldiers and Marines of all ranks, our current capability will not sustain the strategy much longer. We need to be worried about this.

The Active component has serious problems. The Reserve component has even more serious problems. None of us should be content with deploying pickup teams. Pickup teams; that violates a principle that none of us should walk away from. Unit integrity is important and we have driven our army to do things that I, years ago, would never have done.

We have a range of strategic issues out there that we are not prepared to deal with. So I think this is a serious, serious issue. And it gets back to the idea that we do not have the means to do the current strategy. So it is time to rethink our strategy.

What an opportunity to rethink a strategy and finally end up with something that is truly focused, not only regionally but globally, to accomplish what we are trying to do, to turn off the myopic approach that we have on Iraq today and get serious about finishing this thing successfully.

I am not advocating defeat at all; I want to win this thing. But let us not violate our doctrine and principles of war when we do it.

Mr. SKELTON. General Keane?

General KEANE. Yes, well, the fact is, I mean, we are fighting two wars, one in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. And obviously, the one in Iraq is at a vastly different scale, and, as a result of fighting two wars simultaneously, our military is being stressed, as it has

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been in most other wars that we have fought and particularly when there is so much national interest at stake as there is in Iraq.

So, yes, the military is under strain, and it is being stressed, and there are equipment issues, and there are personnel issues, and it is affecting whether people want to join the military or not. I think that is all very understandable.

But where I cannot get to is that, because of those issues, you would take actions that increased the risk in Iraq to where our military commanders believe it is untenable and you run the risk of losing. That, to me, makes no sense, that because the military is under stress and strain, we are willing to risk losing a war. And somehow that will help us strategically with our adversaries who are looking at us and our allies—and some of those relationships are tenuous at best—they are looking at us as well and are watching us throw the towel in.

So I accept the fact that it is under stress. I do believe there is some risk associated with it because we are fighting wars, and when we have fought wars in the past, we have had other strategic risks.

Now, we do have some hedge here. The Navy and the Air Force, by and large, with some exceptions, are not involved in these two ground wars, and that helps us. And if we had a contingency like in Korea and we needed ground forces, I am sure what the Secretary of Defense would do is he would send all available, who are not involved in Iraq, to that ground war regardless of when they came back from Iraq, and they would be further stressed because of the seriousness of that incursion.

So that is my response, Mr. Chairman. And we are being stressed. We are under strain. There are some risks associated with it, but let us face the reality of it: We are fighting two wars, and we should be about the business of winning both of those wars.

Thank you.

Mr. SKELTON. You do understand my concern.

General KEANE. Completely.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Thank you so much to my good friend, Mr. Lantos.

Thank you, gentlemen, for excellent testimony.

I would like to direct my remarks and my questions to Secretary Perry, if I could.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Understanding the emphasis on national reconciliation as a means of providing long-term stability in Iraq, can you provide us with recommendations as to how you would propose that the Iraqi Central Government could convince the Islamic jihadists, the militants and the insurgents to lay down their weapons, to stop fueling sectarian violence, to stop killing Americans, Iraqis and others and, instead, come to the negotiation table?

Further, how would you propose that the Iraqi Central Government convince the terrorist sponsors of Iran and Syria to stop their destructive policies that are supporting these attacks in Iraq?

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How would you propose that we convince the Iraqi people to take more risks when the United States Congress is talking about withdrawal?

You were so involved in a very able and distinguished way, Mr. Secretary, in the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans. How long did it take those different groups to reach that point?

You advocated and supported military action in the Balkans, and I ask, are the Iraqi people any less deserving of our help?

In fact, in an interview with CNN about Bosnia in December 1995, you recognized that, throughout history—and I quote:

> "We have asked our soldiers to take risks to protect American values and American interests. The values are easy to understand when you reflect on the killings, the atrocities that have been taking place in Bosnia for the last few years. The United States national security interest is involved in keeping this war from spreading, threatening the security and the stability of all of Europe. I would tell any family that, whatever risks their son or daughter faced in this mission, that the United States might face risks much worse than that if we were to have walked away from this mission. The world we live in does not give us the option of no risks."

So, finally, Mr. Secretary, would you not agree that, if we withdraw from Iraq, the atrocities and the ethnic cleansing would surely increase and that terrorists and their state sponsors would likely fill the security and power vacuum and that the conflict there would likely spread and threaten the security and the stability of the entire Middle East and beyond?

Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

Chairman LANTOS. I would like to suggest that we will wait for Secretary Perry's response until after we have cast two votes. The committee will stand in recess for 20 minutes.

[Recess.]

Chairman LANTOS. The joint hearing of the House Foreign Affairs and Armed Services Committees will resume.

And I will ask my friend Ms. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen to restate her question to Secretary Perry.

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

They were just basically two questions, really, Mr. Secretary. What are your recommendations to the Iraqi Government in how they could convince the Islamic jihadists to lay down their arms and to come to the negotiation table?

Then, secondly, because of your experience in Bosnia and when you spoke about what would happen were we to pull out, do you think that those same atrocities and ethnic cleansings and horrible actions would take place in Iraq, as well, if we were to promptly withdraw?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you.

Secretary Perry?

Mr. PERRY. I think they are wonderful questions.

Earlier, when you raised the question, you also quoted me, and I love that quote. I am glad you gave it, and I stand by it on the importance of service.

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In comparing this with Bosnia, I also want to note two important differences, which are: We went into Bosnia with an adequate number of troops to perform the mission in the first place, and therefore, we were not scrambling to catch up from not having done that. Secondly, we went in with allies that compromised more than 50 percent of the force instead of allies that comprise about 10 percent of the force.

To get directly to your two questions, the Iraqi Government, I believe, should pass legislation on a priority basis that provides for political sharing with the Sunnis and oil revenue sharing with the Sunnis. If they would do that, that would remove a major rationale for the civil war that is going on.

I must say, though, even if they would do that, that would not deal with the hard-liners in Iraq, and I believe that we and they would have to fight them. So, therefore, in addition to the legislation, they are going to need to build up the Iraqi Army to take over a greater share of that fight.

Third, I think they should support the Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar who are engaged in fighting al-Qaeda in cooperation with the Americans. I was pleased to hear General Keane's comments this morning which would suggest that they are actually starting to do that now. I think it is a very good move.

In terms of the Americans, I believe that the Americans have an important stake in stemming the violence in Iraq and an even greater stake in seeing that the violence does not spread through the region.

I will note that we have already put an enormous effort into achieving that goal for more than 4 years, and it is long past the time for the Iraqi Army to be taking over a larger share of that effort. Again, as General Keane testified this morning, there are some signs that they are doing so, which I am happy to hear.

Thank you.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Just as a follow-up, Mr. Secretary, about the ethnic cleansing, the violence that could occur were we to precipitously pull out of Iraq, would that be similar to the statements you made about our involvement in Bosnia?

Mr. PERRY. Yes, it would be, and I am not in favor of precipitously pulling out of Iraq. I would stand more by the recommendations made in the Iraq Study Group, which call for a gradual phase-down. And even after the phase-down is completed, we recommended we maintain some level of troops in Iraq capable of fighting al-Qaeda, for example, and that we maintain air and logistic support for the Iraqi Army for that purpose.

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

Thank you to the gentlemen as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. I am pleased to call on the distinguished ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, my friend, Duncan Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again, thank you for holding this hearing.

Mr. Secretary, you have talked about what you consider to be the need to achieve readiness and that being a reason to redeploy or to leave Iraq with some expediency.

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I have looked at the figures and have reviewed them for a decade and a half now, since you were Secretary of Defense in the 1990s, and compared the modernization of the U.S. Army and the U.S. Armed Forces in those days and today.

Now, in the 1990s, you averaged in your request to Congress about $45 billion to $48 billion DoD-wide for modernization, for new equipment. The CBO, at our request, told us what they thought needed to be purchased each year simply to replace the old equipment and keep the inventory at a modest state of modernization. The CBO's analysis was that we needed to be spending $90 billion a year and that the shortfall was approximately $42 billion. At the last of your tenure, you went slightly over $50 billion but still leaving the shortfall at around $40 billion per year. That translated into what General Schoomaker, the recent Chief of Staff of the Army, called the "holes in the yard" of the 1990s.

Now, today, we are spending in excess of $90 billion a year on modernization. That means we are meeting at least the metric that the CBO sent us in those days. And so, the first observation I would have is that there did not seem to be a problem with having a 50-percent modernization deficit during the 1990s, and yet, that is being used as a comparison, as an example, of a time of relative readiness for the United States Armed Forces.

Now, General Batiste, I looked at your statistic when you said, in an apocalyptic sense, we are having to recruit 42-year-old privates. We just looked at the statistics, and of the 80,000 Army recruits over the last 2 years, only 653 of them are over the age of 35. Now, that has led to a pool's being established in which we have got $1 wagers, and one of our members says that he thinks there is no more than five members of the U.S. Army who were recruited who were over 42. My wager is that there are at least 10. And I want to let you know, if you want to get in on that, you can. But that is not an example of the 80,000 members of the U.S. Army who were recruited, nor is it an illustration of a bad policy in Iraq.

My question would be to General Keane as to a point that I think is the most important issue, at least from my perspective, and that is the reliability of the Iraqi battalions.

And I would ask the other gentlemen to comment on this if you would like to.

We have 129 Iraqi battalions. We now have a couple more that are stood up, trained and equipped. Please give me, General Keane, your take from your last review of the competency of the Iraqi forces and whether they are being sufficiently rotated into battle—because, as you know, some of them have been stationed in benign areas that have not had a lot of conflict—whether they are being rotated into battle on a fairly even basis so that all of them are getting 3 or 4 months' combat experience, if you will, where they can shake out their logistics capability and reinforce their chain of command and, basically, develop military competency.

Lastly, General Keane—and I would ask the other gentlemen to comment on this, but I think this is a good question for you, too. We talk about readiness, and that question has different meanings to different people. The implication is—and it is certainly true on paper—that a military division which has never left the confines of

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Fort Benning, if it has checkmarks in all of the boxes of the equipment and personnel and flu shots and all of the other things that are used as readiness indicators, is more ready than a division of personnel who have been engaged in combat in a war-fighting theater.

Yet, if you look at the military competence, which is driven by military experience, you would say that battle-hardened unit in the theater probably has more military effectiveness for the mere fact that they now have fought. They are battle-hardened, they are veterans. And they have also worked out their chain of command, they have worked out the logistics, they have worked their operations.

I think it is instructive for us, as Members of Congress and as we throw around these terms of readiness, if you can tell us if there is a difference between being ready in the sense of a brand-new unit that has no battlefield experience but has new uniforms and has all of the checkmarks in the equipment boxes, and that of a battle-hardened unit which has been undertaking operations in a war-fighting theater.

I guess the bottom line of that is: Do you really think that the military units in Iraq are strained to the breaking point, that they are melting down, that they are undergoing unsustainable stress, and that they are losing their military competence?

I know that is a little string of questions, but if you could, I would like you to answer that, and I would like the other gentlemen to comment on that. And you will certainly have fair comment on my statements with respect to those statistics we have.

General KEANE. Okay. Thank you, Congressman Hunter.

First, in dealing with the Iraqi Army itself, there is clear progress on the performance of these organizations. In the past, we did have genuine problems with them. We had combat refusals, as you are very much aware of, back in 2004 and 2005, and there was some of that certainly in 2006. We had uneven leadership, to be sure.

What we are seeing now is, because of the protracted nature of the war, that leadership has gained considerable experience. The Iraqis are primarily responsible for training their own soldiers now, and that adds to, I think, the stick-to-itiveness and to the connectivity and to the cohesion that is in these organizations.

So, as a result of that—and I think, as I said before, General Petraeus will have the answer for you—but it has been a very long time since there has been any combat refusal, despite the fact that the tempo of combat operations has, frankly, increased quite a bit because of the counteroffensive that we are conducting.

So I think there has been steady progress in the growth and development of the Iraqi combat forces, and I think General Jones would echo that when he is here this afternoon.

Right now, today, the Iraqis have the responsibility in the north where we used to have it in Mosul. They have it in the south, and they are going to be reinforced in the south. And I believe they will take over in the west here pretty soon, with us in a supporting role, in Anbar province. So, if that is happening and it is happening successfully in the north and with reinforcements in the south, I hope we will be able to get some success, and I am convinced we will in the west.

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Then, I think, this is a good sign because it is our exit strategy. I mean, you are absolutely right. I know why you are focusing on that, because that is how we are going to get out of Iraq and to leave Iraq stable and secure. I am very familiar with the program that you were talking about in the rotation because I know you conceptualized that idea. You shared it with me many, many months ago.

They have never adopted that with the kind of rigor that you would like to see, where every unit gets battle-hardening experience for X number of months and then goes and gets refit. It does not have that kind of institutionalization to it. It is much more fragmented in the way they go about it. They do move units in and out of Baghdad and in and around the belt quite a bit. Sometimes they actually move them more than we want to move them, because we want them to stay more connected to the people.

Nonetheless, despite the so-called "unorganized" way of doing it, if I were to use that phrase, the general trend of that is more combat experience, better performance, better growth and development of leaders.

The Army is expanding quite a bit. They are going to grow it. They are going to increase it to 40 or 50 percent. It is short leaders now, and that will get exacerbated, obviously, because you cannot get a battalion commander. You cannot hire him off the street someplace. You have to grow that for 15 or 16 years. They have some plans to mitigate that, but there will be some challenges.

Overall, I think the Iraqi Army is, by and large, a pretty good-news story.

In reference to your comment that I think you were talking about, you were talking about United States forces in Iraq in terms of the breaking point issue, correct, sir?

Mr. HUNTER. Yes.

General KEANE. Yes. Listen, I feel very confident about this, having seen so many of these units. I have talked to so many people at different—you know, at platoons, companies, battalions. Most of those soldiers who are benefiting from the surge operation—not all are, but most combat units that are feel that they have been dealt a winning hand. They now have an instrument that they can do something with. And it is particularly interesting in the contrast of the units that were executing the old strategy versus the new strategy, the 2006 strategy versus the 2007. But in terms of a breaking point, nothing could be further from the truth.

Are they stressed? Certainly. It is a 15-month tour, very demanding, with the level of contact that they have with the enemy that probably exceeds many of the wars we have been involved in. That absolutely is true; it is. But the sheer quality of these people is the answer here, in terms of their professionalism, their dedication, their commitment.

I think it may be, historically, in the history of the Nation, one of the most extraordinary military experiences we have had, because it is not lost on the troops that a majority of the American people have profound questions about this war at a minimum and may not even agree with what is taking place. They know they are supported by the American people, but they know they do not agree with what is taking place, and yet, the performance of this organi-

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zation is magnificent. There are no refusals to speak of. There is no chain-of-command disruption. AWOL and desertion rates are miniscule. There is no fracturing of the chain of command. There are no discipline problems. All of the problems I just mentioned we had in Vietnam when an army was on a battlefield and it was not being supported by a plurality of the people back home and that army began to disintegrate in its combat role, it is not happening here.

Stressed, to be sure; strained, to be sure. But they are highly motivated, dedicated and performing, and the performance is the most important. The performance is to a very, very high standard.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you.

Gentlemen, Dr. Perry or General Batiste, if you wanted to comment, I would certainly invite that comment.

Let me just say, Mr. Chairman, too, that I really appreciate the fact that we have got these great people, former Secretaries of Defense, former military leaders, who come and talk to us and to give us their straightforward advice.

Gentlemen, we may differ on some things, but I appreciate all three of you being here.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Congressman Hunter.

I would like to make a few comments on your points.

As the Secretary of Defense, my goal at that time was to keep all—all—Army brigades at the highest readiness level. As you well know, that rating is a complex calculation of manning levels and equipment and training. As a result, it was an unusual situation for even one Army brigade to be even one level below the highest level of readiness. And whenever that did happen, I was called in to account by the Congress, as you may remember, and I think rightly so.

Today, I have no doubt that all of our units in Iraq are at the highest readiness level and at the highest level of combat effectiveness, which is a point you were making and of which I completely agree, and General Keane made the same point.

My comments on readiness have to do with our stand-by units in the United States. They are not ready for contingency missions. And I do believe that America's security depends on Iraq, to be sure, but it also depends on much more than Iraq and we have to be prepared for other missions besides Iraq.

Thank you.

General BATISTE. Thank you, sir.

I totally agree with both Secretary Perry and General Keane that we have the finest deployed military that we have ever had, and we are truly blessed to have these great formations—battalions, brigades and divisions—in the field in Iraq doing what they are doing. There is no question that they are focused on their mission in the current fight, and they have what they need, in large measure.

The problem is this: It is taking the rest of our military to support and to resource 25 brigades. These great outfits are where they are now because we have gutted the rest of the force. I know that to be true. There are countless examples where units are thrown together at the last minute. There are companies right now that deploy in less than 4 months at 50 percent strength with

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young lieutenants leading them with no experience. The schoolhouses are gutted; you cannot find an instructor.

The doctrine is not being written to keep pace with what is happening on the ground. The equipment—the Bradleys and the Abrams tanks and all of this equipment—is backed up at the depots in bad need of repair, with no strategic Reserve. This is not a position that we need to be in.

I came in the Army in 1974, and I spent the first 10 or 12 years rebuilding that great Army to where it was going into the first Gulf War. I do not want to see any of my former subordinates having to go through that again. This Nation is at risk, and we allowed this to happen because, in large measure, the capability does not match with the strategy. And that is what I have been trying to say this morning.

There needs to be an effort to say, "Administration, would you please step out from behind Dave Petraeus and defend your strategy." Dave is the best, and he is fighting the strategy in it, in the context of Iraq, but it is so much more than that, as I have tried to describe this morning. There are other elements of strategy—diplomacy, political reconciliation, the economic hard work—that have to happen way beyond Iraq, into the region and beyond, so that we can build the kind of synergy and focus that we had going into Bosnia, for example, in December 1995. It is not there.

So, to say that the units in contact with the enemy today are not running on full strength and, you know, are not led well is simply not true. Of course they are. But let us be frank: It took the rest of the force—Army and Marine Corps—to field those 25 brigades. Not good.

Now, with respect to the Iraqi formations, I also agree that there is certainly incredible progress. There is no doubt about it. We have heard that the police are incompetent. It was true when I was there, and I am sure it is today, but we have a ways to go. We have yet to issue the Iraqi Army, those battalions and brigades that are stood up, the requisite equipment to fight the insurgent on an even playing field to take our place. It has not happened yet, and, quite frankly, we are running out of time.

Chairman LANTOS. Thank you very much.

Mr. HUNTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from New York, Mr. Ackerman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I thank the panel.

It seems to me we sent the movie reviewers out and they have come back and the results are not just mixed but it seems like they have seen different films. It is kind of hard to figure this thing out, in listening to the testimony.

General Keane, I was a bit dismayed when you said at one point that we were fighting two wars simultaneously, the war in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. I think that is the entire problem in a nutshell. There are too many people, including the administration, who think we are fighting a war or two wars or two wars in two different places and have lost sight of the whole fact that we are supposed to be fighting the war on terrorism. And if we are fighting two wars and another one breaks out somewhere else,

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there is no overall strategy here, it would seem to me, as to what we are doing.

And I was kind of overwhelmed by all of the very happy, anecdotal news. It sounds like we are about to declare that al-Qaeda is in its final death throes.

I used to teach math. I would ask students, you know, "If a train left New York at 2 o'clock and went to some city that was 500 miles away and it was traveling at 40 miles an hour, what time would it get there?" I have never had students as smart as this panel who would probably ask, "How do we assume that the wheels are not going to fall off the train or that the tracks are not going to be ripped up somewhere?"

Let us assume that the wheels are not going to fall off the train. How long do we have to be in Iraq, assuming the rate of progress is exactly what it has been for the past 3 or 4 months? Pick your best 3 or 4 months. Assuming the track does not get ripped up, nobody blows up the way and nothing happens to the conductor, how many months do we have to be in Iraq before our train arrives?

General Keane?

General KEANE. Yes, I will be glad to take a stab at that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If you could, keep it brief, because I have another question.

General KEANE. Yes. Right.

First, how long would we be in Iraq? I am not certain, but I will tell you this. One is we need a long-term security relationship with the Iraqis, and that would mean that we would probably be involved for many years but certainly not with this level of violence that we have today. It would be a relationship that would be a training relationship for the Iraqis, because we have stability, and I do not think it would be as much of a concern to anybody because, at that point, you do not have the conflict. You know, the casualties——

Mr. ACKERMAN. We have been there 5 years since the President declared that the major part of the war was over. When you say we will have to be there for many years, is that more than 10?

General KEANE. What I am talking about is a long-term security relationship with Iraq, that, after it is stabilized——

Mr. ACKERMAN. My question was, when will that be? When will it be stabilized, if the rate of progress has been what it has been?

General KEANE. I am not sure, but I will tell you this——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Just a second.

General KEANE. In June 2008—I believe this, I believe we are going to continue to make progress—we will reduce our forces to at least the pre-surge level, with the possibility they could be reduced further. The pre-surge level is about 130,000, and certainly, if that progress continues into 2009, then we would probably in 2009 realistically get down to below 100,000. And I would imagine that the number that we would probably keep in Iraq over time would be a ballpark number of around 50,000 to 60,000.

At that point, you are not dealing with the conflict, so I do not believe it is an issue in terms of what the size is. The size would be necessary to fit what the requirements are.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Progress is eternal, and I hope that we are not there that long.

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The other part of my question—I was a young State senator some 30 years ago, and I thanked the local police captain because he responded to my complaint that a bunch of teenagers and troublemakers were hanging out on a corner. The next day, they were gone. I called to thank him for solving the problem, and he taught me an important lesson. He says, "We did not solve the problem. It is like a balloon. We squeezed it, and they showed up somewhere else. They just went to another corner."

The balloon of Iraq is not filled with neutral, nonthinking air. If we squeeze it in one place, the intelligent force there determines when and where they bulge somewhere else.

As to the anecdotal successes that you cited——

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman's time is up.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. Is this a balloon, and are we just moving the problem around?

General KEANE. The quick answer to that is, no, we are not just moving it around. I think that is what we were doing in the past when we had a strategy that was based on transitioning to the Iraqi security forces. I think the fact that our forces are in the neighborhoods, protecting the people, has changed the entire dimension.

And to use your city analogy, I am a New Yorker, and we did have a mayor who came into that city and did not accept the reality that crime cannot be resolved. It is a human problem; it can be resolved by humans. In New York City today, using the balloon example, the fact of the matter is that it has one of the lowest crime rates of any major city in America.

So these things can be done, and I think that kind of progress is unfolding right before our eyes in Iraq.

And I do not think General Petraeus would be able to tell you either exactly when he thinks the situation would be so stabilized in Iraq that there is no longer any conflict and we can dramatically bring the forces down to whatever is necessary to train the Iraqis. I am not certain that is answerable at this time.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, I share your concern about losing in Iraq. To me, it is crucial for the American families that we are successful. I take very seriously that Osama bin Laden has identified the Tigris and Euphrates, Baghdad, as World War III. I take very seriously Zawahiri's declaring that Iraq and Afghanistan are the central front in the global war on terror.

I believe that your concerns and mine are, indeed, shared by the *Washington Post*, a newspaper identified with the Democratic Party, but they have editorialized that we must be successful or there will be a catastrophic loss of life in Iraq, that there would be the creation of safe havens that you have identified where al-Qaeda and its allies could conduct operations against America and against our allies. Finally, they pointed out in their editorial that there would be the potential for a regional conflict, again, with catastrophic consequences to the people of the United States.

So, from the beginning, I have been, in my seven visits to Iraq, trying to monitor the training of the Iraqi security forces. And you

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have identified today the successes with the Army. I am concerned, obviously, with your estimation with the leaks of other reports about the police, but it has always been my hope for the training of the security forces of Iraq in what is the exit strategy.

Can you review again—and I particularly appreciated your comments about the Iraqis being in the lead in various parts of the country, but, if you could, be specific about that.

Indeed, I had a son serve in southern Iraq. He went on convoys across country, but he is proud of his service and I am proud of it. I am proud of our military.

General KEANE. Yes. Thank you.

Going back to the comment that you made about the overall strategy in Iraq and its criticality in not losing, regardless of what I think our views are as to whether we should have gone to war in Iraq and what our reasons were at the time, we are very much past all of that. But from the enemy's perspective, the fact that we are in Iraq and it is attempting to establish a fledgling democracy that has some representation of its people, that reality is a dagger to the heart of radical Islam, and the al-Qaeda being one of those instruments.

Why is that? Because it is capitalism and democracy that they fear the most. Those big ideas are the ideas that can defeat them, and they know that. And that is why they have declared this being priority one in Iraq, because of what the threat is to their big idea and to their ideology and to the caliphate that they want to establish in the region. To plant that flag of a representative democracy right there in an Arab nation is a huge threat to them, and so they are coming after this with everything they can.

The good news is we have made some real progress against these guys, and they have lost their major sanctuaries, and they are on the defensive, and they are on the run. So that is the good news.

The other thing is, in reference to the Iraqis' performance again, we have pulled out our forces, by and large, out of Mosul, which was a major area. There is still some al-Qaeda presence in that area, and there has been some other Sunni insurgent activity in that area as well. And the Iraqis are in the lead in that entire region in that area, and we are in a support role. They run the operations day-in and day-out.

The British in the south are turning over to the 10th Iraqi Division operations in the south. They have trained them. They have prepared them for it, and they believe they are ready to deal with it. The British, as you know, are pulling back to the airport.

There are problems in the south, nonetheless, and some of those problems are serious because the Shia gangs are fighting one another. But it still is an example of the Iraqis taking over. And they have to be reinforced because that 10th Division cannot handle it, particularly with the Brits pulling back the way they are.

I do foresee it happening in Anbar province here in the near future, probably pretty soon, where we will pull back and the Iraqis will be given much more responsibility and probably be in the lead. There are places right now in the central region, where we are most concerned about, in Baghdad and in the suburbs around Baghdad.

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I don't want to say it publicly because of the classification nature of it, but there are units there that we could transition to right now because of their capabilities. We are not doing that because we want to cement the gains that we already have. We sense that the Iraqis could take some of this over. But the commanders want to wait a little bit longer, err on the side of caution here and make sure that they see it right, that they are going to be able to do it.

But you will see that happening in the central region as well in certain neighborhoods in Baghdad and in the suburbs around it. So we are already into transitioning to Iraqi taking the lead. It is happening before our eyes.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste, do you have any comment?

General BATISTE. Yes, thank you.

A previous answer to a question in the last round was, it is going to take too long, based on the current strategy and the means that we have to achieve what we are after. And it is all about the strategy.

Yes, the Iraqi Army is getting much better, no question about it. But as I said before, they are largely dependent upon the United States force for communications, for logistics, for fire support, all of the means that are required to fight the insurgent on a level playing field.

On top of that, most of these Iraqi formations do not have the heavy equipment, the heavy—the tools they need to replace us. That is a long way off, based on where we are right now.

And I must also say that Americans don't read history, and there is a lot of it; the library is replete with history in this region: Tactical gains today evaporate tomorrow; the enemy of your enemy is your friend.

Beware that we don't draw the wrong conclusions. Rather, let us focus on our national strategy that we need now to be successful in the global war against Islamic extremism. It goes well beyond the confines of Iraq and Afghanistan.

We are not organized to accomplish that, and we sure haven't mobilized our Nation to get behind it. What I hear from many of my former comrades: "We are at war, but the country is not with us."

Chairman LANTOS. Secretary Perry, do you have any comment?

Mr. PERRY. No, no, thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Ortiz.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to see our witnesses here with us today.

I have a question now for the panel, for all of you. There have been several remarks made by President Bush about Iran and influence in the region. What is your assessment of the influence in Iraq and what should be done to counter their influence now? Could it be that they see that we are stretched too thin, that we are letting the contractors do some of the work that the military used to do? Could it be that we have too many deployments and they know that our troops are tired? Could that be one of the reasons why now Iran is trying to meddle in Iraq?

Chairman LANTOS. Secretary Perry.

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Mr. PERRY. I think Iran is making trouble in Iraq for us because they can, and they do; and I think it is a serious problem for the United States.

I am even more concerned about Iran's move toward attaining nuclear weapons. I think that is a more major problem we need to be concerned with in Iran.

So we have a major security problem today with Iran. They are meddling in Iraq and they are proceeding on a nuclear weapons program. I think we need to be applying serious diplomatic and economic pressure on Iran to try to offset that. I fear that we are distracted by Iraq and we are not paying sufficient attention to the problems from Iran.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste.

General BATISTE. Again, it is our administration's failure to embrace a comprehensive regional strategy, which includes diplomacy in serious ways with countries like Iran and Syria and the other moderate Arab nations in the world. I lived in Iran in the 1960s and visited frequently before the fall of the Shah. And I have memories of the great people, Persians, that we ought to be connected with in a serious way, any way we can.

I recall, in the Balkans, the success was driven in large measure because we stayed connected with everybody—friends, enemies alike; the communications, the diplomacy that needs to be happening, and it is not today.

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane.

General KEANE. Clearly, the Iranians are meddling in Iraq. Their primary interest is they want the United States to fail. They would like to get something close to a proxy state, certainly with the Shia-dominated government. It is something short of that, certainly one where they can influence quite a bit.

And what is fascinating about that is, they are not only aiding directly the Shia militia, but we have caught them at aiding the al-Qaeda, who are Sunnis, and also the Sunni insurgency. And the reason why they have been able and wanting to do that is because they have a common enemy in the United States. So their major near-term objective is to drive the United States out of Iraq. And that is the reality of it.

In terms of dealing with them, I don't think we have ever done this effectively, myself. I can associate myself with the Secretary and also John on this. Iran has serious economic issues, and we should be leveraging that. And we should have a very coherent policy dealing with Iran, not only as it pertains to a multilateral approach to nuclear weapons, but as it pertains to their meddling in the region, in Iraq certainly, and also in the other contested areas in the region. They are the number one threat in that region, to the stability of the region over time; and we do need a coherent policy to deal with it. It should have many factions to it, and certainly we have to get other people involved.

But I have always been convinced in my own mind that there are things we can exploit here with Iran because of their own self-interest and some of the challenges that they have.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Saxton.

Mr. SAXTON. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

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General Batiste, in your opening statement and in subsequent answers to members' questions, you have seemingly gone out of your way to paint a very, very negative picture. And that is certainly your right. And if that is your perspective, we appreciate that and we appreciate you coming here to share that information with us.

However, in your statement, you appear to use some information which is questionable. One of your statements is that sectarian violence continues, the number of Iraqi civilians killed in July 2007 was higher than February 2007 when the surge began. We looked up the numbers. And as a matter of fact, in February 2007 there were 3,014 Iraqis killed according to multinational force numbers, which we were told yesterday by the CBO are the only numbers that exist. So in February 2007 there were 3,014, and in July 2007 there were 1,690 Iraqi deaths.

Further, in December 2006 there were 2,193 Iraqi deaths and by December 2007 there were 575 deaths per month, a decrease of 74 percent. That is not the impression that you gave in your statement.

Total attacks of any type dropped from a high of 1,350 in October 2006 to 250 per month most recently. Total car bomb attacks in December 2006 were 44; in the most recent month, August, there were 19.

So you are right in saying sectarian violence continues, but the impression that you tried to give was that there was little or no improvement, and that is simply not true.

In another part of your statement, as was pointed out by the ranking member, the gentleman from California, Mr. Hunter, you indicated that the all-volunteer Army cannot continue at the current cycle of deployment for much longer, and you pointed out that in order to keep people in the Army that the Army recently stepped away from important standards and is now enlisting "42-year-old privates," your words.

As a matter of fact, in the last 2 years, in 2006 and 2007, we have recruited 80,000 Army soldiers and 653 were over the age of 35. So you are right, we are recruiting up to age 42. But the impression that you tried to give was that we were putting guys on the front line and recruiting up to age 42 to do that, and that was a misleading statement in my opinion. I just wanted to point that out for the record.

General Keane, it has been suggested here several times today by various members and others that our aim should be to leave Iraq "as soon as possible." In your opinion, what would happen in Iraq if we did that?

General KEANE. What would happen with a high degree of certainty is a return to what we saw in 2006. It would unleash the forces of evil that are in Iraq to manipulate the people for their own personal gain, and we would return to a very high level of violence.

What is checkmating that violence is the presence of security forces that are protecting the people. And that is why, as I said—without the numbers, because I didn't want to bore you with the numbers—that all of those trends are down. That level of violence has improved for the simple reason that security forces are there

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protecting the people and keeping these thugs, killers and the like away from each other and off of those people.

If we pull those forces out, we return to 2006. We have already seen the picture. We will just replay that picture again.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste, would you like to comment on the earlier observation?

General BATISTE. Yes, sir, thank you.

With respect to the misleading statement question, it is true that the Army has lowered the recruiting age. That is a recent development. So I would suggest that we ought to come back and look at the numbers in about 6 to 8 months. But the point is the Army is clearly lowering its standards to maintain the current force, which in my view is insufficient to accomplish our current strategy worldwide.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Faleomavaega.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank our distinguished panelists for the excellent and most eloquent statements that they provided before our joint hearing.

I would like to ask the members of the panel: What is or should be our national policy on the use of our ready Reservists and National Guard force structure, especially the way that we are fighting this war in Iraq? As I note with interest that there have been a lot of numbers and indications of exactly how our Reservists or National Guard should be utilized.

I was under the impression that our Reservists and National Guard should be the last, the last level of reliance for the Pentagon we need to bring into this situation that we find ourselves in in Iraq, simply because of the lack of personnel. If I am wrong to suggest that, I think now our entire force structure in Iraq is compulsive, 30 to 40 percent are Reservists and National Guard.

I am also informed that we have got some very serious problems of readiness and maintenance. In having these Reservists or National Guard people returned from the war in Iraq there have been some very difficult situations of the military families in all of this. And I want to ask all three gentlemen: What should be our national policy?

Is this the way we utilize our Reservists and National Guard to fight a war? Did we do it in Vietnam? I believe it was because of the draft that limited the use of our Reservists and National Guard.

But I would like a response from all of you gentlemen if I could.

General KEANE. I will start and give the Secretary a break here.

Well, first of all, you are absolutely right. We have moved from a strategic Reserve with the National Guard, which we have had from post-World War II to the 1990s, when we started the change. We changed without telling anybody; we changed to an operational Reserve. I think it is misguided, myself. I think because of the tempo of operations that we are facing in the 21st century, I believe the movement to an operational Reserve doesn't make any sense.

The only reason we started in the 1990s in Bosnia and other places where we were deployed—why did we start pulling the National Guard and Reserves in and conduct operations at greater frequency? Because it was too much of a strain on what? The active

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duty force. And why is that? Because the active duty force is too small.

That is the problem we have. That is the elephant in the room here. We have fundamentally broken the social compact with people who are in the Guard and the Reserves. We moved them from a strategic Reserve, to be used on occasion, to an operational Reserve where they are used with a much higher level of frequency, and thus, the stress and the strain.

I think it is misguided. I think we need to raise the level of the active duty forces so they can do a contingency like Afghanistan and like Iraq with some Guard and Reserve support, but not with the overdependence that we have on them where the Guard forces and Reserves grew from 45 to 50 percent of our deployment during certain portions of the Iraq conflict.

And that is what I believe needs to be done. Redo the social compact and also grow the size of the active duty force so that the Reserve and Guard forces are used temporarily and infrequently, not frequently to the degree that we are using now. And if we had a major problem of a much larger scale where it requires all in, so to speak, that is understandable, but that is not the case here.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste, do you care to comment?

General BATISTE. Yes, sir. Exactly.

The Reserves and the National Guard units that I know of in Upstate New York are in serious trouble right now. Equipment is at 40 percent strength; the rest of it is in Iraq. When a unit is notified, alerted for deployment, the commander quickly looks at his roster and he realizes that most of the soldiers in his unit have already exceeded their time clock so they can't deploy. So the National Guard Bureau goes back and fills that unit from across the country, literally; and what you end up with are pick-up teams that are being quickly trained and sent to Iraq. And that, I submit, is not the way America goes to war.

We missed an opportunity to call this Nation to action after 9/11. And, my God, we need to fix that if we are truly going to be successful with this decades-long effort that we embarked on for all the right reasons.

Chairman LANTOS. Secretary Perry.

Mr. PERRY. I agree with both General Keane and General Batiste. I would add to that that after Iraq, our Guards need to be reconstituted with new missions. And in my judgment their primary mission should be homeland security, not a strategic Reserve. This will require increasing the size of the Army, active Army.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Inglis.

Mr. INGLIS. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, you said that we should be trying to avoid a loss in Iraq. And I am wondering, how is it possible that we could lose from a military perspective? Isn't it clear that from a military perspective the surge has been successful? They have done everything we have asked them to do.

But it was supposed to give room for political decision-making space, for political decision-making by the Iraqis. So isn't it sort of—it is setting up accountability for outcomes that our military

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can't control to judge their success based on whether the Iraqis decide something.

It seems to me unfair to our military and inappropriate to say to them, "We are going to judge your success, we are going to hold you accountable for whether the Iraqis make political decisions" when, in fact, they have done everything we have asked them to do. They have established security; they have taken control of areas.

And so my question for you would be: What do we say to them? When do they know they are finished in this accountability?

It seems to me it is very important that we try to bring accountability to the Iraqi leadership. We also have to be fair to our troops and say, "Here is what you are accountable for," and then say, "You did it."

So what I am concerned about is, explain to me, if you would, how would you define their success, our success—in other words, our military's success—that doesn't depend on the Iraqi's success? Am I not right that then you are holding them accountable for outcomes that they can't control?

General KEANE. Well, I don't think you can separate it the way you are suggesting. The military operations are always conducted to achieve political outcomes and political objectives to begin with, even in conventional wars. And certainly it is very much the case here, something as complicated as Iraq.

First of all, I don't believe the surge operation has achieved a degree of success where we can say it is completed. If my remarks led to that, then I have been misleading.

We have much work ahead in the security area, as well, to do. I firmly believe that as you set the conditions of security, the problem that we had in the past, we tried to do security economic assistance and put a fledgling government in all at the same time. And one of the profound things that we have learned from 2003 to the end of 2006 is that security truly is a precondition for economic development, some social integration also, and also for political progress; and it is a precondition for that.

So we are very much in the stage of still establishing that precondition; and I am convinced in my own mind, and I have been encouraged by what I have seen, that that precondition can be a catalyst for the kind of political progress that every person in this room wants. Is it certain? No. But what is the evidence of that?

What is the evidence of that, to me, is this extraordinary change that is taking place among the tribes and the people. These are the Iraqi people who are converting from the insurgency to seeking reconciliation. They are reaching out at a lower level. This is the mainstream insurgency that is now seeking some reconciliation with that government. That is an extraordinary development, and it offers us an opportunity here. And I think that opportunity, if linked properly with the Maliki government, will—more than even the benchmarks—have profound impact on what is taking place—more than the legislative benchmarks, which in some cases are a bit of a placebo. Because even if you have a law, it doesn't mean it is going to be enforced.

What I am so encouraged by here is the people taking control of this themselves. They are fed up with war, they want security for

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their families, they want to get back to some kind of normalcy in their life, they want their kids going to school. And that is what is happening. That is very significant. That, to me, is the important piece.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste.

General BATISTE. I keep going back to the notion that to be successful in the global war on Islamic extremism, we need a unified strategy, firing on all cylinders that includes much more than the military.

The question for the administration again is: When are you going to step out from behind David Petraeus and defend your own strategy? Because it is much more than David. There are great things happening on the ground in Iraq right now. No question about it, the surge is having an effect.

In my view, we can't sustain it. We don't have the capability for much longer to do that. And we run the risk of causing great damage to our military that will take, in my opinion, at least a decade to reverse. We missed an opportunity to call this Nation to action, but it is not too late. It is all about leadership.

Chairman LANTOS. Secretary Perry.

Mr. PERRY. No additional comment.

Chairman LANTOS. Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, just one brief question before I get to my main question. You mentioned you were able to roam the streets of Baghdad for 2 weeks; and you said something like, I went to all the same briefings that all you members go to, and then I was able to get out on the streets.

Well, why don't Members of Congress get to do what you do? Did you put on a burqa? How do you get out on the streets, and we are confined to briefings only? How did you do that? How did you maintain your security?

General KEANE. Well, I think the command is trying to do more of that.

Dr. SNYDER. I don't have much time, General Keane. When you were walking through these neighborhoods, were you on patrol? Were you in uniform? Were you by yourself?

General KEANE. No, I don't wear a uniform. I take some security guys with me. I don't wear any armor, I don't have any helmet, I don't wear any sunglasses.

I am an imposing figure physically. I realize that. I try to sit down with somebody as quickly as I can and get off my feet. I try to talk to them at their level as quickly as I can. I have an interpreter. If I go into a store, I take one guy with a gun with me.

Dr. SNYDER. When we came back from the break, we talked about trying to come to some political reconciliation with Iraq.

We have a very divided country and a very divided Congress right now, but it seems like there are some areas of agreement. I am talking about kind of the broad center of the Congress and center of the country. There has been agreement that there have been a lot of mistakes made by the decision makers in our country in the last several years, but there is also agreement—you all three are in agreement today—that there has been some substantial

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military progress made in the last few months because of the surge.

There is agreement that the Iraqi Army is getting better over the last year or so. You all are in agreement that—both you and General Keane are in agreement that there will be a substantial reduction in troops, of our troops, some time in 2008. There is agreement that this reduction needs to be gradual, that it cannot be precipitous. There is agreement that there will need to be some kind of residual force left behind in order to deal with al-Qaeda and those kinds of contingencies.

There is agreement that there is a great confidence of the American people in our troops. There is also a great lack of confidence in the decision-making process of the administration that is personified by a lack of confidence in the President right now.

There is agreement that we do not have the kind of strategic overlook that we ought to have, not only toward Iraq, but toward the whole region. And General Batiste has been talking about it quite a bit today.

But General Keane has been in agreement in it. General Wes Clark has made the same kind of comments, that we need to take that kind of strategic look to look at the countries in the region—Israel, Palestine—with the idea that once we have that kind of strategy it will help shape where we go with Iraq.

You are all in agreement there is uncertainty regarding what level of violence there will be if we were to leave, and when we leave if we leave behind a situation not to our satisfaction. So it seems to me that we ought to be focused on some of the "what after" questions, if we have that kind of agreement.

How do we handle what comes after mid-2008? How are we going to deal with al-Qaeda? What is the nature of this force? Do we have—somehow I think people picture we will have little enclaves of U.S. troops, and we will suddenly hear that at 213 Baghdad Avenue there is an enclave, we are going to send a force in there.

How will that work in practicality? How will we provide, and for what length of time, the logistical support for the Iraqi troops? Will we help them develop an air force or will we have to provide close air support for years to come?

How are we going to deal with potential Iranian mischief? How are we going to deal with a situation if there is really what turns out to be a very bad situation, a massive genocide with a great fear that we will have U.S. troops sitting on the sidelines watching that? I don't think they or the American people will tolerate that.

What will we do about our readiness? How will we deal with NGOs and PRTs that want to continue to develop at a time when we are pulling U.S. troops back? And what will we do if the will of the Iraqis becomes clear, actually they want us to leave some time relatively precipitously?

It seems like those kinds of questions we don't deal with as much. And I think I am running out of time. I don't want the chairman to give me any additional time. But I would think we need to focus on what comes after 2008, not just what is going to happen here in this Congress in the next month.

Chairman LANTOS. Secretary Perry.

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Mr. PERRY. Just a quick comment. I agree with your statement of agreements. I think you summed that up very well indeed, and I think you have also focused on the right questions. They are very difficult questions to answer.

The first step in getting the right answers is to articulate what the right questions are, and I think you have done a very good job at it. Thank you.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste.

General BATISTE. I also would say the same thing, where do we go from here? Again, it is a new strategy focused on the region. Many of the answers come from the combatant commander. But most of them come from an interagency process here in Washington that, to date, has been largely ineffective—not focused, no unity of effort, no one person in charge to support the combatant commander in the field.

But once we develop quickly the right strategy to move forward, out of that will fall the military tasks that are necessary to accomplish. We are in a position now where we can't sustain the current cycle of deployments much longer without doing some serious damage to our military, in my view.

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane.

General KEANE. I think, after 2008, assuming that the progress that we are making now, we are continuing to make that progress in 2008, and in 2008 we are at least at the pre-surge levels, around 130,000, I think if you looked at Iraq during 2008, what you would see is, we would be pulling our United States forces away from the extremities north, west and south and other coalition forces, and we would be focusing in the center, Baghdad and the suburbs.

And then in 2009 we would transition in that central region, as well, to Iraqis; maybe not all of it, but probably most of it, I would imagine. And, to me, the al-Qaeda threat, given where it is and where I think it is going in the next 6 months, in and of itself would never justify a sizable force level to deal with the al-Qaeda threat, given where it is heading. That would be something that the Iraqis would be able to handle themselves. We would have more forces committed to the training of Iraqis than we would to the fighting of al-Qaeda.

And we have developed their special operations forces, and they are a very good force by the way. And I think that they would be able to transition with our own operational forces to be able to take over that.

So we would be moving from a lead role to one of a partnering role in 2008 to a supporting role in 2009. That would be the way I would characterize it.

Chairman LANTOS. Mr. Cole of Oklahoma.

Mr. COLE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would be remiss not to begin by just thanking both of you gentlemen and obviously Secretary Perry for your service and the amount of time you have given us today. Even though I know there are differences between you, I know how much you respect one another. And all of you here, we appreciate your service to our country. So thank you extraordinarily much.

I am like Mr. Snyder. I think there are actually a number of areas of agreement here in terms of sort of the rhythm of what is

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going to happen. I think we are going to sustain a fairly substantial force, the current force through roughly the end of the year, early next year. It is going to draw down; the pace may be debatable, but I don't think it is going to be as rapidly as some of the critics would like it to be.

So given that fact, it seems to me—and I think you have both made this point in different ways—the Iraqis are really the key players going forward. This is, after all, their country; and in the end, we have provided—we have gotten rid of Saddam, we have provided an opportunity.

The real question is: What can they do with the opportunity?

General Keane, you have actually had the most recent experience in that regard, so it is dangerous game, but I would like you to speculate, just politically. Number one, let me ask you this: Do Iraqis understand the rhythm that American forces are going to be drawn down just inevitably? Have they faced that reality themselves?

And then, number two, do they see this as a time in which they can prepare for a civil war, which I have heard some critics say? Or do they see this genuinely as an opportunity, and almost a last-chance opportunity, to sit down with one another and begin to work out their differences?

General KEANE. The Iraqis certainly understand what is taking place in terms of our immediate plans in 2008. I am somewhat confident Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus have talked to their leadership about what our intentions are.

And the Iraqis certainly want us to be in Iraq; make no mistake about that. They know what happened in 2006 and what has changed since that time frame as a result of the President's decision to provide additional forces for security. So they appreciate all of that. But they also know the progress that is being made.

I am encouraged by it, and I think it offers us a political opportunity there. The security operation has to cement itself a little bit more and strengthen. And I do believe it will move the Iraqi political machine, so to speak. That coalition is weak, to be sure.

Maliki represents most people's third choice, not their first or second; and we all know the challenges that we have with that. But nonetheless he has grown in that position when you try to be fair to him. And that coalition, as recently as a couple of weeks ago, has met to do a couple of things. One is to truly move through some of this legislation, the ones that they feel are most important—and that is de-Baathification, revenue sharing, et cetera.

And then the second thing which I find very important is to begin to establish a long-term security relationship with the United States, their agreement to want to do that. And I believe that is critical to us, because it starts moving them, solving the immediate problems politically that they need, knowing that the United States is not going to precipitously withdraw, knowing that the United States wants to have a relationship with them as a fledgling Arab democracy in that region of the world, and they want that relationship.

So I see political progress being made in 2008 in that country, even though it would be hard for General Petraeus or Ambassador Crocker to declare such a thing certainly. And I think it offers us

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then the very real opportunity of the security problems just falling off the charts.

Mr. COLE. Do you think the various constellations of forces in Iraq are willing to work with one another before they are working with people outside? And that is part of the problem. Everybody's loyalty is to somebody else as opposed to a central government or even a central national identity, it seems like.

General KEANE. Iraq is a complicated place. Even among the Shias you see the problems that are in the south with Shias fighting Shias and how fragmented even the Shia militia is.

What has happened in Iraq, though, and it had to do—it is a manifestation of the tribal revolt, so to speak, is these people are fed up with this violence. While they all had purposes for it and political objectives for it, the people are fed up with it. And that has become a catalyst for change in Iraq itself. And that is why I have some of the optimism that I have, because it started at a grassroots level, which in the long run has more meaning than top-down driven.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste.

General BATISTE. I think one of the big questions is: Will the current government be successful? The people are fed up, I am sure, of what is going on. But when only 60 percent of the Iraqi Parliament shows up for duty on the first day after their vacation, that ought to send up a star cluster to all of us. We need more than intentions, we need action. That is why we have got to shift our focus outside of Iraq and solve the regional issues with a new focus strategy that will drive military missions to the United States that will allow us to reset the force in a deliberate fashion. A good bit of it redeploys to rearm and refit for the next fight whenever that is going to be.

We desperately need to do that. Part of it stays and reshifts for other missions to protect the United States mission, to go after extremist groups, direct action, to train and equip the Iraqi Army, to be a counterbalance to the other influences in the region like Iran and what is going to happen in Kurdistan. But we need to get there and put the onus on the Iraqi Government as it is, to be in charge of their future, take charge of their destiny.

As I said in my testimony, the only solution in Iraq is an Iraqi solution. And only Islam can defeat Islamic extremism.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. I appreciate the service that both of you men have given to our Nation.

I do have some certain problems with this situation we are in. I know General Keane said we are past how we all got in, and then also mentioned, just recently, it is a complicated place. I just hope we don't forget how we got in.

We got in there when we shouldn't have gone in there for the reasons that were stated. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There were 48 hours for the inspectors to get out of Iraq once Saddam Hussein said they could go anywhere. Then it changed, the regime changed.

Following the regime change is fighting al-Qaeda, which was not in Iraq at all before, and so I think we do have to remember to pass how we got there, although this may not be the place to dis-

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cuss it. But I hope we don't forget how we got there because we are there when we didn't have to be there for the reasons we said we were going there.

The second thing I have is concern about the military and how it is stretched. Age has gone up. You can't be a policeman in any city over 35. We are taking people up to 42. If you look at the latest numbers of people joining the military, find out how many—and I don't think it is a bad thing, but how many are noncitizens who are joining the military so they can get their citizenship. It is going back to 1775 when the British Royalty, rich people, hired Hessians from Germany to fight in the Revolutionary War. We are getting to having a mercenary military just about.

We have so many great people in it, but we are not going to be able to sustain the level that we are going, and therefore to reup—an average military person, I don't know, gets a $25,000–30,000 bonus to sign up again. Something new. They tell me Special Services get between $100,000 and $125,000 to reup because the training is so intensive that they can leave and go to work for the contractors and make $150,000. So if the U.S. military is going to keep Special Services, they have got to give them a bonus that is equal to what they would make by being a contractor. And then contractors are military people who are under their own control; it is not the U.S. military that we are accustomed to.

We have been trying to find out how many contractors are fighting in Iraq, and our military tells us, "We don't know the number. We can't keep up, we can't calculate it."

And so I think—the trend of our military, in my opinion, is really going in the wrong direction. And so my question to both of you military men is: Will we be able to maintain a qualified, high-standard, all-volunteer Army? Because they are dropping the requirements, not only age-wise, but physical and mental. What type of military are we getting ourselves into when we overwork our wonderful men and women we have today? But how much longer can that go on?

I would like the both of you to try to answer that.

Chairman LANTOS. General Batiste.

General BATISTE. Sir, I think we are heading in the wrong direction clearly. The capability has to match the strategy, and it currently doesn't and I am very concerned about it. If I wasn't, I wouldn't be here today.

Chairman LANTOS. General Keane.

General KEANE. I certainly understand what you are saying, and I appreciate it. But in all fairness, Mr. Congressman, are you trying to hold an Army that is fighting two wars to peacetime standards? Is that what we are suggesting here?

The fact of the matter is, yes, the military is being stressed and strained. It is fighting a war. And it is expected to be.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, we fought two wars in World War II. You can't decide when wars are going to come, especially when you do have some wars that you decide to have preemptive strike, which is starting the war. I mean, that was something that we decided, I didn't, but the President decided was something that he felt should have been done, whereas if we had gone to Afghanistan where al-Qaeda was, the whole world was with us, NATO was with us, ev-

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erybody sympathized with us. They were all ready to go to Afghanistan with us to get al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden, who destroyed our country with the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon and bringing down our plane that was lost in Pennsylvania. I supported that.

But this other war that we decided to go in, we could have had al-Qaeda, we could have had Osama bin Laden, we could have wiped out the extremists if we had put all of these assets into Afghanistan rather than to go and decide to start a war in Iraq. And so I think that our whole policy was so flawed because we could have won this war in Afghanistan 3 years ago probably—even before that if we had put all the concentration into Afghanistan like every American and every country around the world was almost ready to do that with us.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH OF WASHINGTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for convening this very important hearing. And thank you to the two gentlemen for their service and for taking so much of their time today to talk with us.

I do have a couple of questions, and I would urge some caution, General Batiste, in making, in my opinion, what are sweeping and damning statements with regards to the Government of Iraq, saying that it is incapable of stepping up to its responsibilities. I would point out that coalition governments, even mature democracies, struggle—look at Italy, ask the Israelis, ask others. When governments fall, when members of the cabinet resign, it is almost the nature of a coalition government to have that kind of discordance.

When you say 60 percent of the people didn't show up on the first day, the members or delegates, members of their Parliament, the question is: Why? Did they have trouble getting there, what was on the agenda? We have trouble getting our members back unless we have votes scheduled.

There are some issues that should not be—it needs more context, I think.

And also when you say that the GAO report, the Maliki government is meeting only 3 of the 18 military and political goals, that is true; but you leave out that 4 are partially met according to the GAO. And some, frankly—and I would hope you would give some answer to this—perhaps at the time we should wait and they should be layered.

For example, I wonder what you would think about amnesty. Two thousand five hundred people were let out in June, or in 2006, but now the better side of prudence would dictate that an amnesty program should be part of a reconciliation program. So while technically that is an unmet benchmark, perhaps it should not be met.

Look at the Northern Irish situation. Amnesty came after the reconciliation, after the Good Friday agreement. There needs to be, I think, a juxtaposition of when things should happen, and delay is not denial. And yet the sweeping statement, the big headline, that only 3 out of 18 are being met has a great deal of surface appeal, but it is not very illuminating in terms of the situation on the ground; and, again, you left out the 4 that are partially met.

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I would appreciate your thoughts on the amnesty. Should there be an amnesty now? If you say you are discouraged about only 3 of the 18 military and political being met, do you want amnesty met right now? I would think the better side of prudence says we need to wait until some reconciliation goes forward.

And secondly—I was hoping that General Keane would answer this as well as you, but we have had in the 20th century more genocides—the very word was invented, as you know, after World War II—from the Armenians to the Germans to the Congo, Ukraine, China, Bosnia, Rwanda, Cambodia—Darfur, obviously an ongoing genocide. And yet people always say, "Where are the peacekeepers and the peacemakers?"

Well, it seems to be, in Iraq, a real question that has to be asked if we leave prematurely and the situation significantly deteriorates.

You said a moment ago that great things are happening on the ground. You questioned the sustainability of it; and I think that is a very, very good question. But great things right now are happening on the ground. Absent the surge, absent the current military work that our men and women are going so bravely, what happens if we leave prematurely before the Iraqis can step up to the plate?

So if you can answer those two questions. And again, please in the future don't leave out the partially-met, and maybe give some context of things like amnesty. And I would appreciate your thoughts on amnesty since it is an unmet benchmark and yet you seem to think that is a negative.

General BATISTE. Thank you. The benchmarks are what they are.

Mr. SMITH OF WASHINGTON. Even yesterday Controller General Walker made it very clear, as I have—and I have read the report, you had read it, members have read it. It is flawed in many ways; it packages some things that really should be their own. And added to that you have got the situation where some should be done later and not now.

But on this report card it reads as if unmet, bad. I don't want amnesty going forward right now, not when somebody could be let out who could do grave injury to our soldiers, our men and women who are deployed there. But I would appreciate your view and General Keane, especially General Keane, on the whole issue of genocide. Is that a possibility going forward?

General BATISTE. Again, the benchmarks are what they are. That is the tool that we are using. For right or wrong, good, bad or indifferent, that is what they are. But the point is that the Maliki government is nowhere close to setting the conditions that our troops need so that we can get things reset, redeployed, rearmed and refit. Our great military, our Army and Marine Corps largely, to some extent the Army and Air Force, are held hostage by this government's inaction.

And I did say that only 60 percent of the Iraqi Parliament showed up on the first day after their break, for a myriad of reasons, no doubt. A lot of it probably has to do with sectarian violence and they fear for their life and wouldn't make the trip to Baghdad to convene with the rest of the body. What happens if we leave prematurely? Let's not leave prematurely. Let's get focused

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with a strategy that looks at the whole region, as I have said over and over, and recognizes that it is much more than the military.

It is the diplomacy. It is the political reconciliation and the economic hard work that involves all the nations in the region to achieve what we are trying to do. And it also has to do with mobilizing this country to hold it all together. Without all of those components, we are not going to get where we are going and we are going to culminate the great military in the sands of Iraq. And that is not what you want to do and it is not what I want to do, but it is time for bodies like this to start asking questions, great questions. Ask the Department of the Army: How are you doing, what do you need to accomplish the mission that you have in Iraq and the other missions that you have around the world? Do you have what you need?

It is all about ends, ways and means. And the current strategy we have now is flawed, big time.

Mr. SMITH OF WASHINGTON. I asked you directly if you could address benchmark number 6, amnesty.

General BATISTE. Amnesty. I would be loathe to recommend to let everybody out of prison. There has to be a way to carefully, carefully look at that and vet each of those prisoners. Because you are not going to let loose those that are hardened and dangerous.

Again, the benchmarks are what they are. I didn't write them, you didn't write them; it is what we have.

Mr. SMITH OF WASHINGTON. But you reference, with all due respect, that maybe some of those have a flaw that was not anticipated. And now we are in a situation where hindsight may be a little more 20/20 than it was before. And that ought to come at the end of a reconciliation process, it seems to me, and that ought to be covered. Because, again, I read the headlines in the paper, 3 out of 18; you left out the 4 that are partial, and then some of those that really we should wait before those are agreed to.

Chairman LANTOS. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mrs. Davis of California.

Mrs. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. And thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to say, as well, that I really appreciate the joint hearing.

We talk a lot about interagency collaboration. And we know that across our committees we also need to do the same. And so I really appreciate our being here together, however unwieldy it can become. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to move—just quickly, I have three questions. The first is to really acknowledge the concern that we all have with regional strategy. And I wonder if you could say, in as few words as it takes, what the Congress can do, what the President should be doing to bring the international players to the table seriously: What should be done today?

And two other questions: One has to do with the NIE report and the fact that it is acknowledged—assessed, I think in their language—that the bottom-up work that is being done today has probably the best prospect of improving the situation if, and the big "if" is, if the Iraqi Government accepts and supports those changes.

So I wonder if you would say, how much time do you think we should give, we should work with the Iraqi Government, to show

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some change in accepting and moving forward on that kind of shift that is occurring?

And the third question is, if you could put that into play, to what extent you think the 1.1 million displaced Iraqis, internally-displaced Iraqis, and also the about 2 million Iraqis that have gone to neighboring countries, play in the decline of violence that you are suggesting is in the region.

General Keane, I appreciate your really spending the time that you did in the country and in the neighborhoods. So, if you could in that third question, talk a little bit about how you would characterize those shifts and whether or not they are playing a role in the needs that law enforcement will have in the future. How does that play out when you have neighborhoods that are shifting pretty dramatically, I think, in their composition?

General KEANE. The three questions as I understood them dealing with a regional strategy, certainly it would not be a unilateral strategy, it would have to be a multilateral strategy. It seems fairly self-evident that the common issues that we have deal with the threat of extremism. And you need a strategy to deal with that threat of extremism in the region. And certainly what we need to do is harness those moderate governments to do that.

And that threat that is in that region is very real. It is certainly—it is nonstate actors, as well as state-sponsored in terms of Iran. And I think there are certainly common objectives and certainly common fears to drive that strategy.

Secondly, the Iraqi Government supporting the grassroots movement that is taking place; you are absolutely right, in my testimony I tried to emphasize that. This was the challenge, that the Iraqis had to meet some of those expectations.

What I am encouraged by is that Maliki has started to do that; and I gave you examples of that, and I will not repeat them. But that has happened in terms of resources, and it has also happened in terms of letting them do what they wanted to do, which was become part of the security forces.

There will be more of this in the future and the demands will be more significant, to be sure. And the government—and there are people in the government who have paranoia and insecurity fears about this, and they are working against Maliki. Some of its ministers have these fears; I don't want to name them publicly, but that is the truth of it.

And some of those fears are understandable, frankly, given 35 years of suppression by the Saddam Hussein regime and their thought that this is just a strategic pause; that Baathists truly want to take over Iraq, and they will come back at us in a few years, and what we shouldn't be doing is resourcing them so that they are in better shape to do it because they suffered a terrible defeat. Nevertheless, I think it is an opportunity, and we have to work it.

The last thing is the exodus from Iraq. No, I don't believe there is less violence because some of the people moved. I don't think there is a correlation to that, in my judgment. The players who are causing the violence are all there. And the reduction in the violence has to do with the fact that we are there stopping that violence from taking place. It is the presence of boots on the ground and

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protecting the people in a way that we never did in any holistic fashion for the 3-plus years prior to that that has brought this violence down.

And it is not just our commitment; it is also the Iraqi's commitment. And overshadowing this is, the Iraqi forces did show up in Baghdad when they were supposed to and, by and large, in the numbers they were supposed to, which did not happen in the past.

General BATISTE. Part of the answer is to lead. I think the world expects the United States to lead, to work a regional solution that is supported by friends and allies worldwide, to put the responsibility on the regional actors to find solutions: A special envoy, support of moderate Islamic governments, working relationships with other organizations worldwide, like the EU, to come up with solutions, to pull these people together in summits, to develop action plans and responsibilities and time lines, to accomplish what needs to be done.

Diplomacy. There is a lot of it that needs to kick into very high gear quickly in support of our great military, who are moving heaven and earth as best they can, but they are out there alone.

With respect to the displaced persons, I used to witness this all the time. Kurds moving back into the region of Kirkuk and displacing Sunnis. And recently, in the last couple of months in Baghdad, the demographics have changed. Sunni neighborhoods are disappearing and being replaced by Shias. It is still ongoing. And that explains in some measure why Baghdad now is a bit quieter than it was 6 months ago.

Things are not as they seem in the Middle East, in particular in Iraq. So, again, a huge caution on how we view things and how we interpret the situation there.

Mr. PAYNE [presiding]. The gentleman's time has expired.

Mr. Kline.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just being advised that we are pulling the plug on this thing, so I am caught a little bit off guard and apologize to both the Generals. We have just been paged to vote. You can hear the beepers going off.

You have gone through this before. And as you know many of us come and go through these hearings and right now most of us have gone.

Just a couple of quick comments.

General Batiste, I must admit I was extremely surprised that you were dismayed by the fact that we have young and inexperienced lieutenants going to combat. I was just trying to think of a time, certainly not in my 25 years in the Marines, when we didn't have young and inexperienced lieutenants going to combat. I am a little bit concerned that your strategy is for us to turn over to what you call an incompetent Iraqi Government and an incapable Iraqi Army. To turn responsibility over to them, it seems a little bit, may not be the thing we ought to do at this point.

But, General Keane, you have obviously spent a fair amount of time walking around, as you said in your opening remarks, on the streets. And I am sorry, you probably answered this, but could you do two things? Tell us how much time you spent walking around the streets—was it a day or 2, a week?—and when that time frame was. Give us, again, a feel.

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You talk about the schools and the markets. But what was your interaction with the everyday Iraqi people and what they are thinking right now?

General KEANE. Yes. I was in Iraq during the first 2 weeks of August—in my last visit, this previous August and 2 weeks in May, at the end of May, and 2 weeks in February.

Mr. KLINE. Of 2007, you were there in May and in August?

General KEANE. So I have been taking a 90-day snapshot because I wanted to go see some of the same places again to see what kind of progress there was so I could get a feel for it. Even in a Sunni neighborhood where there has been a lot of violence, there has been progress on each one of those visits in terms of the things that I—what I am looking for are the normal patterns and rhythms of life, and if you have a violent situation where security is a problem to a family, to its children, then the patterns of life are not going to be there. So the rhythms I am looking for with people are: Are they going to school? The answer to that is, overwhelmingly, yes. Are the markets open? Overwhelmingly, yes. The markets, are they populated? Yes. Is there commerce taking place? Yes.

Now, some of those markets are not at full capacity, as I said before. In a Sunni neighborhood where there was a lot of violence in the past, you may find that market at 40 percent, but then when I come back in May, it is at 60, and when I come back in August, it is at a higher percentage, and that is encouraging because the progress continues to be made.

Mr. KLINE. Excuse me. May I interrupt for just a minute? What kind of group were you walking around with?

General KEANE. I have security people, but I do not wear any armor or battle dress; I am certainly not in uniform. I do not wear any sunglasses, and I take an interpreter. I have security there, but then I separate myself from them as much as possible so I can engage Iraqis and talk to them. So I will go into a clinic and talk to the doctors. I will go into a school and talk with the principal and teachers.

Mr. KLINE. Again, I hate to interrupt, but you are not surrounded by people. You are just talking one-on-one or——

General KEANE. I have to beat it away. I mean they want to be there—every time I start with a new—I am in a new battalion area or something, I have got to say, "Guys, I really want to do this by myself. Go stand over there. Let me do this." I mean they are in the vicinity, and I have to take a guy, and I go over here. I take my interpreter and say, "Give me one guy with a gun, and let's do it, all right?" Listen, I do not believe it is so much—it is not that big a risk, to be quite frank about it, when Americans are in the area anyway, and I know that. I am a military person. So it is not a big deal, to be quite frank about it, but what it does for me is it gives me an opportunity to engage hundreds and hundreds of Iraqis who are at different stations in life, you know, from a working class person to a director of a hospital to a surgeon that I meet at a gas station. It is anecdotal, to be sure, but because there is so much of it, I am able to look at the rhythms and patterns of life and make judgments about it. All of that is improving, and that is the fact of it, and it is very encouraging to see it happening.

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I will say about this "cleansing" as people refer to it: Yes, there are Sunni neighborhoods where people have been pushed out of them. Now the security is taking hold, the government. General Bood, who is the commander in charge of Baghdad, the Iraqi commander, has been on national television, speaking for Maliki, saying that as he gets security in there he wants people to come back and occupy those homes, and I have put the question to him: Are you willing to put the Shias out of those homes to put the Sunnis back in who rightfully belong? The answer to that question was yes.

I asked the Americans who were working with him. I said, "Can we believe him?" They said, "Yes, you can believe him. He intends to do it."

So the Iraqis, themselves, are attempting, as they secure these areas where the Sunnis were pushed out by the Shias, to bring them back in and occupy it. Only some of that has happened. I do not want to mislead you, but certainly, they are intending to do more of it.

Mr. KLINE. Thank you very much.

General BATISTE. If I could, could I respond, please?

Mr. PAYNE [presiding]. All right.

General BATISTE. On the point, sir, with respect to young and inexperienced lieutenants; boy, I will tell you that one of the greatest things we have got in our Army today is incredible lieutenants and captains, far better than I ever was in the early 1970s.

My point was these youngsters are commanding companies that are deploying to Iraq within the next 90 days because captains are not available or identified yet to take charge. That is not unity of effort. That is not unit cohesion. That is not preparing units for combat in Iraq.

With respect to the Maliki government, yes, it is in trouble, but that is not a reason not to continue on with finding a different strategy. We cannot stay the course. We cannot keep grinding away to nowhere. We need to find a new approach. By the way, I concluded a long time ago that democracy, as we see it, is not compatible with the tribal culture of Iraq. We are on the wrong track.

Mr. KLINE. Okay.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Carnahan, you have about 3 minutes.

Mr. CARNAHAN. Thank you. I will be brief as we wrap up to vote, but I will thank all of the panel for your contribution to this informed and much needed debate that is before the Congress. My question: As to General Petraeus and virtually everyone in the administration, the panel today have talked about the situation and have conceded that, without altering Iraq's power structure in finding a viable, sustainable political solution, no amount of military force is going to result in a unified, functioning Iraq.

What realistic structural changes are there that you believe can work in Iraq? Does that include looking at an option of dividing the country into stronger regional governments? My last question is: I would like you to touch on the issue of the anti-Turkey PKK in the Kurdish areas and as to what we are doing to address that issue.

General BATISTE. Let me start with your second question.

The PKK is a serious concern. The whole Kurdish question is a serious concern for the United States. There are 30 million Kurds

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in the world. A few of them live in Iraq. Most of them live in Turkey. So this whole situation is very destabilizing. As the Iraqi Kurds are working hard to build a greater Kurdistan, which includes the area of Kirkuk where a lot of or half the oil in Iraq is, there is huge instability right there which could derail everything we are doing right now with respect to trying to bring this country along.

One of the options is to split the country into three pieces, clearly, but I would caution against that. The challenges of forming a central government to tie together those three regions may be insurmountable in this country called "Iraq."

General KEANE. The Shia model of government, I think, is in stark contrast to the Sunni model, which is a very centralized government. Most of the power resident in that centralized government is very weak municipalities and provincial governments. The Shia model is more power to the provinces and a weaker central government, and I believe that is probably where Iraq is heading. I do not believe it is heading to federation, so to speak, where we will have three separate enclaves or be semi-autonomous like the Kurds are, mainly because the Iraqis do not want it.

What it is the most for a lot of people is the Shias and the Sunnis, for most of their history in Iraq, have lived in harmony despite the overall Sunni-Shia tension that has been in the world for many centuries, and there are mixed marriages, et cetera, et cetera, out there, and they believe that the future of Iraq is not to separate into three separate groups, even into a loose separation or into some soft separation as some people have suggested. They really do want to keep Iraq as a national identity. I think what they will do is they will give the provinces considerably more power than they have right now, and a central government will have less authority.

As to the PKK, I share, you know, John's concerns about that as well.

Mr. PAYNE. Well, thank you very much. I think that is a great way to end.

Let me express my appreciation to Secretary Perry in his absence, certainly to you, Major General John Batiste, and to you, General John Keane.

Let me once again express our appreciation for the fine service that you have given to our Nation. Let me thank Chairman Lantos and Chairman Skelton and also Ranking Member Hunter and the last person standing, our ranking member, Ms. Ros-Lehtinen. She deserves a medal as we sit here in this empty room, but this has been great. I hope that we will be able to have more joint hearings of this nature.

The meeting stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 1:13 p.m., the joint committee was adjourned.]

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APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

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

Chairman Lantos and Chairman Skelton, thank you for holding this hearing to look at what our next steps should be in Iraq. I appreciate the witnesses being here today an I look forward to their testimony.

Yesterday, we were fortunate to have GAO Comptroller General David Walker testify before the Foreign Affairs Committee on his agencies recent report on Iraqi progress toward 18 military and political benchmarks. The GAO report clearly showed that little if any progress is being made by the Iraqis to reconcile sectarian and political differences to move their country forward.

It seemed that because the report reached different conclusions than some members of the Committee wanted it to reach, several members questioned whether GAO had the expertise and credibility to produce such a report. I do not agree with these member's views, and after producing nearly 100 other Iraq-related reports and testimonies since May 2003, I think Tuesday's GAO report continued the office's important work in gathering information about Iraq, and should be used, along with other information we hear today and Monday from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, to determine what changes need to be made in our Iraq policy.

As the GAO report showed, 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. Additionally, violence, while going dropping in July from the previous month, still remains higher in each month of 2007 than it was in the same month of 2006, and daily incidents of violence in June 2007 were higher than they were in February 2007 when the surge started.

It is time the Iraqi government, the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi people step up and take responsibility for their country. Our military capabilities are limited when it comes to building a country, but we have relied on them so heavily that they are at a breaking point—retention rates are low, equipment is in disrepair, and Guard and Reserve forces are being required to serve in roles unheard of before outside of the active duty force.

Along with many of my Democratic colleagues, I have not supported a complete redeployment from Iraq, but we need to limit and define our role. Fight al Qaeda, limited support for Iraq security forces, protecting our embassy and diplomatic personnel, these are defined, limited roles. Policing the streets of Iraq four and a half years after toppling Saddam Hussein's government was not something we authorized in 2002, and is not something our military should be doing.

Chairman Lantos and Chairman Skelton, I thank you again for holding this hearing on changes we need to make in our Iraq policy in the near future. We have given the Administration more than enough time, money, and flexibility to pursue it's plan in Iraq, but it has failed. It is time this Congress act to limit our scope of operations in Iraq, begin bringing some of our troops home, and begin rebuilding our military readiness.

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

Thank you to the Chairmen of both Committees, for convening today's important hearing on debacle in Iraq. This Congress will not, as the previous Republican Congress did, continue to rubber stamp what we believe to be an ill-conceived war. As

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we continue to receive reports on the situation in Iraq, like the GAO report that we met here yesterday to discuss and the report by General Petraeus that we will receive next week, it is important that we continue to look forward, to the future of Iraq beyond a U.S. military occupation.

I would also like to thank the Ranking Members of both Committees, and to welcome our three distinguished witnesses: the Honorable William J. Perry, Senior Fellow, Hoover Institution and Professor, Stanford University; Major General John Batiste, USA, Retired and President, Klein Steel Services, Incorporated; and General John M. Keane, USA, Retired, and Keane Advisors, LLC. I look forward to your informative testimony.

Only yesterday, the Foreign Affairs Committee heard testimony on the recently released GAO report on Iraqi progress toward the 18 legislative, economic, and security benchmarks. The Comptroller General of the GAO sat before the Committee and informed members that only 3 of these benchmarks have been met by the Maliki government. Despite the surge, despite increasing U.S. military involvement, the Iraqi government has not made substantial progress toward stabilizing their country. The over 3740 U.S. casualties and the $3,816 per second we are spending in Iraq have not bought peace or security.

President Bush rationalized his surge, over opposition by myself and other House Democrats, by arguing it would give the Iraqi government "the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas," bringing about reconciliation between warring factions, Sunni and Shia. This has not occurred. Sectarian violence remains high, the Sunni Arab Consensus Front withdrew from the Maliki government in July, and even the Bush Administration has noted the unsatisfactory progress toward political reconciliation. Compounding the Sunni-Shiite split is increasing fragmentation within Shiite ranks.

The security situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate. A Sunni-led insurgency continues, likely driven by a population who resents foreign military occupation. This insurgency has contributed to the high levels of sectarian violence, with insurgents conducting increasingly complex and well coordinated attacks. U.S. military officials have cited evidence that Iran may be supplying militias within Iraq, in an attempt to further destabilize the country. Relations are also strained on the northern border, where Turkey has accused Iraqi Kurds of harboring anti-Turkey guerrillas.

Mr. Chairman, non-partisan assessments, such as yesterday's GAO report, have illustrated that the surge has *not*, as the President hoped, helped Iraq to meet the benchmarks. Instead, ongoing and escalating U.S. military involvement in Iraq is hindering that nation's ability to move beyond the devastation of war and death, to build a successful new government, and to create a stabile and secure environment.

Today's hearing is entitled "Beyond the September Report: What's Next for Iraq?" This is a crucial question, and one which Democrats in Congress are working very hard to find constructive answers to. We have the evidence: the surge is not working. What do we do now?

I believe, as I have for some time, that the answer is to recognize that the objectives for which military force in Iraq was authorized have been achieved, and the authority to use this force has therefore expired. Our brave troops have completed the task we set for them; it is time now to bring them home. Our next steps should not be a continuing escalation of military involvement, but instead a diplomatic surge.

This is why I 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 statecraft tools of the first, rather the last, resort. We must seek constructive engagement with Iraq, its neighbors, and the rest of the international community, as we work to bring resolution to this calamitous conflict that has already gone on far too long.

Mr. Chairman, Democrats in Congress will not continue to rubber stamp the President's ill-conceived war effort. Last November, the American people spoke loudly and clearly, demanding a new direction to U.S. foreign policy, and we here in Congress are committed to seeing that change brought about. We are working to see the extensive funds currently being spent to sustain the war in Iraq go to important domestic programs and to securing our homeland against real threats.

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. For this huge sum of money, 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, Min-

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nesota. 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 million 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.

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 yesterday was 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.

The Department of Defense had confirmed a total of 3741 U.S. casualties. 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.

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

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

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