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To meet those challenges, the United States should reassess its strategic goals in light of its regional and global interests. It should announce a date certain for beginning the redeployment of forces from Iraq. It should conclude a status-of-forces agreement with the government of Iraq. It should resource and invigorate a comprehensive, political reconciliation program in Iraq.

It should immediately act to restore and increase both the size of the Army and Marine Corps refit and reset units that have been in combat, ensure our special operations forces are being properly resourced, and care for the families of our military personnel.

The United States should also repair damage done to our relations with our allies and special partners, and it must more clearly articulate U.S. policy in order to regain the confidence and support of the American people.

In conclusion, we must maintain our focus on our primary challenges: the proliferation of WMD and the threat from extremists who threaten our homeland. We should not allow ourselves to expend our military forces, national credibility and treasure on a ground war that does not deal with our primary threats.

Thank you for your attention and time.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Hughes can be found in the Appendix on page 64.]

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Colonel Hughes.

General Eaton.

STATEMENT OF MAJ. GEN. PAUL D. EATON (RET.), FORMER COMMANDER, COALITION MILITARY ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM, IRAQ, U.S. ARMY

General EATON. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the invitation to speak here.

I can't leave this room without commenting on the state of the American Army. I am going to talk about the American Army, the Iraqi army, current operations in Iraq, and the deficient diplomatic efforts that we have in the region.

First, the American Army: We are under-funded, we are undermanned, and we are overextended. And we have to correct all three of those points.

We have to grow the Army and the Marine Corps to meet the foreign-policy demands of our country. We have to commit the resources necessary to rebuild, refit our equipment, and to properly equip our forces both in the theater of operations and in training right now. We are having to shuffle equipment back and forth from units to conduct the training for deployment. So we have to correct that situation.

The Iraqi army: We started the Iraqi army program to recruit nationally, make the army representative nationally, ethnically and religious, and to employ locally. The original plan was that we would recruit these men to defend the Nation from enemies from without. And that evolved into what we have to do right now in a counter-insurgency environment.

The Iraqi army is still not properly equipped, and we still don't have enough men under arms to meet the demands placed upon the Iraqi army.

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Secretary WEST. Mr. Congressman, General Eaton began a system with the advisors on the military side that is now working terrific. All the way down to every single company, there is an American advisor but he is also a conscience.

The State Department, as General indicated, lagged badly, and it has only been under Ambassador Crocker that they have begun to insert some smart guys at different levels to say, so-and-so is a bum and you have to get rid of him. But they have begun that.

I think if you had a classified hearing and brought some of them in and say, "Do you know who the bad apples are at the top that have to go?", they could say, "Yes."

My feeling is that Maliki isn't that strong. But I think you are going to have a lot of sloppiness at the top if you don't have this level of violence.

General Eaton is right. We are behind it in terms of the diplomacy and struggling to catch up. But I think you can tolerate that if we don't have 135,000 Americans in the country.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

Anybody else want to comment on the same question?

Dr. BIDDLE. Sir, the issue of federalism is something that is part of their constitution. It focuses on the idea of federalism. The issue is the mechanics and the implementing laws that provide for that sort of thing.

And that is being worked out through the constitutional reform committee's work, which has recently reported back to the council of representatives and has again been given some more homework assignments to work. But that is a very active issue among the Iraqi government right now.

Mr. AKIN. Are they starting to get the concept? Because when I talked to the State Department three years ago on a couple tours back, they said the whole idea of federalism under these guys is just like somebody from Mars. They just didn't—everything was top-down from their point of view.

Dr. BIDDLE. Correct.

Mr. AKIN. But you take a look at the Kurds and the Shia and Sunni, it seems like it is ready-made for a central constitution that says, "All we are going to do is this, this and this, and everything else is going to be regional." I should think that would help a lot.

Dr. BIDDLE. The constitution recognizes just one Federal entity at this time, and that is the Kurdish regional government. It does provide for the creation of other regional governments, but the implementing laws have yet to be worked out.

But the U.S. Institute of Peace has worked at it for many years now with the national government, and we are as frustrated as anybody with the results that we are seeing. And that is why now we are pushing out into the provinces.

And, for example, the work I did in March with the Baghdad provincial council was astonishing. It taught me an important lesson that we all need to understand. The Iraqis do not possess the tools with which to tackle these kinds of issues. And so they need the training. They need the mentoring in political reconciliation and the ideas of working through these various issues.

But the provincial council members soaked this up like a sponge. It was amazing to me.

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Afterwards, I had the district council representatives from Sadr City and from Adhamiya—the adjoining predominantly Sunni district—those come to us and say, "We want more of this training, and we want to do it together." And for the very first time in their history, Sadr City and Adhamiya sat down at the same table and started talking about issues.

So at the grassroots level, there is hope, but it just needs to become a principal focus of what we are doing over there.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Akin.

Mrs. Davis for five minutes.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here.

I wanted to go back to the Anbar situation a little bit, because I think one of the important things that was said that, rather than focusing on top leadership necessarily in Iraq, that it may be through the grassroots efforts that more change is going to occur.

But I also have felt a great concern from a few who believe that our working with the militias there might in the short term be a good idea but further out, that there is a real down side to doing that. And that it may work in areas where you have more homogeneity, but as you move through different areas of Iraq that that is going to be a problem.

Could you all comment on that and whether you think there is a significant down side that maybe not necessarily ignored like now but perhaps not being addressed in the way that it should?

Secretary WEST. I would simply say that each tribe in Anbar knows exactly where its boundaries are, and every one of them wants to push out, and every time they do now, the other tribes are pushing back.

Really, one of the reasons for the awakening spreading among all the tribes was that it only began with about 16 of the 23 tribes. But the other seven quickly said, "Wait a minute, we are going to start losing some of our smuggling. We are going to start losing some of these goodies that they are offering if we don't get on the bandwagon." So in self-defense they are going onboard.

The tribes take care of the tribal sectors and are very jealous of the other tribe coming in. What I don't see out of the Anbar situation is that these tribes somehow would come together and be a threat to Baghdad. They are much more parochial, extremely parochial people. And they are interested in their tribal areas.

General EATON. My position is any ally you can find is worth having, and the original relationship that we had with them was very positive. They were very helpful and they were very willing to go to great lengths to expose themselves to some risk by coming into the Iraqi army.

So the pursuit of alliances with the tribal factions and with militias, I think, is a very positive move on our part.

Dr. BIDDLE. What we are presented with in Anbar right now is both a window of opportunity and a window of vulnerability.

With the tribes banding together to push AQI, they are now trying to be brought into the recognized Iraqi police and military forces in the province.

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I mentioned that this is a campaign, just as we had World War II with many campaigns and Vietnam with many campaigns. And even in Desert Storm, we had three separate campaigns. You know, you can have varying levels of success in a campaign and still win the war, as long as you have strategic thought and guidance and vision about what you ultimately want to achieve.

If we are going to focus on fighting a ground war in Iraq, I have to ask, what does this contribute to our ability to dissuade Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons or from getting after AQI in Pakistan?

If the al Qaeda like any that we are fighting in Iraq is not a threat to our homeland, their goal is simply to get us out of Iraq. Their goal is to force us out. There were 33 insurgency groups that have been identified in Iraq, and the one common identifier among all of them is get the foreign occupation out of Iraq.

Once the Americans leave, there could be a lot of gun-play between these guys, and I suspect there will be. But principally, they and all the other groups, want us out of Iraq because we are a foreign occupation force. And that has been a traditional earmark of Iraqi nationalism for many, many decades. I mean, just ask the British.

Mr. BARTLETT. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will yield back and wait until the second round for my next question. Thank you.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Sestak for five minutes.

Mr. SESTAK. Thank you.

Let me tell you what I heard that fell upon me.

First, Dr. Biddle, you said, as well as the general, our leaving is going to be challenging if not done deliberately. You remember, General, it took us to get out of Somalia, 6 months after Blackhawk Down, 6,300 troops, and we inserted another 19,000 personnel. The 160,000 troops in Iraq and over 100,000 contractors, anyone who thinks we are going to turn around tomorrow and not do it an a deliberate way without a turkey shoot on that one road, that is what fell upon me here, is a timetable withdrawal can't be precipitous.

Then you spoke about training, and so did you, Dr. West. We have about 48,000 combat troops out of the 160,000 that is over there. That is all. We have got 8,000 advisors over there. Do we really think we are going to come down to 60,000 troops and build up the 20,000 advisors and have how many combat troops to prevent another Blackhawk Down?

And that is what I heard from you. The head of the National Intelligence Council told us the other day that it is an art, not a skill, to determine which of those Iraqi forces would be loyal or motivated to protect our troops once embedded there.

So those who want to leave behind a touch back, sort of like immigration touch back, you know, you kind of give it—okay, we will leave some training troops behind. Well, I tell you, that really worries me after watching Somalia.

And then, I step back and I hear, sir, about Al Anbar province and been there. That started before this surge started. They were coming over to us, those tribal chiefs after watching their 15-year-

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Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Andrews, five minutes.

Mr. ANDREWS. I thank the witnesses for your excellent testimony this morning.

Secretary West, I think you have exactly captured the dichotomy of public opinion between those who believe that the Islamist terrorists are the principal problem in Iraq versus those who believe sectarian violence is the principal problem. I think that is exactly right.

I want to explore your analysis and your conclusion. With did AQI come into existence?

Secretary WEST. I would probably say it was the battle of Fallujah was what really made AQI. When we backed out of Fallujah, that is when Zarqawi gathered so much strength that we had these weirdos and coyotes and wolves coming from all over the place for the next battle. And that was the turning point.

Mr. ANDREWS. When would you date the emergence of AQI as a viable force to create disruption in Iraq, what date would you put on that?

Secretary WEST. Oh, August of 2003.

Mr. ANDREWS. When would you say——

Secretary WEST. From then on they were a force to be reckoned with.

Mr. ANDREWS. Well, when would you say they reached a point where their strength increased considerably?

Secretary WEST. They became, in my judgment, the dominant force among all the different elements after they were able to regroup in Mosul in November of 2004 after they had been——

Mr. ANDREWS. Okay.

Secretary WEST [continuing]. Kicked out of Fallujah.

Mr. ANDREWS. And prior to November of 2004, the average attacks per month in Iraq were just shy of, I won't say average, the height were around 3,000, the lowest were 1,800 so the average is going to be 2,300 or 2,400 attacks a month, who was engaging in those attacks, if AQI was not yet a significant force.

Secretary WEST. The psychology of beginning to perceive you don't have anything to lose by striking at somebody and you have a high degree of testosterone, you are out there with different kids, would cause practically anyone to pick up a weapon, go out and start shooting.

Mr. ANDREWS. I appreciate that.

Secretary WEST. So the number of incidents——

Mr. ANDREWS. My time is limited. I wanted to ask you to answer my question, though, which was that prior to November of 2004, who was propagating these 1,800 attacks per month? AQI wasn't much of a force——

Secretary WEST. Correct. AQI was not the dominant force. You had many different insurgent groups who were hostile to the Americans.

Mr. ANDREWS. Do these insurgent groups still exist. Have they gone away? Have they evaporated?

Secretary WEST. That is the interesting thing, sir, that if you look at Anbar where most of the attacks took place, over 50 percent of them, the attacks now from last year in July at 400 have dropped to 100. So it is the same tribes that were on the other side

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shooting that now are no longer shooting but they haven't come over as individual insurgent groups.

Mr. ANDREWS. I wanted to ask General Eaton and Colonel Hughes, if I read your testimony correctly, I think that you think that the prospects for political settlement are enhanced with some kind of orderly withdrawal by the United States. Did I correctly state that in both of your cases?

Okay.

General EATON. Correct here.

Mr. ANDREWS. General Eaton, what do you think that political settlement might look like?

General EATON. Political settlement. Are you talking about the government of Iraq?

Mr. ANDREWS. Yes.

General EATON. We have heard discussion today and pretty articulately laid out that a relatively weak federalist approach to governing Iraq is probably the way out with strong local governments.

Mr. ANDREWS. What do you do about the problem of mass internal migration of Shia Iraqis from central Iraq which is predominantly Sunni area, what do you do about the people who are living in integrated neighborhoods and towns?

General EATON. Facilitate that.

Mr. ANDREWS. Facilitate the migration——

General EATON. It is happening right now in a brutal way.

I believe our efforts to facilitate the migration or re-migration as we are watching right now with the northern part of Iraq near the Kurdish boarders——

Mr. ANDREWS. In my remaining time I would ask Colonel Hughes or Dr. Biddle how they think the government of Saudi Arabia would react to such a plan where there was the existence of a large Shiite republic or large Shiite quasi-state on its borders?

Dr. BIDDLE. In my contacts with the Saudis, they would not view that as favorable to their security interests. But I would like to revisit this issue to what some have referred to as "soft partitioning of Iraq." I think that would be a very, very dangerous path for the United States to engage in.

The fact, the history, remains that soft partitions don't happen. All we have to do is look at Africa. We can look at India. We can look at Pakistan. We can look at the Balkans. And let me remind you that the level of violence and destruction in Iraq today doesn't even come close in a per capita sense what occurred in Bosnia. Not even close.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you very much for your testimony. I appreciate it.

Dr. SNYDER. Mr. Jones for five minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

And General Eaton, I want to say that I appreciate your service when you were in the military. But I appreciate you even more now because of your honesty and integrity.

I wish my friend from Georgia was still here to hear me say that but I mean that most sincerely.

I want to thank you, General Batiste, General Zinni, General McCaffrey, and anyone else I have left out by name for being will-

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So my question is, where is our responsibility or morality regardless of what you think about the different options out there? Secretary West.

Secretary WEST. Again, I am the odd one out here because I don't see the degree of the pessimism but if you start with your quitting, if you start with we are leaving because we consider a civil war inevitable and therefore, we are just packing up and going. Once you have quit, you have no control over what happens after you quit.

And I think we would, in this country, look at ourselves the way we did after Vietnam and it would be a bad time for us for about five years, both in our own self-esteem, how others look at it, and some of us would argue that we had a moral responsibility that we let down on unnecessarily and other would argue, no, we had done all we could and we have a bitter debate but we wouldn't have a national consensus about our moral responsibility.

Dr. SNYDER. General Eaton.

General EATON. Nations have interest that don't have friends. If it is a vital interest, nations will act. The argument based on moral grounds didn't with respect to Vietnam. We basically allowed South Vietnam to go down in flames because we withdrew support for the South Vietnamese army.

It is different in Iraq. I think the outcome can be very detrimental to this nation's vital interests and certainly to a lot of other nations dependent upon the oil coming out of that region. Because I think the whole place will collapse if we have a disaster in Iraq.

Dr. SNYDER. Go ahead, Colonel Hughes.

Colonel HUGHES. Sir, the American people bear a moral responsibility to the people of Iraq for what has gone on over there. And it transcends the scientific, almost theological discussion about vital security interests.

One thing that we can do to help mitigate whatever occurs is to fix the refugee admission issue here with the United States. There are many Iraqis who are fleeing the country, predominantly are Damascus and Amon but now it is growing in Cairo. And all of my contacts throughout the Middle East tell me this is viewed with great concern that this could become another destabilizing factor in the Middle East just as the Palestinian refugee issue destabilized so many places in the Middle East.

We need to fix the refugee situation and make it easier for the United States to fulfill its obligation to those Iraqis who have worked with us and bring them into the country.

Dr. SNYDER. Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. I think we have a terribly important moral responsibility to Iraqis that as moral philosophers would put it, aught implies can. You only have a moral responsibility to do things that are possible.

The question of whether or not it is possible for us to stabilize the country is debatable at this point. I think it is possible but improbable. How improbable it has to be before you decide you can no longer effect this in trying only magnifies the moral problem by increasing the death toll associated with the effort is a judgment call, which again, is partly why, I think, either of the two extremes is a defensible position.

One place where ought——

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pared to anything like drunk drivers killing people, or something, is still so horrendous how we view things that I would say it is the notion that we must a belief in ourselves that causes a joint sacrifice by the entire nation before we ask our sons and daughters to go to war. And we did not have this time.

Mr. AKIN. Joint consensus?

Secretary WEST. Joint, sir, in that it is the Nation as a whole that says, we are in this as a nation and we will sacrifice as a nation because this interest is vital. Ann if a President can, say you can't do it on the cheap and if the President says, I don't think I have to bother about that, then I don't think we should go to war.

So my great lesson would be, if you can't get the country to unite for a sacrifice, don't do it.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

General EATON. That was pretty eloquent.

I would also offer that our state department is not properly organized nor is it properly resourced nor are its personnel policies appropriate for the world we live in today.

Regional commands are working very well in the Department of Defense. I would go after a regional command approach for the State Department. They need a bigger budget and they need different personnel policies so that we can direct their people to do the things that we are asking them to do today they are not doing in the EPRTs.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

Colonel HUGHES. Sir, as you know, I worked on the Iraq study group and in doing the work, the big lesson that came out is exactly what Secretary West just raised. You have to have a national discussion about why the Nation wants to go to war before the first deployment occurs connected to those operations.

We did not have that. it should have occurred in 2002. The Iraq study group was almost retroactive in restarting that debate. And that is the lesson all of Americans need to hear and take to heart.

Mr. AKIN. Thank you.

Dr. BIDDLE. And one lesson we should learn and one that we probably will but shouldn't, the one that we should—although, again, as Colonel Hughes said, the importance of dissent in an open marketplace of ideas. It is not clear that the Defense Department in 2003 was sufficiently opened to a diversity views to allow them to make good decisions in extremely complex environments.

The lesson I am afraid we will learn that I don't think we should is that we went from a single-minded focus on major combat as the only primary mission for the U.S. military. And it ill-served us in Iraq, so we should now go to a single-minded focus on counter-insurgency and conflict as the only mission we should organize the U.S. military around.

The future, I suspect, is more diverse than that. The sheer difficulty of simultaneously doing two or three things very well should not be underestimated. The danger that is enormously great that that will become a recipe for mediocrity at many things altogether as once. The business of avoiding single-minded focus on any single military challenge is organizationally and culturally much harder than it looks and I am concerned that the single-minded focus that

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time that our country has faced in a long time so I appreciate being able to be part of this discussion.

Gentlemen, each of you have expressed yourselves in the last few minutes since I have been here—I apologize for not being able to make it earlier but I was interested in something Dr. Biddle said in that before we enter into a situation like this again, conflict or whatever, that we ought to have a national discussion and "examine all the possibilities." I think that is great advice.

And a few minutes later, Secretary West talked about our military leaders and all of us here in the Administration and in Congress considering a Plan B.

And I guess by question would be this. In terms of examining all possibilities as we move forward from the point we are in, which we obviously can't do anything about now. We are where we are. It would seem to me that we ought to have a discussion and I suggested this to my colleagues previously about where we go from here in examining all the possibilities including the recognition that Iraq does not exist in a vacuum, including the recognition that the country to its east, Iran, has demonstrated that it has aspirations to do some things that involve Syria and that involve Hezbolla, that involve perhaps the Shia majority in Iraq, that perhaps involve the state of Israel, and their support of terrorism may by a subject that even involves the United States.

So I guess my questions is, in examining all the possibilities for decisions that we are about potentially about to make and recognizing the Iraq government doesn't exist in a vacuum, and recognizing that the other factors are, in fact, factors that we ought to be talking about, give us a quick one minute or two or whatever it is, each of you if you would, be kind enough to, on your assessment of what are our decisions we make, what are the ramifications of the decision we may make?

Secretary WEST. Excuse me, sir, you mean relative to the Iranian dimension of the whole problem?

Mr. SAXTON. Relative to the what decisions we have to make about Iraq and the other factors that I mentioned?

Secretary WEST. I will just touch on two and quickly move.

You did mention, sir, that I think you should keep an eye on. And that is that the United States and Iraq together have to come to terms before December and go to the United Nations with the United Nations Security Council will then issue in December a statement about the role of the occupying power. That is going to be very interesting to see how we in Iraq work out our differences to go before the U.N.

Separate statement about Iran, I think we have been tiptoeing around the tulips too long. If they are killing Americans, there should be a punishment for killing Americans. That may be easy for me to say versus the President, but if anything, I think, sure, I am perfectly willing to talk to them, smile genially like President Reagan did and at the same time say, gee, I am sorry, but you just lost the place where those bombs were coming from.

General EATON. We need a powerful diplomatic engagement. Essentially, Iraq is a protectorate right now and we are its protector. We need to distribute that to other nations of interest.

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I actually think the most useful role that Congress can play at this point is causing ideas to be discussed that otherwise won't be. And again, I don't want to return to the same idea too often but in an extremely complex subject matter problem like how in the world do we mitigate the costs of either total or partial withdrawal from Iraq, the natural tendency of the government, especially in a situation as polarized as this, is not going to be to examine an all possibilities with the kind of rigorous, multi-disciplinary approach that we would all like.

The political catch-22 in doing that kind of planning can be overcome by law and that notion of creating ideas and information around which policy can be made, not just for lawmakers but also, for officers and strategic planners and people in the executive branch. I think that is a way that Congress can at this point in time, help us move forward in addition to just thinking about should we get out, should we not, what should the force level be.

Colonel HUGHES. Sir, that is an excellent question and I am glad you asked that.

The biggest issue that confronts General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker today is how do you wrap your arms around the political reconciliation issues of Iraq? And this nation lacks that ability because you don't have an Office of Political Reconciliation in the Department of State Foreign USAID. There are certain entities in the town and maybe this is a shameless advancement for my own institute but that is what we do.

You need to empower entities like the Institute of Peace that do political reconciliation work so we can get out there and, you know, have a broader net to cast over Iraq and its provinces. We are seeing progress there but it is slow and it is very, very consuming in terms of resources for us.

General EATON. The issue before Congress is the President of the United States and his stubbornness and unwillingness to deviate from stay the course.

That is the drama. I hear too much about the commanding general in Iraq and less about the Combatant Commander Fallon. Admiral Fallon has the entire region. He has all the countries that have a factor on the problem.

The President of the United States will not shift off his definition of victory. His definition of victory is not going to happen. It is going to be something else crafted with the countries of interest around Iraq. You have got to reach out to the Republican Party to help the President shift off of his notion of victory.

Mr. SESTAK. I agree.

Secretary WEST. I believe, sir, that the House Armed Services Committee, as I said earlier, is probably the only committee that really has the credibility inside the military. That if you were to say why don't we have some fulsome discussion about Plan B that you could get it.

Mr. SESTAK. You are saying we should be saying that.

Secretary WEST. I believe you could do that, sir.

Mr. SESTAK. That is——

Secretary WEST. I think this committee is probably the only committee that could do that.

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APPENDIX

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PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

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Opening Statement of
Chairman Dr. Vic Snyder
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Hearing on "A Third Way: Alternative Futures for Iraq"

July 25, 2007

The hearing will come to order.

Good afternoon, and welcome to the third in a series of four hearings that the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations is holding this month on alternative strategies for Iraq.

As I have stated previously, we are holding these hearings because my colleague, Mr. Akin, and I have both been frustrated by the tone of the debate about Iraq this year, and the polarization that has occurred. We wanted to have a series of hearings in which we invited smart, experienced people to help us identify and develop alternative approaches for Iraq. Our intent is not to critique current or past policies, but to focus on the future. Through these hearings, we hope to enhance the public debate and inform full committee deliberations.

I think we are off to an excellent start. Over the past two weeks, we have heard from retired senior military officers, defense policy experts, and academics who specialize on the Middle East, including General Wesley Clark, Max Boot of the Council on Foreign Relations, Dr. Muqtedar Khan of the University of Delaware and Brookings Institute, and Dr. Daniel Byman of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service. At the same time, the full committee has held hearings on trends and recent security developments in Iraq, and this afternoon, will hold a joint session with the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence to receive testimony regarding implications of the recent National Intelligence Estimate with respect to Al-Qaeda.

We have asked our witnesses to look forward rather than backward. We are not intent on rehashing how we got to where we are. Instead, the witnesses have been asked to address alternative strategies, and have been given guidance that should allow the subcommittee and the public to draw comparisons in key areas. Each witness today has provided us with a written statement, and I think it is clear we have a real variety of backgrounds, perspectives, and ideas. I hope that today will bring a vigorous discussion not only between the subcommittee members and the witnesses, but between the witnesses themselves. Anyone who was here two weeks ago for our first hearing, (the audio from that session which is available on the Armed Services website) will tell you that is exactly the kind of productive exchange we are looking for.

Today's hearing will begin with a statement from the Honorable Bing West, an award-winning author, correspondent for the Atlantic Monthly, former Marine combat

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commander, and Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs during the Reagan Administration.

Mr West will be followed by Major General Paul Eaton, who retired from the Army in 2006 after 33 years of military service, including command of the initial effort to develop a New Iraqi Army in 2003-2004.

Our third witness is Colonel Paul Hughes, whose resume includes both a distinguished military career and, since retiring from the Army, work on the Iraq Study Group's Military and Security expert working group.

Finally, we have with us Dr. Stephen Biddle, a senior fellow for defense policy and the top analyst on Iraq at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Welcome to all of you.

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Statement of Ranking Member Todd Akin
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
House Armed Services Committee

Subcommittee Hearing on A Third Way: Alternatives for Iraq
Part 3 of 4

July 25, 2007

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning to our witnesses; thank you for being here today.

Today's hearing is the third in a series aimed at breaking out of the false construct of talking about Iraq in terms constrained to "precipitous withdrawal" or "stay the course". While these hearings have been constructive, I want to reiterate the purpose of this exercise: we are here to discuss alternatives that truly offer a different plan to the current strategy. Simply critiquing the current approach is not the point of this hearing and is not helpful. So, I look forward to hearing the witnesses discuss and define an alternative plan.

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After reviewing our witnesses' testimonies, it is clear that some advocate departing from the current strategy. General Eaton and Colonel Hughes do not endorse pursuing a plan that emphasizes U.S. combat forces going "door to door" performing a counterinsurgency mission aimed at securing and holding Iraqi neighborhoods. Dr. Biddle's testimony acknowledges that the current plan has a chance of success, but believes "the likeliest outcome of the surge is eventual failure." Only Mr. West would seem to argue in favor of the current strategy. I have a couple of questions that I'd like our witnesses to address over the course of this hearing.

Those who advocate departing from the current strategy emphasize the need for improving the readiness of the Army and Marine Corps. While I think all members agree that this is an important issue and a vital priority, I'm curious how your alternative will allow U.S. troops to carry out the following military roles and missions: (1) training Iraqi forces; (2) deterring conventional militaries from intervening in Iraq; (3) supporting al Qaeda's enemies; and (4) conducting direct strike missions? Almost all of the experts who have testified before this subcommittee on this subject agree that continuing these roles and missions in Iraq is important.

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Finally, according to previous witnesses, increased violence, humanitarian tragedy, a failed state, emboldened terrorists and regional actors will all result in the wake of the withdrawal or significant drawdown of American forces. I'd like to know how our witnesses will ensure that their plan will not to make the situation worse. For those concerned about readiness, how will we ensure that subsequent to withdrawal the U.S. will not find itself in a situation where U.S. forces will have to return to Iraq in five or ten years? I would also appreciate it if you would take some time this morning to discuss how the U.S. should manage the consequences of withdrawal.

Again, thank you for being here today.

[Yield Back to Chairman Snyder]

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Statement of The Honorable Francis J. West, former Assistant Secretary of Defense, before the Subcommittee on Oversight & Investigations
Committee on Armed Services, U.S. House of Representatives
July 25, 2007

Chairman Snyder, Ranking Member Akin and Members:

It is an honor to appear before this subcommittee. I have been to Iraq 13 times in the past four years, embedding with more than 50 Iraqi and American battalions. I know from firsthand experience that the men and women of our Armed Forces serving in Iraq and Afghanistan have benefited greatly from your untiring efforts on their behalf and from your unstinting determination to insure those on the front lines receive the equipment and services they so richly deserve.

The subject today is "Alternatives for Iraq". The President and the Congress agree about the desirability of a withdrawal of US forces; the issue is under what conditions. It makes a vast difference to our self-esteem as a nation, to our reputation around the world and to the morale of our enemies whether we say we are withdrawing because the Iraqi forces have improved or because we have given up.

That issue towers above any discussion of tactics, logistics diplomacy or even timing. The Iraqi Study Group and former Secretary of State Kissinger have suggested that negotiations might yield an honorable withdrawal - some sort of compromise that extracts American soldiers while not precipitating a collapse inside Iraq. But it's not clear what convergence of interests with Iran or Syria would persuade them to cease supporting insurgents. And inside Iraq, the Jesh al Mahdi extremists and al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) must be destroyed, not placated.

Separate from AQI, though, there are a dozen other Iraqi insurgent groups. At the local level, there have been productive negotiations with the tribes, undoubtedly including some of these insurgents. These bottom-up understandings, focused against AQI, occurred because military action changed the calculus of the tribes about who was going to win. Successful negotiations flowed from battlefield success, not the other way around.

In Anbar, our commander, Major General Walt Gaskin, believes we have turned the corner, with weekly incidents dropping from 428 in July of '06 to 98 in July of '07. In Baghdad and its outskirts, that's exactly what General Petraeus intends to do with his surge strategy - bring security to the local level and break the cycle of violence.

America is divided between two schools of thought about Iraq. The first school - let's call them the Anti-Terror Camp - identifies the jihadists as the main enemy. General Petraeus has said that "Iraq is the central front of al Qaeda's global campaign." AQI is "public enemy number one" because it slaughters thousands

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of innocent Shiites in order to provoke a civil war. CIA Director Gen. Michael Hayden believes that a US failure in Iraq will result "in a safe haven (for al Qaeda) from which then to plan and conduct attacks against the West".

Although AQI is a minority insurgent faction, it is unmatched in savagery. I watched Fallujah descend into hell when the Marines pulled back in May of 2004. Our troops called it the "M & I" campaign: Murder and Intimidation on an astonishing scale. In this war, the moral is to the physical as 20 to one. Most of the Iraqi forces and the tribes don't have yet the self-confidence and experience to stand alone against those killers.

Al Qaeda, however, is losing heavily in Anbar, is on the defense in Baghdad and is fleeing north toward Baqubah. The Anti-Terror Camp believes that fracturing AQI and the Jesh al Mahdi death squads will set the conditions that enable US withdrawal, leaving Iraqi forces to enforce reasonable stability, albeit with continued violence. Based on my observations in a half dozen Sunni cities and in Baghdad over the years, I subscribe to the Anti-Terror Camp.

The Sectarian Camp, on the other hand, believes Iraq is being torn apart by religion, not terrorism. Removing the terrorists will not remove the root cause of the violence. An intransigent hostility between the Shiites and Sunnis will lead inevitably to a full civil war and sweeping ethnic cleansings - regardless of the current surge. So we should get out, because the situation is hopeless.

It is problematic whether the sectarian conflict has metastasized into the body polity, and the top levels of the Iraqi government have certainly performed poorly. But if we declare we're leaving on that account, chaos will ensue. When President Thieu in 1975 pulled back just one division, the whole country erupted in panic. If we pull out because we say the Iraqi government has failed, Prime Minister Maliki will pull back and retrench his forces. When he does, the potential for panic flashing across the country in a few days is real.

Iraq has a wide-open highway network that facilitates spontaneous mass movement. In April of 2004, I was with the task force of 200 armored vehicles that General Mattis sent 200 miles, from north of Ramadi all the way around Baghdad, in order to stop the pandemonium and armed bands spontaneously cascading down the highways. This will happen again if we leave before the Iraqi Army is ready to take over.

Conversely, if we believe the Iraqi forces are dominating the insurgents and can contain the centrifugal forces of the Shiite militias, then we'll withdraw combat units beginning in 2008 -- but leave a hefty presence behind. I am referring to advisers, logisticians and anti-terror combat units. We have 24,000 soldiers in Afghanistan; we would need many more than that in Iraq for years to come. Personally, I'd like to see us say we plan on having American troops in Iraq indefinitely - and repeat that every time we withdrew some of our troops. I'd like

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to undercut AQI's morale by saying, we're going to continue killing and imprisoning you until there are none of you left.

In summary, I would make four points.

First, General Petraeus is our wartime leader. He has a smart, experienced staff. He will provide to you a fulsome, balanced assessment in September - far superior to anything you will hear in the interim.

Second, how you, our elected leaders, depict our withdrawal will have profound consequences. To a very large extent, you will shape the narrative, determining how our great nation is perceived and how friends and enemies respond to us.

Third, if the rationale for withdrawal is because Iraq seems hopeless, then leaving behind a residual force is fraught with peril. You cannot quit, and expect to manage what happens after you quit. Iraq, if it perceives it is being abandoned, could fly apart quickly.

Fourth, the rationale for withdrawal drives everything that comes thereafter. Why are we withdrawing? Is it because we as a nation have given up, concluding that full-scale civil war is inevitable; or has our military succeeded, allowing Iraqi forces to maintain stability?

I do not see a compromise "middle ground" between these two rationales.

Thank you.

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MG Paul D. Eaton, USA (Ret.)

Testimony before the House Armed Services Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee

July 25, 2007

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I am Paul D. Eaton, retired now 18 months from the United States Army in the rank of Major General. My last operational assignment was Commander of the organization missioned to rebuild the Iraqi Security Forces from 2003 to 2004.

My remarks will focus upon the United States Army, the Iraqi Army, current Iraq operational approach and State Department efforts in the Middle East.

First, the American Army, the most important Army on the planet. We are under funded, under strength and are poorly supported by this administration - all the while given a critical mission that this President insists on executing on the cheap. Our depots continue to operate under strength and under funded, with huge quantities of materiel awaiting rebuild while units go without. We have failed to meet deployed leaders' demands for bomb resistant vehicles, solution the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP), while continuing the funding of Cold War legacy equipment best illustrated by the F22, JSF and the Virginia Class submarine. We have failed to put this country on a war footing to support the equipping of the American Soldier to ensure he is properly equipped for training while he is properly equipped for war. Our industrial performance during World War II was far more impressive than what we see today. Our ability in the Pentagon to meet acquisition requirements in a timely fashion remains a significant weakness.

Recently, in order to meet the requirements of our Foreign Policy, Secretary Gates increased deployment time to fifteen months. Eighteen month deployments are not out of the question. This isn't like WWII where our men fought battles, then retired to safe zones to rearm, refit. This is constant, grinding attrition warfare. We must immediately embark upon a massive, focused increase in the size of the Army and Marine ground forces. Figures range from 70K to 100K for Army; 15K to 20K USMC. To this date, my local recruiting stations have not received increased recruiting quotas although six months ago, the Secretary of Defense stated the need for an increase, endorsed by the President. The joke in the Pentagon is that a vision without resources is a hallucination. Preparing for a near peer competitor twenty years from now is interesting but we are at risk of losing the near fight.

This President is an unsupportive Commander in Chief for our Army and Marine Corps. He has resisted until early this year, to grow our Armed Forces to meet his Foreign Policy objectives – admittedly so advised by his former Secretary of Defense and current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Pace. Unlike war presidents before him, he has failed to put this country on a war footing to meet fiscal and personnel demands of the current and growing threat to our Nation. Finally, he has recently shown himself callous before the needs of our troops with the denial of your proposed pay raise and the abject failure of the Veterans Administration before the needs of our returning wounded.

Recently, retired Army Chief of Staff, General Edward 'Shy' Myer, one of our last truly candid Generals, notable for his warning on the hollow Army of the seventies, warned that you may not know the Army is broken until well after the event has occurred. Many signs indicate we are there. One of the canaries in the mine is the wife of a serving Army officer, former Special Forces Sergeant, who tells me she cannot recommend Army service for her oldest son. She is

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STATEMENT OF COLONEL (RETIRED) PAUL HUGHES, USA
UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHET & INVESTIGATIONS
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

"CONSOLIDATING GAINS IN IRAQ"
Wednesday, July 25, 2007
Washington, D.C.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for inviting me to present my views about "Consolidating Gains in Iraq." While I remain very engaged in Iraq through my work at the United States Institute of Peace, what I present today reflects my own personal views and not those of the Institute, which does not take policy positions.

As you well know, the Nation is seized with the war in Iraq, one of the most complex wars it has ever fought. This complexity can be characterized in many ways but one fundamental aspect must be understood for the United States to successfully interact over the long term with the larger Muslim world. While many Americans view the war in Iraq as a conflict motivated by sectarian hatred, this war involves issues rooted in power re-distribution among groups of people who have never experienced the dynamic processes we now demand they implement quickly, namely those of political reconciliation.

Understanding this fundamental nature of the war is crucial to our development of our war aims and national interests. So far there have been several changes in both and these have only served to confuse our regional friends and worldwide allies as to our ultimate goals. Additionally, this confusion has opened the door for our enemies to exploit.

Today, the interests and goals of the United States are usually reduced into sound bites rather than studied in their true nature. They are complex and very demanding. As described in the national strategy document, Victory in Iraq, they are:

- In the **Short Term**, Iraq makes steady progress in fighting terrorists, meeting political milestones, building democratic institutions, and standing up security forces.
- In the **Medium Term**, Iraq takes the lead in defeating terrorists and providing for its own security, with a fully constitutional government in place, and on its way to achieving its economic potential.
- In the **Longer Term**, Iraq is peaceful, united, stable, and secure, well-integrated into the international community, and a full partner in the war on terrorism.

In reviewing these goals, it appears less likely that these can be attained over what America views as "the short term." In fact, many have suggested this will be a generational effort. The complex nature of the short term goals suggests some of its components are not feasible and should be pushed back on the strategy's time line.

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If our security interests are realistically discussed and deliberated, they must begin with the fundamental fact that a ground war in Iraq does not serve our regional interests.

Some will raise the specter of another terrorist attack on our homeland – and as a survivor of the 9-11 attack on the Pentagon, I am very sensitive to this issue. But we must ask ourselves if Al Qaeda in Iraq is the likely actor that would stage such an attack. Given the recent development of Iraqi tribes banding together to resist and attack Al Qaeda in Iraq, it is doubtful this terrorist group would be in any shape to attack the United States. Al Qaeda in Pakistan poses a far greater threat to us than those in Iraq do. Again, we must ask ourselves how a ground war in Iraq serves our goal of eliminating Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda organization in Pakistan.

Therefore, we must step back and recognize that the campaign in Iraq is just one of many we will fight over the next 15-20 years. One campaign does not constitute a war in its full scope and complexities; we have succeeded in deposing a dictator, assisted Iraqis in establishing a nascent democracy and emerging civil society organizations. We can no longer ignore other pressing challenges challenging our security.

Announce a Date

Given that we are in Iraq and will likely be for the next two or three years, we can take prudent steps that would begin the redeployment of our forces, help the Iraqi people reconcile their differences, and build effective democratic institutions. Such steps would allow us to reinforce our campaign in Afghanistan, restore American credibility, and dissuade other states from engaging in destabilizing acts, either in this region or elsewhere in the world.

The essential step would be for the United States, in close consultations with Iraq and our regional partners, to announce a date when it would begin redeploying from Iraq military units not needed for the training and support of Iraqi military forces, the conduct of counter-terrorism operations, or the conduct of border surveillance/protection operations. Once this date is announced it must be protected and met. Decisions relative to the withdrawal of the last units would need to be condition-based so as to protect our ability to act to new or resurgent enemy actions should they arise.

By announcing a date for redeployment the United States would regain the strategic initiative in the region by strengthening our diplomatic posture relative to Iraq's neighbors and demonstrating to the Iraqi people that their security remains their ultimate responsibility and not ours.

Department of Defense officials should determine the size of the remaining force. However, we should recall that raw numbers of personnel are not what matters and should not be used to gauge our capabilities. Rather, the force would be best described by the types of units required, such as brigade combat teams, logistics units, and training teams. In addition to these, specifically skilled units that would provide support to the Iraqi Army must also be identified, such as tactical intelligence, medical, fire support, and logistical units.

With the announcement of the initial withdrawal date, the governments of the United States and Iraq should also announce the signing of a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), something that

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So far, reconciliation efforts have borne little fruit at the national government level for a variety of reasons and are unlikely to succeed in the short term. However, there have been some early signs of success at the provincial council and district levels where results can more easily be seen and felt by Iraqis on the street. These lower level successes should be reinforced so that a gradual groundswell builds to provide a national reconciliation basis for the central government.

Restructure Our Military Presence & Replenish Our Military

The Iraq Study Group recommended a restructuring of our forces in Iraq so that our troops remain committed to training and equipping the new Iraqi Army, conducting counter-terrorism operations, and providing the necessary support to the Iraqi military until it fully matures over time into a force capable of defending its territory. Units redeployed from Iraq could then undergo refit/reset programs before being deployed for new missions.

Careful consideration should be given to calls for the stationing of U.S. forces in the Kurdish region of Iraq. Any decision should take into full account the possible unintended consequences of such a move. The Kurds have been very supportive of the U.S.-led campaign to topple Saddam; however, they have a historical goal from which they have never wavered, the creation of an independent Kurdish state. The current Iraqi constitution gives them many trappings of sovereignty but still falls short of their desire for complete independence. We must recall that the Kurds are the largest nation of people in the region that do not have their own sovereign state. Basing U.S. forces in their federal region of Iraq would place us in a very dangerous position of being the firewall between the Kurds and both an old NATO ally, Turkey, and the state which we should really focus our attention towards, Iran.

As part of the restructuring effort, the United States should also consider forging an agreement with the Government of Iraq that would facilitate a rapid redeployment of U.S. forces into Iraq to deter any external threat to Iraq's territory. Such an agreement should provide for over-flight rights, base access, storage facilities and combined training exercises with Iraqi forces. In addition to deterrence operations, U.S. forces should also initiate civic action programs similar to those our current efforts in Central America. Such programs would help to build a confident relationship between the U.S. military and the Iraqi people.

Military units withdrawn from Iraq will require significant rest and reset when they return to the United States. During this time, the threats from South Asia will not cease; in all likelihood the operations tempo for our military will remain quite high. Efforts to resource and increase the size of both the Army and the Marine Corps must be given high priority, and their training and sustainment bases be rapidly expanded for the long-term. Priority must also be given to the needs of our Special Operations forces – their losses are not generally made public but undoubtedly they too have suffered losses and should receive similar attention.

Replenishing our military must also take into account the sacrifices our military families have made in this war. While they have suffered, their losses remain anonymous to many Americans. We owe them the necessary care and services to keep faith with them for giving up their loved ones for the greater need to protect the Nation.

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- Immediately act to resource and increase the size of both the Army and Marine Corps, refit and reset units that have been in combat, ensure our Special Operations forces are being properly resourced, and care for the families of our military personnel.
- Repair the damage done to our relations with our allies and special partners.
- More clearly articulate U.S. policy in order to regain the confidence and support of the American people.

Colonel (Retired) Paul Hughes, U.S. Army, served more than 29 years on active duty. Among his more significant duties, he served as the chief of the Army's National Security Policy division and as the chief of strategic policy for both the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq. Following his retirement in 2005, he continues to work on Iraq issues with the United States Institute of Peace. The views expressed in this statement are his alone and do not reflect those of the Institute, which does not take policy positions.

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The Case for the Surge

The surge represents a long shot gamble that is much likelier to fail than to succeed. But the odds of success, although small, are not zero. Given the consequences of failure in Iraq, even a long-shot chance at averting this is a defensible choice.

Iraq is already deep in civil warfare, and has been for at least two years.[1] This civil war is currently being waged at relatively low intensity, and could easily escalate, but it is already a civil war all the same. The policy challenge in Iraq is thus civil war termination, not prevention. Unfortunately, efforts to negotiate peaceful settlements to civil wars rarely succeed prior to the military defeat of the weaker side. James Fearon, for example, who has performed perhaps the most rigorous empirical analysis of this problem, finds that of 54 civil wars since 1945, only about one-fourth ended in a peaceful negotiated settlement.[2] And many of these efforts were not saddled with the legacy of prior misdiagnosis, policy error, and accumulated loss of public confidence that the United States now confronts in Iraq. Taken together, this legacy of error, combined with the inherent difficulty of the undertaking, suggest a poor prognosis for the American project in Iraq.

The odds in Iraq are thus long. But success is not inconceivable. The most common indicators of progress in Iraq are mixed – increases in US casualties, for example, have been accompanied by decreases in sectarian murders. Given the difficulty of the undertaking, great caution is warranted in projecting optimism from such ambiguity. But mixed indicators make it hard to exclude possibilities altogether and assert absolute confidence in any given outcome, including failure.

More important, there are some indications that an unanticipated Sunni tribal rebellion against al Qaeda in Iraq in Anbar Province may be spreading elsewhere in the country. If so, this gives some degree of hope that a strategy of bilateral ceasefire negotiations with individual combatant factions might eventually cumulate into something resembling stability in Iraq.[3] Of course, continued pursuit of stability via negotiation in Iraq is inherently a long shot at this point – certainly the odds are well below the 25 percent success rate for such attempts historically. But to jump from this historical observation to a claim that the chances are zero is very hard to sustain analytically. A more reasonable prognosis is a small – but non-zero – chance of success.

A long shot gamble is never an attractive option, but it can make sense if the costs of failure are high. And failure in Iraq could pose grave risks to American interests. If one defines failure as the total withdrawal of American forces from an unstable Iraq, then

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[1] The standard definitions of "civil war" in the scholarly literature normally require that such conflicts (a) pit combatant parties internal to a state, (b) involve at least 1000 total battle fatalities, and (c) involve at least 100 fatalities on each side (thus distinguishing civil war from unilateral massacres or genocide): see, e.g., James Fearon and David Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 97, No. 1 (2003), pp. 75-90. By such criteria Iraq is clearly and unquestionably a civil war today, and has been since long before the Samarra mosque bombing of February 2006 that some now see as the beginning of sectarian warfare in Iraq.

[2] James Fearon, Testimony to US House of Representatives, Committee on Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations, on "Iraq: Democracy or Civil War," September 15, 2006, p. 3.

[3] For a somewhat more detailed discussion, see Stephen Biddle, "Hard Bargaining," *Boston Globe*, June 3, 2007, pp. C-1ff.

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on the margins already, whether in the United States or abroad. And it is entirely possible that if confronted with such a disaster, the United States could be forced to re-intervene militarily in a conflict that will have gotten much harder still to resolve in the interim.

None of these prospects are certainties. But during the Cold War we worried enough about a very small risk of nuclear aggression by the Soviet Union to spend untold billions to reduce that small risk to an even smaller one. By comparison, the danger that we could catalyze an eventual regional war in the Mideast by failure in Iraq seems much more realistic. There is now no way to avert this risk with certainty, but the surge does offer at least a long shot chance to stabilize the country and thereby head off this prospect. As such it is a defensible, if unattractive, choice.

The Case for Complete Withdrawal

While a long shot chance at averting a possible disaster is defensible, so is the opposite. If the odds of success are now long, we are thus likely to fail anyway even if we try our best to avert this. And the cost of trying is painful: hundreds or thousands of American lives will be lost in the attempt that might otherwise be saved if we cut our losses and withdrew sooner. The likeliest outcome of the surge is eventual failure; this failure would lead to total US withdrawal anyway, but would postpone it until after many additional US fatalities were suffered. An earlier complete withdrawal of US forces ensures the failure but saves the added deaths.

The other chief advantage of complete withdrawal is an earlier recovery for the US military from the damage done by the war. The Army has estimated that it may take 2-3 years to replace or repair the equipment damaged by four years of continuous warfare in Iraq, even with the dedication of some $17 billion a year to the task.[4] Every additional year of fighting not only postpones this rebuilding task, it lengthens it by adding to the backlog of unrepaired damage and deferred maintenance. Whatever the outcome in Iraq, we will need a capable military to respond to other potential threats elsewhere for decades to come. And if the surge does eventually fail we will confront the danger of a possible regional conflagration in the Mideast and its potential for US military involvement. These are serious policy challenges that continued high operating tempos in Iraq make it harder for us to meet. It may well be worth the cost in deferred rebuilding if an extended US effort succeeds and thus averts risks such as a regionalized war. But the likeliest case is that the surge will leave us with these risks and a significant delay in rebuilding the American military to meet them. Given this, an important advantage of complete withdrawal is to hasten the process of resetting our military to deal with the challenges of the post-Iraq security environment.

The Administration has sometimes posed complete withdrawal as the only alternative to a surge, but used withdrawal as a strawman to encourage support for their policy. I agree with them that complete withdrawal is the best alternative to the surge, but I disagree with them on its merits: it *is* defensible, it is not a strawman.

This is not because it is risk-free or low cost. The dangers sketched above in the event of failure are real, and complete withdrawal sacrifices the chance to avert them via US-induced stability in Iraq. Moreover, the withdrawal itself is likely to be long, difficult,

[4] Ann Tyson, "Military is Ill-Prepared for Other Conflicts," *Washington Post*, March 19, 2007, pp. A-1ff.

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