



U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

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**United States Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Opening Statement in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Hearing on Iraq: Iraq in a Strategic Context – Session 1
Witness: Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger
January 31, 2007
****Remarks as Prepared for Delivery******

This morning we are privileged to have with us Dr. Henry Kissinger, whose name is synonymous with effective American diplomacy. Dr. Kissinger will discuss Iraq in the broader context of American foreign policy and strategy in the region. Before we begin I'd like to take a moment to present some of the key findings from our four weeks of hearings. While no unanimous prescription has emerged, there is a remarkably broad consensus on three main points.

First, our troops cannot stop the sectarian warfare in Iraq – only a political settlement can. Second, we must engage in intensive regional diplomacy to support such a settlement among Iraqis. Third, the United States military should focus on combating terrorists, keeping Iraq's neighbors honest and training Iraqis, not on policing a civil war. Indeed, combat troops should start to redeploy soon. Since a political settlement is so critical, we have examined some of its likely components. We have discussed the benchmarks the President has proposed – an oil law, de-Ba'athification reform, constitutional reform, and provincial elections.

But the divisions are so deep and the passions so high, that I believe we are well past the point where implementing such modest measures can make a meaningful difference in stabilizing Iraq. I believe something much bolder is necessary.

Les Gelb and I put forward just such a proposal nine months ago. It is premised on our conviction that the heart of the administration's strategy -- building a strong central government -- cannot succeed. There is no trust within the government, no trust of the government by the people, and no capacity by the government to deliver services and security.

Instead, we must bring Iraq's problems and the responsibility for managing them down to the local and regional level, where we can help Iraqis build trust and capacity much more quickly and effectively. We have proposed that Iraqis create three or more regions consistent with their constitution. We call for Iraq's oil to be shared equitably, with a guaranteed share going to the Sunnis. We call for aggressive diplomacy and the creation of a Contact Group consisting of Iraq's neighbors and the major powers to support a political settlement. We believe that we can redeploy most, if not all, of our troops from Iraq within 18 months under this plan, leaving behind a small force in Iraq or the region to strike terrorists, keep the neighbors honest, and train Iraqis.

I believe that this plan is more relevant than ever. It takes into account the harsh reality of self-sustaining sectarian warfare. It is consistent with Iraq's laws and constitution. It can help produce a soft landing for Iraq and prevent a full blown civil war that tears the country apart and spreads beyond its borders. It may be too late for our plan or any other plan to work. Iraqis may be too blinded by sectarian hatred and revenge to see their self-interest.

If that is the case, then we need to consider a more rapid way to disengage and contain the civil war to Iraq. That will not be easy. But we do not have the luxury of just walking away. Confining the violence to Iraq and preventing a regional war -- proxy or otherwise -- will require a lot of heavy-lifting if we don't get it right inside Iraq.

One of the things I've noticed is we should always have alternative plans, to deal with the possibility that the present strategy will not work, and I am absolutely convinced that this present strategy will not work. I hope that you will share with us what you think we need to do to put in place a

“disengage and contain” strategy if all of our efforts don’t succeed in turning the situation around. We are eager to hear your testimony.

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