



U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

**For Release:
February 1, 2007**

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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 – Panel 1
Witness: Former National Security Advisor Lt. General Brent Scowcroft
February 1, 2007
*****Remarks as Prepared for Delivery*****

Before we begin, let me make a brief comment on Senator Warner's resolution on Iraq.

Three weeks ago, before this Committee, Secretary of State Rice presented the President's plan for Iraq. Its main feature is to send more American troops into Baghdad, in the middle of a sectarian civil war.

The reaction on this Committee, from Republicans and Democrats alike, ranged from skepticism to profound skepticism to outright opposition. And that pretty much reflected the reaction across the country.

Senator Hagel, Senator Levin, Senator Snowe and I wrote a resolution to give Senators a way to vote what their voices were saying.

We believe that the quickest, most effective way to get the President to change course is to demonstrate to him that his policy has little or no support across the board.

After we introduced our resolution, Senator Warner came forward with his. The bottom line of our resolutions is the same: Mr. President, don't send more Americans into the middle of civil war.

There was one critical difference. As originally written, Senator Warner's resolution left open the possibility of increasing the overall number of American troops in Iraq.

We believed that would send the wrong message. We ought to be drawing down, not ramping up, and redeploying our forces that remain in Iraq. That's the best way to make it clear to the Iraqi leaders that they must begin to make the hard compromises necessary for the political solution virtually everyone agrees is necessary.

We approached Sen. Warner several times to try to work out the differences. I am very pleased that last night, we succeeded in doing just that.

The language Senator Warner removed from his resolution removed the possibility that it can be read as calling for more U.S. troops in Iraq.

With that change, I am pleased to support his resolution.

When I first spoke out against the President's planned surge before the New Year, I made it clear that I hoped to build bi-partisan opposition to his plan because that was the best way to turn him around. And that is exactly what we have done.

Now, we have a real opportunity for the Senate to speak clearly. Every Senator will be given a chance to vote whether he or she supports or disagrees with the President's plan to send more troops into the middle of a civil war.

If the President does not listen to the majority of Congress and the majority of the American people, we will look at other ways to change the policy.

But this is an important first step.

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