

**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations
Senator Richard G. Lugar**

**Opening Statement for Hearing on Iraq with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker
April 8, 2008**

I join in welcoming General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker back to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We commend their skillful service in Iraq and the achievements that U.S. military and diplomatic personnel have been able to bring forward under their leadership. We are grateful for the decline in fatalities among Iraqi civilians and U.S. personnel and the expansion of security in many regions and neighborhoods throughout Iraq.

Last week, the Foreign Relations Committee held a series of hearings in anticipation of today's inquiry. We engaged numerous experts on the situation in Iraq and on strategies for moving forward. Our discussions yielded several premises that might guide our discussion today.

First, the surge has succeeded in improving the conditions on the ground in many areas of Iraq and creating "breathing space" for exploring political accommodation. Economic activity has improved and a few initial political benchmarks have been achieved. The United States took advantage of Sunni disillusionment with al-Qaeda tactics, the Sadr faction's desire for a cease fire, and other factors to construct multiple cease-fire agreements with tribal and sectarian leaders. Tens of thousands of Iraqi Sunnis who previously had sheltered al-Qaeda and targeted Americans are currently contributing to security operations, drawn by their interest in self-preservation and U.S. payments.

Second, security improvements derived purely from American military operations have reached or almost reached a plateau. Military operations may realize some marginal security gains in some areas, but these gains are unlikely to be transformational for the country beyond what has already occurred. Progress moving forward depends largely on political events in Iraq.

Third, despite the improvements in security, the central government has not demonstrated that it can construct a "top-down" political accommodation for Iraq. The Iraqi government is afflicted by corruption and shows signs of sectarian bias. It still has not secured the confidence of most Iraqis or demonstrated much competence in performing basic government functions, including managing Iraq's oil wealth, overseeing reconstruction programs, delivering government assistance to the provinces, or creating jobs.

Fourth, though portions of the Iraqi population are tired of the violence and would embrace some type of permanent cease fire or political accommodation, sectarian and tribal groups remain heavily armed and are focused on expanding or solidifying their positions. The lack of technical competence within the Iraqi government, external interference by the Iranians and others, the corruption and criminality at all levels of Iraqi society, the departure from Iraq of many of its most talented citizens, the lingering terrorist capability of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, seemingly intractable disputes over territories and oil assets, and power struggles between and within sectarian and tribal groups all impede a sustainable national reconciliation. Iraq will be an unstable country for the foreseeable future, and if some type of political settlement can be reached, it will be inherently fragile.

Fifth, operations in Iraq have severely strained the U.S. military, and these strains will impose limits on the size and length of future deployments to Iraq, irrespective of political decisions or the outcome of the election in our country. Last week, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General Richard Cody, the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, testified: "Today, our Army is out of balance. The current demand for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds our sustainable supply of soldiers, of units and equipment, and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies. Our readiness, quite frankly, is being consumed as fast as we can build it. Lengthy and repeated deployments with insufficient recovery time at home station have

placed incredible stress on our soldiers and on their families, testing the resolve of the all-volunteer force like never before.” Later in the hearing, General Cody said “I’ve never seen our lack of strategic depth be at where it is today.”

The limitations imposed by these stresses were echoed in our own hearings. General Barry McCaffrey asserted that troop levels in Iraq have to be reduced, stating that the Army is experiencing “significant recruiting and retention problems” and that 10 percent of recruits “should not be in uniform.” Major General Robert Scales testified: “In a strange twist of irony for the first time since the summer of 1863 the number of ground soldiers available is determining American policy rather than policy determining how many troops we need....The only point of contention is how precipitous will be the withdrawal and whether the schedule of withdrawal should be a matter of administration policy.”

If one accepts the validity of all or most of these five premises, the terms of our inquiry today are much different than they were last September. At that time, the President was appealing to Congress to allow the surge to continue to create breathing space for a political accommodation. Today the questions are whether and how improvements in security can be converted into political gains that can stabilize Iraq despite the impending drawdown of U.S. troops. Simply appealing for more time to make progress is insufficient. The debate over how much progress we have made and whether we can make more is less illuminating than determining whether the Administration has a definable political strategy that recognizes the time limitations we face and seeks a realistic outcome designed to protect American vital interests.

Our witnesses last week offered a wide variety of political strategies for how we might achieve an outcome that would preserve regional stability, prevent the worst scenarios for bloodshed, and protect basic U.S. national security interests. These included focusing more attention on building the Iraqi army, embracing the concept of federalism, expanding the current bottom-up cease fire matrix into a broader national accommodation, negotiating with the Iraqis in the context of an announced U.S. withdrawal, and creating a regional framework to bolster Iraqi security.

But none of our witnesses last week claimed that the task in Iraq was simple or that the outcome would likely fulfill the ideal of a pluralist democratic nation closely aligned with the United States. All suggested that spoiling activities and the fissures in Iraqi society could undermine even the most well-designed efforts by the United States.

Unless the United States is able to convert progress made thus far into a sustainable political accommodation that supports our long-term national security objectives in Iraq, this progress will have limited meaning. We cannot assume that sustaining some level of progress is enough to achieve success, especially when we know that current American troop levels in Iraq have to be reduced and spoiling forces will be at work in Iraq. We need a strategy that anticipates a political end game and employs every plausible means to achieve it.

I thank General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker for joining us, and I look forward to our discussions of how the United States can define success and then achieve our vital objectives in Iraq.

###