

From the Iraq Communication Desk ([icd@osd.mil](mailto:icd@osd.mil) / 703-697-7323 / DSN 312-227-7323)

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Edition #1

## Initial Transcript

### STATUS OF THE WAR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

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**SUBJECT:** GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY, COMMANDING GENERAL, MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ; AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

**LOCATION:** HEARING OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE



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SUBJECT: STATUS OF THE WAR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

CHAIRER BY: REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON (D-MO)

WITNESSES: GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY, COMMANDING GENERAL, MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ; AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

LOCATION: 2118 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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REP. SKELTON: (Sounds gavel.) Would the gentlemen of the press please take their seats. (Pause.)

(Sounds gavel.) Ladies and gentlemen, before we start, General, Ambassador, I have a quick housekeeping announcement. The ranking member and I have agreed that for our second hearing today, which begins at 1:00, we'll deviate from the regular process for questioning, and for this afternoon's hearing we'll start the questioning with members who are here for this hearing but did not get to ask a question and are present at the gavel for the second hearing. And we will then proceed in the usual order beginning with them.

We also want to announce we will take a very short break this morning at 11:00. And if you have any questions regarding this, ask the staff.

Today the House Armed Services Committee meets in open session to hear an update on Iraq from two of America's finest -- General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker. Gentlemen, we thank you for appearing. I'm glad to see you both and believe that our nation is well-served by your leadership.

This committee does not forget all the personnel who serve valiantly under General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker and who work day and night on our behalf. They and their families have sacrificed tremendously in an effort to carry out a most challenging mission.

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Where there's been progress, it's due to their efforts, and we thank them.

We should not begin this hearing without recalling how we got here. Iraq was invaded on incorrect information. The turbulent aftermath following the initial military victory was not considered despite warnings of the aftermath, including two such warnings from me. Now we are in our sixth year of attempting to quell this horrendous aftermath.

Preparing for this hearing, I went back and read my opening statement from our last hearing with you in September, and I think I could have delivered the same statement today as I did then, which means I either repeat myself or things haven't changed that much in Iraq.

One thing I do think is worth repeating here is to remind members and everyone watching the hearing that all of us -- everyone -- desires to bring the war in Iraq to a close in a way that will best preserve our national security in this country.

We must approach Iraq by considering our overall national security. Iraq is clearly an important piece of that puzzle, but only one piece. Admiral Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and General Hayden, the director of the CIA have both said publicly that the next attack on our homeland will likely come from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, where Osama bin Laden is hiding. Troops in Iraq or those in units recovering from being in Iraq cannot be sent to Afghanistan to hunt down bin Laden. Protecting this nation from direct attack is job number one, yet our allocation of forces does not match this imperative.

Yesterday, Senator Warner asked whether our efforts in Iraq are making this nation safer. When looking at the needs in Afghanistan, the effort in Iraq, however important, is putting at risk our ability to decisively defeat those most likely to attack us. Iraq is also preventing us from effectively preparing for the next conflict.

We've had 12 military contingencies in the last 31 years, some of them major and most of them unexpected. The army would face a steep climb in trying to respond to another contingency. Readiness for most non-deployed units has fallen to unprecedented levels. Nearly all training is focused on counterinsurgency operations. Those contingencies have come, on average, about every five years. We're due for another, and in my view we're not doing what we must to prepare.

Turning back to Iraq itself, we should all recall that the surge is just the latest in a line of plans. And we're in our sixth year of war in Iraq. We've seen just about everything, from Secretary Rumsfeld's denial that there was an insurgency, to Ambassador Bremer's throwing fuel on the fire by firing every Ba'athist and member of the Iraqi army. We tried assaulting Fallujah twice. We tried rushing the Iraqi army into combat only to watch it fail. We tried pretty much

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everything before we got to trying counterinsurgency doctrine backed by increased forces that worked tactically.

Our forces have helped reduce violence, but in my view we cannot call the surge a strategic success without political reconciliation. The objective of the surge was to create the political space for the Iraqis to reconcile. Our troops have created that space, but the Iraqis have yet to step up. There have been some local gains and some legislative accomplishments but those mostly haven't been implemented. So we don't know if those will really help or not. And reconciliation based on a sharing of resources, a guarantee of political participation, equal treatment under the law and protection from violence regardless of sect simply hasn't happened.

The United States has poured billions of dollars into Iraqi reconstruction, and yet our senior military leadership considers an Iraqi commitment of a mere \$300 million for the reconstruction as a big deal.

This nation's facing record deficits, and the Iraqis have translated their oil revenues into budget surpluses, rather than effective services.

Under these circumstances and with the strategic risk to our nation and our military readiness, we and the American people must ask: Why should we stay in Iraq in large numbers?

Some of our witnesses want to argue for keeping large numbers in Iraq. I hope you can also explain the next strategy. The counterinsurgency strategy worked tactically, but the surge forces are going home. Political reconciliation hasn't happened, and violence has leveled off and may be creeping back.

So how can we encourage and not force the intransigent political leaders of Iraq to forge a real nation out of the base sectarian instincts? So what is the new strategy?

Last time you were here, General, you spoke of speeding up the Baghdad clock while putting more time on the Washington clock. You've succeeded in putting more time on the Washington clock, but the strategic failure is that the Iraqi politicians don't seem to have picked up a sense of urgency. In my view, that sense of urgency will only come when we take the training wheels off and let the Iraqis begin to stand on their own two feet. While we hold them up, there's no real incentive from them -- for them to find their balance.

In closing my comments in the September hearing, I quoted Tom Friedman, the journalist, saying that he would be convinced of progress in Iraq by the various sectarian leaders stepping forward, declaring their willingness to work out their differences on a set timeline and asking us to stay until they do. They hadn't done that by last September, and I don't see a lot of change on that front.

So, ladies and gentlemen, I now turn to my good friend and

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ranking member, Mr. Duncan Hunter, for any comments that he might have.

REP. DUNCAN HUNTER (R-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

And gentlemen, I think, when I see this team of leaders together appearing before us, as they did last year, I think of the words "duty," "honor," and "country," because you represent, I think, great models for young Americans who would go into public service, either on the State Department side or on the military side.

And behind you are lots and lots of family members, representing all of the thousands of people in the military and in the Foreign Service, thousands of family members who haven't seen their loved one for a long time. And I know you've endured some big separations, as have your personnel. We want to thank you for your service to this country.

You know, Mr. Chairman, it was 15 months ago when the president announced the surge, and even before -- even a few days after it had been announced, some members of Congress were declaring the failure of this increase in American forces going into country.

And yet I think by all metrics, it's been a success. And I'm reminded that in Anbar Province, where you had by some accounts, and by some statistics, the most dangerous of situations, the situation is extremely benign. In fact, I've seen -- I have seen Marines coming back in large numbers from Anbar Province without combat action ribbons for a simple reason: they didn't make contact with the enemy, because there isn't contact and contention to be had in most parts of that province now. And generally, the violence level has dropped throughout Iraq as a result of the surge operation.

Now, you know, we've looked at this initial foray of the Iraqi army undertaken under the leadership of the -- this newly formed Iraqi government in Basra, and that's been described by some critics as a failure because they didn't complete all the objectives that they undertook. Mr. Chairman, I see it exactly the opposite. I see this as inevitable and necessary for the engagement on the field of combat by the Iraqi military undertaking their own operations. And as I understand it, and I'd hope you'd elaborate today and explain today the -- your evaluation of the performance of the Iraqi army, but only with a few enablers being contributed by the United States. They undertook their own operations, meaning they had to stand on the field of battle, they had to face bullets, they had to have a -- utilize their own chain of command, their own logistics capability and their own battlefield effectiveness in this operation.

And General, I remember when we had the first battle of Fallujah and green Iraqi troops were rushed to that battle to participate with the Marines in that operation, and the next day those troops did not show up. They weren't trained, they didn't have discipline, and they moved out of that battle area very quickly and very abruptly. And

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today we see Iraqi forces which are standing and fighting, which are exercising that chain of command and that logistical capability. And I would hope that today, you could give us your unvarnished opinion on the stand up of the Iraqi military, because in my estimation, a reliable Iraqi military is the key to the United States leaving Iraq in victory.

So I would hope that we would have some detail devoted to your evaluation of how they're doing. They've now stood up 134 battalions. A number of them have been engaged in some fairly heavy warfare. Others are located in more benign regions of the country and haven't been engaged in extensive operations, but I would you could give us today your testimony and your description and your evaluation of how well the Iraqi army is standing up.

Also I hope, General, that you'll go into the issue of desertions. I've seen that one figure was that there was 4 percent desertions in the Basra operations. I would hope you could tell us to what extent those were members of the military police, to what extent those were members of the Iraqi army, so we can get an understanding of, in your estimation, what that's attributable to and what kind of a grade you'd give them on that particular operation.

Mr. Chairman, there's a lot of dissent as to whether or not the Iraqi government has utilized this space that has been given to them by the surge operation and this quelling of violence, whether they've utilized that to their best advantage in terms of political reforms that will move this country down the road.

I would hope also, Ambassador Crocker, you can give us your best evaluation as to how far down the road they've moved, whether you think they've made reasonable progress, inadequate progress and what you expect them to do in the future and the extent of engagement that you think we should undertake to ensure that they continue to improve. Also I would hope both gentlemen could comment today on the extent of Iranian participation in the Iraqi situation.

And particularly General Petraeus with respect to Iran's training and equipping of the anti-government forces in Basra, to what extent you think that will now shape the security situation, whether Iran is backing off or going in full force with their special operations and their intel in trying to train and equip and affect the military situation inside Iraq. So if you could touch on that, I think that's very important to us.

Mr. Chairman, I think we have before us today two outstanding leaders who really represent the best in a model of service to this great country. I think they've made enormous advances and improvements since the last, this last hearing that we held. And I look forward to the hearing today and to learning especially your unvarnished take on the standup of the Iraqi military apparatus.

Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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REP. SKELTON: Mr. Hunter, thank you.

Gentlemen, again I'm very, very pleased that you're here today, and look forward to your testimony.

General.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Mr. Chairman, Congressman Hunter, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on the situation in Iraq and to discuss the recommendations I recently provided to my chain of command. Since Ambassador Crocker and I appeared before you seven months ago, there has been significant but uneven security progress in Iraq.

Levels of violence and civilian deaths have been reduced substantially. Al Qaeda Iraq and a number of other extremist elements have been dealt serious blows. The capabilities of Iraqi security force elements have grown. And there has been noteworthy involvement of local Iraqis in local security.

Nonetheless the situation in certain areas is still unsatisfactory and innumerable challenges remain. Moreover as events in the past two weeks have reminded us, the progress made since last spring is still fragile and reversible.

Nonetheless security in Iraq is better than it was when we reported to you last September. And it is significantly better than it was 15 months ago, when Iraq was on the brink of civil war and the decision was made to deploy additional U.S. forces to Iraq.

A number of factors have contributed to the progress. First has been the impact of increased numbers of coalition and Iraqi forces. You're well aware of the U.S. surge. Less recognized is that Iraq has also conducted a surge, adding well over 100,000 additional soldiers and police to its security force ranks in 2007 and slowly increasing its capability to deploy and employ these forces.

A second factor has been the employment of coalition and Iraqi forces and the conduct of counterinsurgency operations, deployed together to safeguard the Iraqi people, to pursue al Qaeda Iraq, to combat criminal elements and militia extremists, to foster local reconciliation and to enable political and economic progress.

Another important factor has been the attitudinal shift among certain elements of the Iraqi population. Since the first Sunni awakening in late 2006, Sunni communities in Iraq increasingly have rejected al Qaeda Iraq's indiscriminate violence and extremist ideology. Over time, awakenings have prompted tens of thousands of Iraqis, some former insurgents, to contribute to local security as so-called "Sons of Iraq." With their assistance and with relentless pursuit of al Qaeda Iraq, the threat posed by AQI, while still lethal and substantial, has been reduced significantly.

The recent flare-up in Basra, southern Iraq and Baghdad

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underscored the importance of the cease-fire declared by Muqtada al-Sadr last fall as another factor in the overall reduction in violence. Recently, of course, some militia elements became active again. Though a Sadr stand down order resolved the situation to a degree, the flare up also highlighted the destructive role Iran has played in funding, training, arming and directing the so-called "special groups" and generated renewed concern about Iran in the minds of many Iraqi leaders. Unchecked, the special groups pose the greatest long-term threat to the viability of a democratic Iraq.

As we look to the future, our task together with our Iraqi partners will be to build on the progress achieved and to deal with the many challenges that remain. I do believe that we can do this while continuing the ongoing drawdown of the surge forces.

In September, I described the fundamental nature of the conflict in Iraq as a competition among ethnic and sectarian communities for power and resources. This competition continues, influenced heavily by outside actors, and its resolution remains the key to producing long-term stability in Iraq. Various elements push Iraq's ethno-sectarian competition toward violence. Terrorists, insurgents, militia extremists and criminal gangs all pose significant threats. Al Qaeda's senior leaders, who still view Iraq as the central front in their global strategy, send funding, direction and foreign fighters to Iraq.

Actions by neighboring states compound Iraq's challenges.

Syria has taken some steps to reduce the flow of foreign fighters through its territory, but not enough to shut down the key network that supports AQI. And Iran has fueled the violence in a particularly damaging way through its lethal support to the special groups.

These challenges in recent weeks -- violence notwithstanding, Iraq's ethno-sectarian competition in many areas is now taking place more through debate and less through violence. In fact, the recent escalation of violence in Baghdad and southern Iraq was dealt with, temporarily at least, by most parties acknowledging that the rational way ahead is political dialogue rather than street fighting.

Though Iraq obviously remains a violent country, we do see progress in the security arena. As this chart illustrates, for nearly six months, security incidents have been at a level not seen since early to mid-2005, though the level did spike in recent weeks as a result of the violence in Basra and Baghdad, but has begun to turn down again, though the period ahead will be a sensitive one.

As our primary mission is to help protect the population, we closely monitor the number of Iraqi civilians killed due to violence. As this chart reflects, civilian deaths have decreased over the past year to a level not seen since the February 2006 Samarra mosque bombing that set off the cycle of sectarian violence that tore the very fabric of Iraqi society in 2006 and early 2007.

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Ethno-sectarian violence is a particular concern in Iraq, as it is a cancer that continues to spread if left unchecked. As the box in the bottom left of this chart shows, the number of deaths due to ethno-sectarian violence has fallen since we testified last September. A big factor has been the reduction of that violence in Baghdad. Some of this decrease is, to be sure, due to sectarian hardening of certain Baghdad neighborhoods. However, that is only a partial explanation, as numerous mixed neighborhoods still exist. In fact, coalition and Iraqi forces have focused along the fault lines to reduce the violence and enable Sunni and Shi'a leaders to begin the long process of healing in their local communities.

As the next chart shows, even though the number of high-profile attacks increased in March as al Qaeda lashed out, the current level of such attacks remains far below its height a year ago. Moreover, as we have helped improve security and focused on enemy networks, we have seen a decrease in the effectiveness of such attacks. The number of deaths due to ethno-sectarian violence in particular, as I noted, has remained relatively low, illustrating the enemy's inability to date to reignite the cycle of ethno-sectarian violence.

The emergence of Iraqi volunteers helping to secure their local communities has been an important development. As this chart depicts, there are now over 91,000 Sons of Iraq, Shi'a as well as Sunni, under contract to help coalition and Iraqi forces protect their neighborhoods and secure infrastructure and roads. These volunteers have contributed significantly in various areas, and the savings in vehicles not lost because of reduced violence, not to mention the priceless lives saved, have far outweighed the cost of their monthly contracts.

Sons of Iraq have also contributed to the discovery of improvised explosive devices and weapons and explosives caches. As this next chart shows, in fact, we have already found more caches in 2008 than we found in all of 2006.

Given the importance of the Sons of Iraq, we're working closely with the Iraqi government to transition them into Iraqi security force or other employment, and over 21,000 have already been accepted into the police or army or other government jobs. This process has been slow, but it is taking place.

Al Qaeda also recognizes the significance of the Sons of Iraq, and al Qaeda-Iraq elements have targeted them repeatedly. However, these attacks, in addition to al Qaeda-Iraq's use of women, children and the handicapped as suicide bombers, have further alienated AQI from the Iraqi people. And the tenacious pursuit of al Qaeda-Iraq, together with AQI's loss of local support in many areas, has substantially reduced its capability, numbers and freedom of movement.

This chart displays the cumulative effect of the effort against AQI and its insurgent allies. As you can see, we have reduced considerably the areas in which AQI enjoys support and sanctuary, though there clearly is more to be done.

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Having noted that progress, al Qaeda-Iraq is still capable of lethal attacks, and we must maintain relentless pressure on the organization, on the networks outside Iraq that support it and on the resource flows that sustain it.

This chart lays out the comprehensive strategy that we, the Iraqis and our interagency and international partners are employing to reduce what AQI needs. As you can see, defeating al Qaeda in Iraq requires not just actions by our elite counterterrorist forces but also major operations by coalition and Iraqi conventional forces, a sophisticated intelligence effort, political reconciliation, economic and social programs, information operations initiatives, diplomatic activity, the employment of counterinsurgency principles in detainee operations, and many other actions.

Related to this effort, I applaud Congress's support for additional intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets in the upcoming supplemental, as ISR is vital to the success of our operations in Iraq and elsewhere.

As we combat AQI, we must remember that doing so not only reduces a major source of instability in Iraq, it also weakens an organization that al Qaeda's senior leaders view as a tool to spread its influence and foment regional instability. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have consistently advocated exploiting the situation in Iraq, and we have also seen al Qaeda-Iraq involved in destabilizing activities in the wider Mideast region.

Together with the Iraqi security forces, we have also focused on the special groups. These elements are funded, trained, armed and directed by Iran's Qods Force, with help from Lebanese Hezbollah. It was these groups that have launched Iranian rockets and mortar rounds at Iraq's seat of government and the International Zone.

Iraqi and coalition leaders have repeatedly noted their desire that Iran live up to promises made by President Ahmadinejad and other senior Iranian leaders to stop their support for the special groups. However, nefarious activities by the Qods Force have continued, and Iraqi leaders now clearly recognize the threat they pose to Iraq. We should all watch Iranian actions closely in the weeks and months ahead, as they will show the kind of relationship Iran wishes to have with its neighbor and the character of future Iranian involvement in Iraq.

We have transferred responsibilities to Iraqi forces as their capabilities and the conditions on the ground have permitted. Currently, as this chart shows, half of Iraq's 18 provinces are under provincial Iraqi control. Many of these provinces, not just the successful ones in the Kurdish Regional Government area, but also a number of southern provinces, have done well. Challenges have emerged in some other areas, including, of course, Basra. Nonetheless, this process will continue, and we expect Anbar and Qadisiyah provinces to transition in the months ahead.

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Iraqi forces have grown significantly since September, and over 540,000 individuals now serve in the Iraqi security forces.

The number of combat battalions capable of taking the lead in operations, albeit with some coalition support, has grown to well over a hundred. These units are bearing an increasing share of the burden, as evidenced by the fact that Iraqi security force losses have recently been three times our own.

We will, of course, conduct careful after-action reviews with our Iraqi partners in the wake of recent operations, as there were units and leaders found wanting in some cases, and some of our assessments may be downgraded as a result. Nonetheless, the performance of many units was solid, especially once they got their footing and gained a degree of confidence, and certain Iraqi elements proved very capable.

Underpinning the advances of the past year have been improvements in Iraq's security institutions. An increasingly robust Iraqi-run training base enabled the Iraqi security forces to grow by over 133,000 soldiers and police over the past 16 months, and the still-expanding training base is expected to generate an additional 73,000 Iraqi soldiers and police through the rest of 2008.

Additionally, Iraq's security ministries are steadily improving their ability to execute their budgets. As this chart shows, in 2007, as in 2006, Iraq's security ministries spent more on their forces than the United States provided through the Iraqi security forces fund. We anticipate that Iraq will spend over \$8 billion on security this year and \$11 billion next year. And this projection enabled us recently to reduce significantly our Iraqi security forces fund request for fiscal year 2009 from \$5.1 billion to \$2.8 billion.

While improved Iraqi security forces are not yet ready to defend Iraq or maintain security throughout the country on their own, recent operations in Basra highlight improvements in the ability of the Iraqi security forces to deploy substantial numbers of units, supplies and replacements on very short notice. They certainly could not have deployed a division's worth of army and police units on such short notice a year ago. On the other hand, the recent operations also underscored the considerable work to be done in the area of expeditionary logistics, force enablers, staff development and command and control.

We also continue to help Iraq through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales program. As of March 2008, the Iraqi government has purchased over \$2 billion worth of equipment and services of American origin through FMS. Since September, and with your encouragement of the organizations in the FMS process, FMS deliveries have improved.

While security has improved in many areas and the Iraqi security forces are shouldering more of the load, the situation in Iraq remains exceedingly complex and challenging. Iraq could face a resurgence of AQI, or additional Shi'a groups could violate Sadr's cease-fire order.

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External actors like Iran could stoke violence within Iraq, and actions by other neighbors could undermine the security situation as well.

The Commanders Emergency Response Program, the State Department's Quick Response Fund and USAID programs enable us to help Iran (sic) deal with these and other challenges. To that end, I respectfully ask that you provide us by June the additional CERP funds requested by the supplemental.

Encouragingly, the Iraqi government recently allocated \$300 million for us to manage as Iraqi CERP to perform projects for their people while building their own capacity to do so, recognizing our capacity to help them. The Iraqi government has also committed \$163 million to gradually assume Sons of Iraq contracts, \$510 million for small business loans and \$196 million for a joint training, education and reintegration program. The Iraqi government pledges to provide more as they execute their budget passed two months ago. Nonetheless, it is hugely important to have our resources continue, even as Iraqi funding begins to outstrip ours.

Last month, I provided my chain of command recommendations for the way ahead in Iraq. During that process, I noted the objective of retaining and building on our hard-fought security gains while we draw down to the pre-surge level of 15 brigade combat teams. I emphasized the need to continue work with our Iraqi partners to secure the population and to transition responsibilities to the Iraqis as quickly as conditions permit, but without jeopardizing the security gains that have been made.

As in September, my recommendations are informed by operational and strategic considerations. The operational considerations include recognition that the military surge has achieved progress but that that progress is reversible. Iraqi security forces have strengthened their capabilities but still must grow further. The provincial elections in the fall, refugee returns, detainee releases and efforts to resolve provincial boundary disputes will be challenging. The transition of Sons of Iraq will require time and careful monitoring. Withdrawing too many forces too quickly could jeopardize the progress of the past year, and performing the necessary tasks in Iraq will require sizable conventional forces as well as special operations forces and adviser teams.

The strategic considerations include recognition that the strain on the U.S. military, especially on its ground forces, has been considerable. A number of the security challenges inside Iraq are also related to significant regional and global threats. And a failed state in Iraq would pose serious consequences for the greater fight against al Qaeda, for regional stability, for the already existing humanitarian crisis in Iraq and for the effort to counter malign Iranian influence.

After weighing these factors, I recommended to my chain of command that we continue the drawdown of the surge forces, and that

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upon the withdrawal of the last surge brigade combat team in July, we undertake a 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation. At the end of that period, we will assess the conditions on the ground and determine where and when we can make recommendations for further reductions.

This process will be continuous, with recommendations for further reductions made as conditions permit. The approach does not, to be sure, allow establishment of a set withdrawal timetable; however, it does provide the flexibility those of us on the ground need to preserve the still-fragile security gains our troopers have fought so hard and sacrificed so much to achieve.

With this approach, the security achievements of 2007 and early 2008 can form a foundation for the gradual establishment of sustainable security in Iraq. This is not only important to the 27 million citizens of Iraq, it is also vitally important to those in the Gulf region, to the citizens of the United States and to the global community. It is clearly in our national interest to help Iraq prevent the resurgence of al Qaeda in the heart of the Arab world, to help Iraq resist Iranian encroachment on its sovereignty, to avoid renewed ethnosectarian violence that could spill over Iraq's borders and make the existing refugee crisis even worse, and to enable Iraq to expand its role in the regional and global economies.

In closing, I want to comment briefly on those serving our nation in Iraq.

We've asked a great deal of them and of their families, and they have made enormous sacrifices. My keen personal awareness of the strain on them and on the force as a whole has been an important factor in my recommendations.

The Congress, the executive branch and our fellow citizens have done an enormous amount to support our troopers and their loved ones, and all of us are grateful for that. Nothing means more to those in harm's way than the knowledge that their country appreciates their sacrifices and those of their families. Indeed, all Americans should take great pride in the men and women serving our nation in Iraq, civilian as well as military, and in the courage, determination, resilience and initiative they demonstrate each and every day. It remains the greatest of honors to soldier with them.

Thank you very much.

REP. SKELTON: General, we certainly thank you for your testimony, for being with us today.

Ambassador.

AMB. CROCKER: Mr. Chairman, Congressman Hunter, members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to provide my assessment of political, economic and diplomatic developments in Iraq.

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When General Petraeus and I reported to you in September, I gave my considered judgment as to whether our goals in Iraq were attainable. Can Iraq develop into a united, stable country with a democratically elected government operating under the rule of law?

Last September I said that the cumulative trajectory of political, economic and diplomatic developments in Iraq was upwards, although the slope of that line was not steep. Developments over the past seven months have strengthened my sense of a positive trend. Immense challenges remain, and progress is uneven and often frustratingly slow, but there is progress.

Sustaining that progress will require continuing U.S. resolve and commitment. What has been achieved is substantial, but it is also reversible.

Five years ago today, the statue of Saddam Hussein was toppled in Baghdad. The euphoria of that moment evaporated long ago. But as Iraq emerges from the shattering violence of 2006 and the early part of 2007, there is reason to sustain that commitment and the enormous investments we have made both in the lives of our young brave men and women and our resources.

Let me describe the developments upon which I base such a judgment.

The first is at the national level in the form of legislation and the development of Iraq's parliament. In September, we were disappointed that Iraq had not yet enacted some key pieces of legislation. In the last several months, Iraq's parliament has formulated, debated vigorously and in many cases passed legislation dealing with vital issues of reconciliation and nation building. A pension law extended benefits to individuals who had previously been denied them because of their service under the former regime. The accountability and justice law, de-Ba'athification reform, passed after lengthy and often contentious debate, reflecting a strengthened spirit of reconciliation, as does a far-reaching amnesty law.

The provincial powers law is a major step forward in defining the relationship between the federal and provincial governments. Passage of this legislation required debate about the fundamental nature of the state, similar in its complexity to our own lengthy and difficult debate over states' rights. The provincial powers law also called for provincial elections by October 1st of this year, and an electoral law is now under discussion that will set the parameters for elections. All major parties have announced their support for elections, and these will be a major step forward in Iraq's political development, setting the stage for national elections in late 2009.

In January, a vote by the Council of Representatives to change the design of the Iraqi flag means the flag now flies in all parts of the country for the first time in years. The passage of the 2008 budget, with record amounts for capital expenditures, ensures that the federal and provincial governments will have the resources for public

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spending. Mr. Chairman, all of this has been done since September. These laws are not perfect and much depends on their implementation, but they are important steps.

Also important has been the development of Iraq's Council of Representatives as a national institution. Last summer, the Council of Representatives suffered from persistent and often paralyzing disputes over leadership and procedure. Now, it is successfully grappling with complex issues and producing viable tradeoffs and compromise packages. As debates in Iraq's parliament became more about how to resolve tough problems in a practical way, Iraqi politics have become more fluid. While these politics still have a sectarian bent and basis, cross-sectarian coalitions have formed around issues, and sectarian political groupings which often were barriers to progress have become more flexible.

Let me also talk about the intangibles: attitudes among the Iraqi people. In 2006 and 2007, many of us understandably questioned whether hatred between Iraqis of different sectarian backgrounds was so deep that a civil war was inevitable. The Sunni Awakening movement in al-Anbar, which so courageously confronted al Qaeda, continues to keep the peace in the area and keep al Qaeda out. Fallujah, once a symbol for violence and terror, is now one of Iraq's safest cities.

The Shi'a holy cities of Najaf and Karbala are enjoying security and growing prosperity in the wake of popular rejection of extremist militia activity. The Shi'a clerical leadership, the marjaiyah -- based in Najaf -- has played a quiet but important role in support of moderation and reconciliation. In Baghdad, we can see that Iraqis are not pitted against each other purely on the basis of sectarian affiliation.

The security improvements of the past months have diminished the atmosphere of suspicion and allowed for acts of humanity that transcend sectarian identities.

When I arrived in Baghdad a year ago, my first visit to a city district was to the predominantly Sunni area of Dora. Surge forces were just moving into neighborhoods still gripped by al Qaeda. Residents also were being terrorized by extremist Shi'a militias.

Less than a year later, at the end of February, tens of thousands of Shi'a pilgrims walked through those streets on their way to Karbala to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. Sunni residents offered food and water as they passed through, and some joined the pilgrimage.

News from Iraq in recent weeks has been dominated by the situation in Basra. Taken as a snapshot, with scenes of increasing violence and masked gunmen in the streets, it is hard to see how this situation supports a narrative of progress in Iraq. And there is still very much to be done, to bring full government control to the streets of Basra and eliminate entrenched extremist, criminal and militia groups.

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When viewed with a broader lens, however, the Iraqi decision to combat these groups in Basra has major significance. First, a Shi'a majority government, led by Prime Minister Maliki, has demonstrated its commitment to taking on criminals and extremists regardless of sectarian identity. Second, Iraqi security forces led these operations in Basra and in towns and cities throughout the South. British and U.S. elements played important roles. But these were supporting roles, as they should be.

The operation in Basra has also shaken up Iraqi politics. The prime minister returned to Baghdad from Basra shortly before General Petraeus and I left for Washington. And he is confident in his decision and determined to press the fight against illegal groups, but also determined to take a hard look at lessons learned. The efforts of the government against extremist militia elements have broad political support, as a statement April 5th by virtually all of Iraq's main political leaders -- Sunni, Shi'a and Kurd -- made clear.

A wild card remains the Sadrism trend and whether the Iraqis can continue to drive a wedge between other elements of the trend and Iranian-supported Jaish al Mahdi special groups. A dangerous development in the immediate wake of the Basra operation was what appeared to be a reunification between special groups and the mainline Jaish al Mahdi. We also saw a potential collapse of the Jaish al Mahdi freeze in military operations.

As the situation unfolded, however, Muqtada al-Sadr issued a statement that disavowed anyone possessing heavy weapons -- which would include the signature weapons of the special groups. This statement can further sharpen the distinction between members of the Sadrism trend, who should not pose a threat to the Iraqi state, and members of special groups, who very much do.

One conclusion I draw from these signs of progress is that the strategy that began with the surge is working. This does not mean, however, that U.S. support should be open-ended or that the level and nature of our engagement should not diminish over time. It is in this context that we have begun negotiating a bilateral relationship and agreement between Iraq and the United States.

In August, Iraq's five principal leaders requested a long-term relationship with the United States to include economic, political, diplomatic and security cooperation. The heart of this relationship will be a legal framework for the presence of American troops similar to that which exists in nearly 80 countries around the world. The Iraqis view the negotiation of this framework as a strong affirmation of Iraqi sovereignty, placing Iraq on par with other U.S. allies and removing the stigma of Chapter VII status under the U.N. charter, pursuant to which coalition forces presently operate.

Such an agreement is in Iraq's interest and ours. U.S. forces will remain in Iraq beyond December 31, 2008, when the U.N. resolution presently governing their presence expires. Our troops will need basic authorizations and protections to continue operations, and this

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agreement will provide those authorizations and protections.

The agreement will not establish permanent bases in Iraq, and we anticipate that it will expressly fore swear them. The agreement will not specify troop levels, and it will not tie the hands of the next administration. Our aim is to ensure that the next president arrives in office with a stable foundation upon which to base policy decisions, and that is precisely what this agreement will do. Congress will remain fully informed as these negotiations proceed in the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Chairman, significant challenges remain in Iraq. A reinvigorated cabinet is necessary both for political balance and to improve the delivery of services to Iraq's people. Challenges to the rule of law, especially corruption, are enormous. Disputed internal boundaries -- the Article 140 process -- must be resolved. The return of refugees and the internally displaced must be managed. The rights of women and minorities must be better protected. Iraqis are aware of the challenges they face, and are working on them.

Iraq's political progress will not be linear. Developments which are on the whole positive can still have unanticipated or destabilizing consequences. The decision to hold provincial elections -- vital for Iraq's democratic development and long-term stability -- will also produce new strains. Some of the violence we have seen recently in southern Iraq reflects changing dynamics within the Shi'a community as the political and security context changes. Such inflection points underscore the fragility of the situation in Iraq, but it would be wrong to conclude that any eruption of violence marks the beginning of an inevitable backslide.

In terms of economics and capacity building, in September, I reported to you that there had been some gains in Iraq's economy and in the country's efforts to build capacity to translate these gains into more effective governance and services. Iraqis have built on these gains over the past months, as is most evident in the revival of marketplaces across Iraq and the reopening of long-shuttered businesses. According to a Center for International Private Enterprise poll last month, 78 percent of Iraqi business owners surveyed expect the Iraqi economy to grow in the next two years.

With the improving security and rising government expenditures, the IMF projects that Iraq's GDP will grow 7 percent in real terms this year, and inflation has been tamed.

The dinar remains strong, and the Central Bank has begun to bring down interest rates.

Iraq's 2008 budget has allocated \$13 billion for reconstruction, and a \$5 billion supplemental budget this summer will further invest export revenues in building the infrastructure and providing the services that Iraq so badly needs.

This spending also benefits the United States. Iraq recently

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announced its decision to purchase 40 commercial aircraft from the U.S at an estimated cost of \$5 billion.

As Iraq is now earning the financial resources it needs for brick-and-mortar construction through oil production and export, our assistance focus has shifted to capacity development and an emphasis on local and post-kinetic development through our network of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and ministerial advisers. The era of U.S.-funded major infrastructure projects is over. We are seeking to ensure that our assistance, in partnership with the Iraqis, leverages Iraq's own resources.

Our 25 PRTs throughout Iraq have been working to improve provincial and local governance capabilities, particularly in budget design and execution. They are also helping to establish critical linkages between provincial and federal governments. Our PRTs are great enablers, and we are working to insure their continued viability as our forces redeploy. The relatively small amounts they disburse through Quick Response Funds have major impacts in local communities, and congressional support is important, as it is for other vital programs in the FY '08 supplemental request.

Iraq increasingly is using its own resources to support projects and programs that we have developed. It has committed nearly \$200 million in support of a program to provide vocational training for concerned local citizens who stood up with us in the Awakening. Our technical assistance advisers have helped design new procurement procedures for Iraq's Oil Ministry. We developed the technical specifications from which Iraq's state-owned oil company will build new oil export platforms and underwater pipelines worth over a billion dollars. And in Baghdad, in the last three months the municipality has stepped up to take over labor contracts worth \$100 million that we had been covering under the Community Stabilization Program.

Like so much else, Iraq's economy is fragile, the gains reversible, and the challenges ahead substantial. Iraq will need to continue to improve governmental capacity, pass national-level hydrocarbon legislation, improve electrical production and distribution, improve the climate for foreign and domestic investment, create short- and long-term jobs, and tackle the structural and economic problems of the vital agricultural sector. We will be helping the Iraqis as they take on this challenging agenda, along with other international partners, including the United Nations and the World Bank.

Along with the security surge last year, we also saw a diplomatic surge, focused on enhancing U.N. engagement in Iraq, anchoring the International Compact with Iraq and establishing an expanded neighbors process, which serves as a contact group in support of Iraq.

The United Nations has taken advantages of an expanded mandate granted to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq, UNAMI, to increase the scope of its activities and the size of its staff. Under dynamic new leadership, UNAMI is playing a key role in preparing for

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provincial elections and in providing technical assistance to resolve disputed internal boundaries. UNHCR has returned international staff to Iraq to assist with the return of internally displaced persons and refugees.

The International Compact with Iraq provides a five-year framework for Iraq to reform its economy and achieve economic self-sufficiency in exchange for long overdue Saddam-era debt relief. Preparations are under way for a ministerial level Compact meeting in Sweden next month; 74 nations were represented at last year's gathering in Egypt.

Iraq's neighbors also understand they have a major interest in Iraq's future. Turkey hosted the second ministerial meeting of Iraq's neighbors in November, and Kuwait will host the third meeting later this month. In addition to all of Iraq's neighbors, these expanded conferences also include the permanent five members of the Security Council, the Arab League, and the G-8.

Support from Arab capitals has not been strong - and must improve, for the sake of Iraq and the sake of the region. Bahrain's recent announcement that it will return an ambassador to Baghdad is welcome, and other Arab states should follow suit. Iraq is a multi-ethnic state, but it is also a founding member of the Arab League and an integral part of the Arab world. Last month, Iraq hosted a meeting of the Arab Parliamentary Union, bringing the leaders of Arab parliaments and consultative councils to Iraq for the first major inter-Arab gathering since 1990.

It is noteworthy that the meeting was held in the Kurdish city of Erbil, under the recently redesigned Iraqi flag, highlighting both the remarkable prosperity and stability of Iraq's Kurdish region and the presence of the Iraqi federal state. We hope that this event will encourage more active engagements with Iraq, and we expect that Prime Minister Maliki's efforts against Shi'a extremist militias in Basra will also receive Arab support.

The presence of the PKK terrorist organization in the remote mountains of Iraq along the Turkish border has produced tension between Turkey and Iraq, and led to a Turkish cross-border operation in February, including movement of Turkish ground forces into Iraq. At the same time, both governments are working to strengthen their ties, and Iraqi President Talabani made a successful visit to Turkey in March.

Syria plays an ambivalent role. We have seen evidence of efforts to interdict some foreign fighters seeking to transit Syria to Iraq, but others continue to cross the border. Syria also harbors individuals who finance and support the Iraqi insurgency.

Iran continues to undermine the efforts of the Iraqi government to establish a stable, secure state through the arming and training of criminal militia elements engaged in violence against Iraqi security forces, coalition forces and Iraqi civilians. The extent of Iran's

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malign influence was dramatically demonstrated when these militia elements clashed with Iraqi government forces in Basra and Baghdad.

When the president announced the surge, he pledged to seek out and destroy Iranian-supported lethal networks inside Iraq. We know more about these networks and their Qods Force sponsors than ever before, and we will continue to aggressively uproot and destroy them. At the same time, we support constructive relations between Iran and Iraq and are participating in a tripartite process to discuss the security situation in Iraq. Iran has a choice to make.

Mr. Chairman, almost everything about Iraq is hard. It will continue to be hard as Iraqis struggle with the damage and trauma inflicted by 35 years of totalitarian Ba'athist rule. But hard does not mean hopeless, and the political and economic progress of the past few months is significant. I must underscore, however, that these gains are fragile and they are reversible.

Americans have invested a great deal in Iraq, in blood as well as treasure, and they have the right to ask whether this is worth it, whether it is now time to walk away and let the Iraqis fend for themselves. Iraq has the potential to develop into a stable, secure, multi-ethnic, multi-sectarian democracy under the rule of law. Whether it realizes that potential is ultimately up to the Iraqi people. Our support, however, will continue to be critical. I said in September that I cannot guarantee success in Iraq. That is still the case, although I think we are now closer.

I do remain convinced that a major departure from our current engagement would bring failure, and we have to be clear with ourselves about what failure would mean. Al Qaeda is in retreat in Iraq, but it is not yet defeated. Al Qaeda's leaders are looking for every opportunity they can to hang on. Osama bin Laden has called Iraq the perfect base, and it reminds us that a fundamental aim of Al Qaeda is to establish itself in the Arab world. It almost succeeded in Iraq; we cannot allow it a second chance.

And it is not only Al Qaeda that would benefit. Iran has said publicly it will fill any vacuum in Iraq, and extremist Shi'a militias would reassert themselves. We saw them try in Basra and Baghdad over the last several weeks. And in all of this, the Iraqi people would suffer on a scale far beyond what we have already seen. Spiraling conflicts could draw in neighbors, with devastating consequences for the region and the world.

Mr. Chairman, as monumental as the events of the last five years have been in Iraq, Iraqis, Americans and the world ultimately will judge us far more on the basis of what will happen than what has happened. In the end, how we leave and what we leave behind will be more important than how we came. Our current course is hard, but it is working. Progress is real, although fragile. We need to stay with it.

In the months ahead, we will continue to assist Iraq as it

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pursues further steps toward reconciliation and economic development. Over time, this will become increasingly an Iraqi process, as it should be. Our efforts will focus on increasing Iraq's integration regionally and internationally, assisting Iraqi institutions locally and nationally to strengthen the political process and promote economic activity, and supporting the efforts of the United Nations as Iraq carries out local elections toward the end of the year. These efforts will require an enhanced civilian commitment and continued support from the Congress and the American people.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I want to recognize and thank all those who serve our country in Iraq, both military and civilian. Their courage and commitment, at great sacrifice, has earned the admiration of all Americans. They certainly have mine, and it is an honor to serve there with them.

Thank you, sir.

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## Initial Transcript

### STATUS OF THE WAR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

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**SUBJECT:** GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY, COMMANDING GENERAL, MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ; AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

**LOCATION:** HEARING OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE



HEARING OF THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: STATUS OF THE WAR AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN IRAQ

CHAired BY: REPRESENTATIVE IKE SKELTON (D-MO)

WITNESSES: GENERAL DAVID H. PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY, COMMANDING GENERAL, MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ; AMBASSADOR RYAN CROCKER, U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRAQ

LOCATION: 2118 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.

TIME: 9:06 A.M. EDT

DATE: WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2008

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REP. SKELTON: (Strikes gavel.) The hearing will resume.

Mr. Smith.

REP. ADAM SMITH (D-WA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony.

I think the thing that we're all struggling with is the ultimate goal here is stability and reconciliation, and there are so many different factors into that. Dr. Snyder mentioned a couple with electricity. You've certainly mentioned a fair number. But ultimately we're sort of looking at, you know, what the long-term goals are and how we get there.

And one of the questions I had -- is there any way that you figure our troop presence in some ways contributes to instability or makes reconciliation more difficult? And if so, how have you factored that into your plans for getting to those ultimate goals?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, it's very akin, Congressman, to the idea that in a sense we might hold them back in the security tasks as well. And so it is another area where, you know, it -- we're constantly looking at is this the time to allow them to get into the deep end and be there if necessary, but you know, how hard do you need to hang on to the bicycle seat, that kind of measure.

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And we look at that across the board and in this area as well. But in the security arena, in local governance, in the provision of basic services and all the rest of that, we are keenly aware that there could be cases where they're going to say, "Well, why should we do it for ourselves if they're doing it for us?"

Counter to that is this impulse that I mentioned earlier that we have seen repeatedly, really, which is the desire to exercise sovereignty and the desire to be in charge. And occasionally it actually pushes them to do -- not -- more than occasionally -- it pushes them to want to do something, perhaps before they're completely ready to do that. And there have been some issues that evolved as a result of that.

REP. SMITH: Sure. Do you think our -- on a different issue in the same area, do you think our presence motivates insurgents or -- I think it clearly motivates Iran to cause more problems in Iraq than they otherwise would, because if we're not there, as I think Ambassador Crocker mentioned, Iran doesn't have much interest in Iraqi instability. But if we are there, given the conflict we have with Iran and the very real threats that Iran poses, they have to be worried about what our military would do if it got too secure in Iraq. So do you factor that in, in terms of how we reach ultimate reconciliation with Iran? And also with the various Shi'a factions -- and I want to throw one more question at you, and they're on the Shi'a factions -- because what happened in Basra and Baghdad recently could be simply dismissed as the government versus unlawful militias, but if you dig very deep down, you find out that there's more to it. And it's basically rival militias fighting out. The Badr Brigade seemed to be more closely allied right now with the Iraqi government, but the Badr Brigades also to some extent are allied with Iran.

So what's our long-term strategy there? Are we really choosing sides between the Badr Brigade and the Mahdi Army? And if so, why do we perceive that to be in our interests?

AMB. CROCKER: Those are two very good questions, Congressman. With respect to Iranian activities in Iraq, my earlier comments were my analysis of what I think should be Iran's long-term strategic calculations, not what they necessarily are. Clearly, they are motivated to try to put pressure on us. That's obviously part of it.

But having watched this dynamic for a number of years in the region, I think what the Iranians are doing is pursuing a policy, if you will, of Lebanonization, doing what they did in Lebanon. And they, in conjunction with Syria, have pursued a policy of backing more than one militia in Lebanon for the last quarter of a century. And we haven't been there in Lebanon as a military force since 1984. So I think they would be pursuing these kinds of efforts in Iraq --

REP. SMITH: Could you -- I'm almost out of time.

Could one of you quickly touch on the issue of the side that we are

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choosing in the Shi'a factionalism and why that's in our interest?

AMB. CROCKER: Yes, sir, because that is also a very important point. The way Iraqis are reading the events of Basra and Baghdad is the government against extremist militias. That's what has fused political support for Prime Minister Maliki and his government in a way that we just haven't seen, at least during the year I was there. So Iraqis themselves, Kurds and Sunnis as well as most of the Shi'a, are perceiving this as government against the Shi'a extremists.

REP. SMITH: Thank you.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you.

Mr. McKeon.

REP. BUCK MCKEON (R-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General, Ambassador, for your service and those of all of the men and women you command and that are out there fighting for our freedoms. You know, there's lots of discussion as to mistakes that have been made previous. I think those can be discussed forever. But what I would like to focus on a little bit is now going forward from here.

I have a quote from bin Laden. You know, some people say that we should get out right away. Some people say we should phase out. Some people say we should set dates. There's lots of comments. But I think we've also talked about the price of being there and the price of leaving. And I think bin Laden puts the focus pretty good. He says: The world's mill stone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate. The whole world is watching this war and the two adversaries -- the Islamic nation, on the one hand, and the United States and its allies on the other. It is either victory and glory, or misery and humiliation.

I think he understands the consequences of us leaving early before we finished our mission. I'm hopeful that the American people understand that, and I think they do.

General, could you please comment a little bit on the morale of our troops and their families, how they feel about the mission?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Congressman, first of all, let me just say that -- I don't want to start off by generalizing about morale; I want to start off by explaining that morale is an individual event. And morale depends, from soldier to soldier, and for me, as well, on the kind of day that you're having out there in the theater. And it's a roller coaster existence.

Now, having said that, as -- there is actually something called the Mental Health Assessment, which is done every year. The last one was done in the late fall, I believe it was. And after several years of a generalization of morale as going down, morale actually went up.

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We've talked about it. I talked to Command Sergeant Major Hill, my senior noncommissioned officer in MNF-I and long-time (the same ?) in the 101st Airborne Division, a number of other commissioned, noncommissioned officer leaders and troopers, and I think it is the sense that they have had that they are making progress; that in a number of the different areas where they were operating, they could see tangible results, and that they saw a reversal of the ethno-sectarian violence, the progress that had been made by al Qaeda, and so forth and so on.

And the brigade commander got that test question right. He pledged support. It took some time to build those forces, to get them going, to get it established. By mid-March, they were ready to clear Baqubah or, I'm sorry, Ramadi.

Over time, this played out in other areas. Originally they were not paid. Over time, they did ask if we could pay them, because they were helping with security. We have lots of security contractors and now we have 91,000 more called Sons of Iraq.

The calculations we've done showed that this is a pretty good bargain, because the cost in their salaries per month is a lot less than the amount of vehicle losses that don't take place because we have this support. They're helping us to hold areas that have been cleared of al Qaeda or their insurgent allies.

So again they're a very, very important component of this. They help with local security most of all. And quantity has a quality of its own in counterinsurgency operations, where the enemy can attack everywhere, anywhere, and you must guard everywhere. And they have helped us to do that.

They have, by the way, been targeted very heavily by al Qaeda, which shows the importance that al Qaeda sees, because they're also a manifestation of the population rejecting al Qaeda. And their losses have been similar, about two-and-a-half to three times our losses in recent months, as al Qaeda has relentlessly tried to go after them, to intimidate them, to get them to desert their posts. And by and large, they are very much hanging in there. They're fairly cohesive, tribally based elements.

REP. MCKEON: Thank you very much.

REP. SKELTON: Ms. Sanchez.

REP. LORETTA SANCHEZ (D-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, gentlemen, for being before us today.

I want to go back to a report that General Jones did back in September. And I know that the last time you were before our committee, it has just come out and we had some discussion over it. But I think that some people have forgotten about this report.

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And in particular to General Petraeus, I have a question -- or several questions -- with respect to what I'd call the Iraqification of Iraq, or the army -- the fact that to a large extent, it seems to me, over the last five years or so we have been thinking that the way to get out of Iraq is to set up the army and the police forces and let them take care -- get them to a point where they're -- we leave the country in the stabilized situation, and they're able to continue that stability.

So in the September 2007 report of the Independent Commission on the Security Forces of Iraq, which again was chaired by General Jim Jones, it painted a fairly pessimistic outlook for Iraqi security independence. And according to the report, the national police force was dysfunctional and should be disbanded. The minister of Interior was riddled with corruption and incompetence and that it was a ministry in name only, according to the report. It said that the Iraqi army was doing better, but wouldn't be capable of full operations for at least 12 to 18 months and was lacking in adequate weapons, transport, logistics, intelligence, planning capabilities.

And of course, I ask this question because we saw their performance -- or their lack of performance -- in the last couple of weeks in Basra and other areas. It wasn't very encouraging. And because, again, our general strategy is based on the capabilities of the Iraqi forces, my questions would be in particular -- and to you, General, because you spent a year in the mission of training those forces -- my questions are first, do you agree with the findings of General Jones and the commission? And where do you disagree and why? Have you acted on the recommendations of the Jones Commission, and which ones of the major recommendations have you acted on?

The commission found that the Ministry of the Interior, the national police and the border guards were heavily infiltrated by sectarian militias and were making little or no contribution to that fight. Do you agree with that assessment? What have you done to address these problems with the Maliki government? And are there any reforms that are likely to occur because of that?

The report also asserts that the massive troop presence of U.S. military and its facilities creates a perception among the Iraqis that the U.S. forces are a long-term occupying force. Do you agree with that assessment? And do you agree with the recommendation that significant reductions, consolidations and realignments of the U.S. forces must happen in Iraq in order for that perception to go away? And what friction do you see because of the fact that we may be looking as an occupying force to the Iraqi population?

And lastly in theory, reduction of U.S. forces should be possible as Iraqi army forces achieve the necessary state of readiness and effective independent operations.

In light of this reality, what can be done to accelerate the process of training, equipping and transferring responsibility to the Iraqi forces? Should we devote more resources to it? What do we do

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about those who didn't fight or ran away?

Do you agree with the Jones Commission that the Iraqi army is not ready to be independent in 12 to 18 months? That would be the end of this year. And how much of the Iraqi army, do you believe, will really be ready to operate independently within the time frame? That is by December of this year.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, I've tried to write as quickly as I could, Congresswoman.

REP. SANCHEZ: I can go over them again if you'd like. But --

GEN. PETRAEUS: By all means. No. Let me try to answer them if I could.

REP. SANCHEZ: You know what I'm asking, General.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I do indeed.

First of all, we have acted on a number of the recommendations that the Jones Commission report made. And frankly we agreed with their assessment of the national police, that it was, and I am on the record as stating repeatedly that the national police were hijacked by sectarian interests during the height of the sectarian violence. And they had become a sectarian actor.

And in fact, every one of the brigade commanders, division commanders and overall commander of the national police were relieved, as were about 70 percent of the battalion commanders. In one case, by the way, the relief is twice in one unit. And they actually have -- they have become net contributors now rather than net consumers or net sectarian actors.

And in fact, if you talk to the commanders, on the ground in Baghdad or elsewhere where there are national police operating, you'll find that in a number of cases, the national police are pulling their load, and that the commander of the national police, over the course of about the last 8 to 10 months, has made substantial progress, and that it has been directed by the ministry of interior.

They have -- each brigade has gone through rebluing process, a period of training where the entire brigade goes off to a training center and goes through intensive training. And now the Italian Carabinieri are actually in helping units one after another to do additional work.

The ministry of interior has worked to reduce sectarian influence, militia influence and so forth. This is not easy when you are in a situation that that ministry was in at the end of the sectarian violence of 2006, 2007. But they have indeed made progress in our assessment.

I also brought in another team to look at some specific, based on

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General Jones Commission's report, and again did follow a number of the steps with respect to that, as General Dubik, the head of the train-and-equip mission, has been pursuing.

The Iraqi army has taken over numerous areas already, as I've mentioned in my testimony today.

And although there clearly were units that did not measure up and leaders that didn't measure up in Basra -- and by the way, we then, and together with our Iraqi counterparts, provided a list of individuals that we thought didn't meet the mark in Basra and as well in Baghdad, and also a list of those who did very well, to provide our input, because they do have a leader assessment process in the ministries of Defense and Interior, and they will use that. And in some cases, the prime minister directed their release.

I also mentioned that the Iraqi security forces did do well in the face of violence that sprung up at the time of the Basra operation's start in the southern provinces and again, they did a creditable job. And those are areas that have been -- many of those have been handed off to provincial Iraqi control. One of the others will be handed off in the next few months.

Again, the same is playing out in Anbar province, of all places, at one time the most dangerous province in Iraq, now a place where a unit returned to Fort Stewart from the Army as well, where the concern of the infantry battalion was that many of them had not received combat infantryman badges because they hadn't been in real combat; and again, Iraqi forces stepping up in those locations.

So that's, I think, a pretty quick answer, although three minutes over the time. But we're --

REP. SANCHEZ: I thank you, General, and I'll --

REP. SKELTON: Thank you very much, Mrs. --

REP. SANCHEZ: -- submit it for you in writing so that you can get to the specifics --

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Thornberry.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I'd be happy to --

REP. SANCHEZ: -- because I am interested. Thank you.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Happy to do that.

REP. SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Mr. Thornberry.

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REP. MAC THORNBERRY (R-TX): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, today and some yesterday, there have been calls to declassify a recent intelligence community assessment, and kind of left hanging is this implication that there's something radically different in this assessment than in your public testimony today. So I guess I'd just like to ask briefly, do you take intelligence community products into account in writing your public testimony, and is there something substantially different in that particular assessment from the thrust of your public testimony that you've given today?

GEN. PETRAEUS: We do take it into account. In fact, you know, I -- we draw very heavily on, obviously, on our intelligence assessments as well, but it's certainly taken into account. And there is not any difference that I'm aware of, having looked at that fairly quickly, between what that says and what we have said. And I'm not the one who does declassification of intelligence documents.

REP. THORNBERRY: I understand.

Let me go to, I think, maybe a larger point. General, in your testimony, you talked about the gradual establishment of sustainable security in Iraq is vitally important to the citizens of the United States. And Ambassador, in your testimony, you said we have to be clear with ourselves about what failure would mean.

The American people don't hear that sort of talk very much. What they hear is what happened today on the ground with this bombing or this suicide bomber, and that's if something happened on the ground. If it's relatively quiet, they don't get any news. And I think it's important for them to hear from each of you why Iraq is important, what we have at stake, not just what we're doing for them, but why it's important for us. So I would invite you both to elaborate on the comments that you made in your written testimony.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, again, Congressman, I think it -- we have an enormous national interest in the security and stability of Iraq with respect, as I've mentioned, to al Qaeda-Iraq and al Qaeda in that particular area -- the possible resumption of sectarian conflict that could not only engulf Iraq once again but also potentially spread over Iraq's borders.

Some of your members have rightly noted that there is already a humanitarian crisis in Iraq. There are already, by most accounts, somewhere around 2 million internally displaced and 2 million others displaced out of the country. That could get far, far worse. In fact, we've seen some signs of a reversal of that, of the security conditions allowing some citizens to return to their homes and their families.

Again, there is certainly a regional stability issue and there's obviously an issue in terms of the global economy with Iraq being the

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second or third most -- the country with the second or third most oil resources in the world.

AMB. CROCKER: Congressman, both General Petraeus and I have spoken about the cost of failure. I'd like to spend just a moment on how a stable and secure Iraq could transform the region.

For most of Iraq's modern history, since the 1958 revolution, Iraq has been a negative factor for regional stability. And indeed, that revolution in '58 and our concerns over where it was going is what triggered the decision to send Marines to Lebanon. So over the course of these years, we saw the Iran-Iraq war, we saw the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the threat to Saudi Arabia, Iraqi subversion in Syria, in Jordan, in Lebanon -- kind of an unbroken saga of destabilizing actions or outright military invasions.

A stable Iraq, in my judgment -- and I spend a lot of time in this region -- could be an anchor in the Arab world and the broader Middle East. And we could have a positive dynamic throughout the region that we really haven't seen for decades. I can't predict, you know, what the specific consequences of that would be. But it would be a far more positive dynamic than we have seen in literally decades.

REP. SKELTON: I thank the gentleman.

Mr. McIntyre from North Carolina.

REP. MIKE MCINTYRE (D-NC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you both for your service to our country.

As I mentioned to General Petraeus before the hearing today, I was in Iraq just 10 days ago and had the opportunity to meet with many of our fine men and women serving our country there, including General Lloyd Austin from Fort Bragg, of whom we are particularly proud in our area of North Carolina, and had opportunities also to visit detainee centers at Cropper and Bucca.

I wanted to ask you, Mr. Ambassador, specifically, as we measure progress in Iraq, I'm struck by the fact that there has been no discussion, really, today of where we stand on the 18 benchmarks that were so widely discussed last September. The GAO said we had met three -- three -- out of 18 benchmarks. Can you tell us what your assessment is as to where we stand on those benchmarks? Having heard the testimony today that you all do not believe that timelines are in order, but where do we stand on the benchmarks?

AMB. CROCKER: Well, actually, Congressman, I would state that just in about an eight-week period we saw benchmark legislation enacted on accountability and justice -- that's de-Ba'athification reform -- on amnesty. And the provincial powers law, with its stipulation for elections by this fall, I would also describe as a significant benchmark.

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We're actually going through this process right now of doing an updated assessment on the benchmarks. That's something that I expect we'll have done in the next week or so. But pending that, I would say we're certainly well above three. I think I would say either achieved or significant progress on about a dozen of them.

REP. MCINTYRE: All right. "Achieved" or "significant progress." But as far as checking off the benchmark or having been achieved, can you tell us about how many you think that has been done?

AMB. CROCKER: Well, again, we're going through the process right now, and we can and will do that. In my testimony, as I described the legislative achievements, I did so in their own terms, because -- this is something I said in September -- you can have a situation in which all of the benchmarks are achieved, and you still don't have meaningful reconciliation. You can also have circumstances in which relatively few of them are achieved, but you -- you're getting reconciliation anyway.

REP. MCINTYRE: All right. I know my time's limited. Excuse me.

So you're saying within next week you could provide us an assessment as to where we stand specifically on the 18 benchmarks that the Iraqi government agreed to meet in working with the U.S. government to make sure that we are accomplishing the political/economic progress that we want to see in the country, as well as the military progress. Is that correct?

AMB. CROCKER: Yes, sir.

REP. MCINTYRE: Will you submit that to this committee within the next week?

AMB. CROCKER: I will.

REP. MCINTYRE: If you would do that in writing, please.

AMB. CROCKER: Yes, sir.

REP. MCINTYRE: Thank you.

And General Petraeus, I just wanted to ask, with regard to local police, following up on Ms. Sanchez's question, I've heard a continuous concern -- we've talked today about national police and also the military -- and commend you for your work with the military and all that you've done with the national police. Can you tell us your assessment of the corruption problem with the local police?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, first of all, Congressman, if I could just add that everybody in the Tar Heel State ought to be very proud of the 18th Airborne Corps headquarters' Lloyd Austin and his great team and all the other troopers and Marines from Fort Bragg and points east, who have served so magnificently.

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REP. MCINTYRE: And thank you for your service there too.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Sir, with respect to the local police, they have again taken on more and more and more. And interestingly what is emerging as the poster child for this is Anbar province.

Fallujah, again once the most, one of the most dangerous cities in Iraq, now has no Iraqi army or Iraqi military in it. It has 10 police precincts, each of which is a gated community essentially. They have had a Marine squad per police precinct. They're gradually downsizing those. So we'll have probably one for every two for a while and then gradually reduce those. And they are doing a creditable job.

There are always temptations in Iraq, and there's something cultural about it, frankly, about ensuring that there is not corruption ongoing. And there is an effort. They have in fact relieved police chiefs, in some cases, detained police chiefs in Anbar, among other places, to make sure that they're not supplementing their income by illicit means.

Iraq's a country with enormous oil riches and other natural blessings. And again there has to be continued effort to make sure that local police don't succumb to the temptations again to try to get their hand into some of this.

REP. MCINTYRE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you.

Mr. Jones.

REP. WALTER JONES (R-NC): Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

And to the two gentlemen at the desk, thank you for your leadership, your patriotism to this great nation and all the good things you're trying to do for America.

Ambassador Crocker, I want to ask you a question. But I don't want you to answer it right now because I've got a second question, and you can combine them both.

How often do you have communications with the Iraqi governmental leadership, especially Prime Minister Maliki?

Second -- (name inaudible) -- the issue and the reasons, which you have nothing to do but to protect the security of this nation. So this was not meant towards you, his bringing these figures up. The reason is that this country right now is borrowing money from foreign governments to pay our bills.

In the year 2001, a gallon of 87-octane gas cost \$1.42. Today it's \$3.35. In addition, in 2001, a barrel of oil was \$28. Today it's over 100.

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And I'm not going on and on, but the issue is that we in this Congress are going to be cutting programs to help our elderly with health care. So we do want to, as you're trying to do today, to give us, as you have done, the honest assessment of where everything is.

But the American people do support the troops as we support the troops. The American people want to know that the Iraqi government understands that we do not have treasure and blood to go on and on and on.

And Mr. Ambassador, the reason I bring this up is that a couple of your statements, as well as the general's, were very, very, you know, statements such as, gains are fragile and reversible; cannot guarantee success but we are closer. And we appreciate those statements.

But recently Prime Minister Maliki demanded al-Sadr disband his Mahdi Army, and threatened to bar al-Sadr's followers from the political process if the cleric refused. And I quote, "A decision was taken yesterday that no longer have a right to participate in the political process or take part in the upcoming elections unless they end the Mahdi Army."

My question to you, because of the word fragile -- which I appreciate, and you've been very honest -- fragile, do you have conversations with Maliki? Does he take you into discussion as it relates to political decisions that are going to be forthcoming? Because this is the question to you: If by chance that he would bar al-Sadr's group from the political process, what would be the results of that?

AMB. CROCKER: Congressman, General Petraeus and I see a great deal of the Iraqi political leadership. We met with Prime Minister Maliki, for example, I think just the day before we got on the plane to come back here. We also have extensive contacts with the other elements of the leadership.

And we do, in those contacts, register our views. We consult. But at the same time, Prime Minister Maliki is the leader of a sovereign government. And as we saw in Basra, he will take his own decisions. He did not extensively consult with us before that operation. We learned of it just a couple of days before he embarked on it.

With respect to the Jaish al-Mahdi, I point out that it's not just the prime minister. President Talabani, the Kurdish president of Iraq, yesterday also called on Muqtada Sadr to disband that militia and commit himself fully to the political process. And again, I think this is one of the really positive developments we have seen, that I referred to earlier, a popular rejection of militia extremists, terrorists, violence, both Sunni and Shi'a. And it is reflected not only in the prime minister's call, but in a position that spans the political spectrum. A statement issued last Saturday specifically called for the disbanding of militias. And that was a collective view

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of all the major political movements.

REP. SKELTON: I thank the gentlemen.

The gentlelady from California, Ms. Tauscher.

REP. ELLEN TAUSCHER (D-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, thank you for your service, and to your families, and for the people that you represent.

Gentlemen, over the last few weeks some of the national polling -- a CBS, New York Times poll -- have increasingly larger numbers of Americans saying, for example: looking back, do you think the United States did the right thing in taking military action against Iraq or should the United States have stayed out; 62 percent say stayed out. Do you favor or oppose the U.S. war in Iraq; 66 percent say oppose. All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over or not; 62 percent not worth it.

Now, both of you have stated in repeated testimony that our withdrawal from Iraq or redeployment from Iraq is going to be conditions-based. Apparently, that is a metric for Iraq. Those are not the only conditions that we have to look at. We have to also look at the conditions here. My constituents in California repeatedly tell me that they don't believe that we can sustain the number of troops or the treasure that we are expending.

The American people, gentlemen, love their troops and appreciate their sacrifice, but they do not like this mission. And they want to know what is going to happen. And we have an election coming forward in November, and that is going to be significantly about this.

On January 21st of 2009, if you report to a commander-in-chief that says that they want a plan for the withdrawal of troops in the next 60 days, what will you advise them?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, what I would set down first, Congressman, is I'd try to back up and ask what the mission is. What are the objectives? What's the desired end state? With an understanding of that mission, then you can state what resources are required --

REP. SANCHEZ: General, the mission is to maintain the security gains as best we have made during the surge, but to bring our troops home so that they can rest, retrain and be redeployable and we can fix our readiness problem and cut the amount of money that we're spending in Iraq, which is \$600 billion now, going to well over a trillion dollars in the future. What would your response be?

GEN. PETRAEUS: My response would be dialogue on what the risk would be, again. And this is about risk.

At the end of the day, let me just state up front, I absolutely support the principle of civilian control of the military.

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We are not self-employed in uniform. We take orders and we follow them. But what we want to do, of course, is to have dialogue within the chain of command about what the mission is, what the desired end state is, the objectives and so forth, then be able to provide the assessment of a commander on the ground of what we believe the resources are required, if they're less than that, you know, this is the risk to various elements. And then it is up to other folks to determine where they want to take the risk. But again, as I stated, I fully believe in, subscribe to and have sworn an oath to Constitution and the concept of civilian control in the military.

REP. TAUSCHER: Ambassador Crocker, considering that we have a new president on January 20th, and that president could say that they want to have you give them an assessment, for example, on how we spread the risk, how we spread the risk away from the American people and our military, who in the region could step up, who around the world could step up to help stabilize the Iraq government and their security situation in lieu of our departure. What would you advise the president as to who could be available and how we would begin that engagement?

AMB. CROCKER: Well, again, Congresswoman, that's looking fairly far into the future, and I've learned to keep my timelines pretty short when I'm predicting things to do with Iraq. I would anticipate it would be a briefing on the efforts that are under way.

I described, for example, the efforts we have made to have the United Nations more actively engaged in Iraq. They are. Our efforts with the international community more broadly -- again, it's noteworthy, I think, that Sweden is hosting this upcoming ministerial on the international compact with Iraq. It's the first time that an European state has stepped forward that was not a member of the coalition.

So, you know, we're trying to broaden there. And we have constant efforts under way in the region that frankly, I wish had been a little more successful. But we'll keep at it, and I think what I would probably be doing is providing an update on these sorts of things.

REP. TAUSCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. TAUSCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And gentlemen, thank you for being here. Please convey our gratitude and incredible appreciation of the men and women with whom you serve.

Three questions. Number one, the Anbar model is obviously working, it would appear, for a number of reasons, mainly because tribal leaders are working with elected leaders and our military officials to come up with a plan that cooperates and works, if you would comment on that.

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Number two, elected leaders and tribal leaders are the ones that can provide this timeline that everybody talks about. What do you see happening? How do we precipitate, how do we cause that to happen so that the Iraqis say, we're going to be ready by this date? Immediately, then you can come up with the timeline that we need.

And last, in the south, very significant, the Basra situation. You have Iraqi Shi'a battling Iranian influenced Shi'a who are Muqtada al-Sadr. How do we work that out, if you will just kind of explain the dynamic of that, because with Maliki taking on al-Sadr, that's pushing back on Iran and people need to know about that.

And last comment. David Walker sat where you're sitting and said the benchmarks we have for Iraq are not the right ones. So the benchmarks of Iraqis spending money of their own on us helping to fight the war against the terrorists is very significant in the benchmark area.

Thank you.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Congressman, if I could take the first and third, and the ambassador will take the second and the fourth.

The Anbar model is a model that we have tried to apply elsewhere. It's a model that certainly works in an area that is almost exclusively Sunni Arab with substantial tribal influence, and an area in which al Qaeda very clearly overplayed its hand, where again the population was devastated by what al Qaeda did to them in terms of violence, in terms of these oppressive practices that they implemented, not to mention the ideology to which they subscribe, which the people of the Euphrates River Valley really didn't embrace.

There were reasons why they were willing to support al Qaeda, having to do with a variety of actions early on -- feelings of dispossession, disrespect and the like. But over time they came to realize what al Qaeda had done to their river valley, done to business, had done to basic services and so forth, chose to reject it, and because, again, of the relative cohesion of the population and the tribal structures, were able to use that, and they were able to use it to cobble together a fairly coherent response to al Qaeda.

We are applying that where we can. Again, the circumstances there are fairly unique, so you have to adapt it to each area. And when you have a place where there are sectarian or ethnic differences, say in Diyala province or Nineveh, it's a bit more sensitive and you got to be a little bit more skillful in your application, perhaps, or just different in your application, because those in Anbar demonstrated enormous skill.

With respect to Basra, again, as the ambassador mentioned earlier, this is, in our view, truly a decision by a prime minister to take on elements that were very much threatening the peace, rule of law, good order and so forth in Basra, that were carrying out acts of

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intimidation, included murder and so forth, and not just -- it wasn't a purely politically inspired activity. It does happen that some of the most lethal elements associated with that militia, the so-called special groups, are in fact backed by Iran, were trained, equipped and funded by them.

So again, this is a fairly courageous decision.

It was a fairly sudden decision. It was one that came after some months of preparing a more deliberate approach. And it's still very much playing out. It is far too soon to say that Basra has succeeded or has failed, either. It is safe to say that Basra's going to continue for months, actually, and that it is a tough nut to crack. But the fact is that the prime minister has taken it on and his forces are grappling with that particular issue.

AMB. CROCKER: On the role of elected and tribal leaders, Iraqis -- both Iraqi leaders and the Iraqi population at large, you know, want to be in a position of taking charge of their own country and their own security. It's not a situation in which they're really all saying well, let the Americans do it. And again, the Basra operation reflects that sentiment, that they should be able to do things for themselves. So I think clearly Iraqis are moving in that direction, but just as we look at conditions rather than timelines, so do thoughtful Iraqis.

One thing that will be important are the provincial elections, because -- you mentioned tribal and elected leaders. Many tribal leaders and their followers sat out the last election and are therefore not represented in government. They are not going to make that mistake this time. They've been very clear on that, so these elections are going to be important to kind of recalibrate through the voting booth who Iraq's leaders are at the provincial level.

With regard to the benchmarks, the benchmarks have importance. We track them, and as I undertook to Congressman McIntyre, we'll provide our assessment of where they are. But what they don't do -- and as your suggestion implies -- they simply don't tell the whole story. And it is important to focus on a number of other things. A key element is that which you mentioned, the ability of Iraq to spend its own funds on its own reconstruction and development. And we place a very high emphasis on that even though it's not a benchmark.

REP. SKELTON: I thank the gentleman. Mr. Andrews from New Jersey.

REP. ROBERT ANDREWS (D-NJ): I thank the chairman.

I thank the witnesses for their service to our country. And please thank the people you represent, as well. We're very grateful.

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Ambassador Crocker, the words I hear talk about transition to Iraqis running Iraq, but the substance I see looks more to me like an indefinite American occupation of Iraq.

I want to ask you some questions about that. A significant though not exclusive source of the hostilities in Iraq are Sunni resisters who do not want to live in a country that's 61 percent Shi'ite. And Iraq is a country where who controls the guns and the money and the power is going to be very, very important.

When you were here in September, the essential argument you made to the American people was that General Petraeus and his forces would do their very best to tamp down the violence -- and they have, and we thank them for that -- and that the Iraqi politicians would then take advantage of that hiatus and do the best they could to reach political reconciliation. They have not.

It is correct, isn't -- let's first talk about sharing of power with the provinces, particularly those that are majority Sunni. There have not been provincial elections yet, have there?

AMB. CROCKER: There have been provincial elections, one round, in which many Sunnis boycotted. The next elections will be this fall.

REP. ANDREWS: But there have not been meaningful provincial elections which vested real power in provincial governments. Would you agree with that?

AMB. CROCKER: Well, actually, Congressman, the provincial governments do have significant power. And that's now been codified in the provincial powers law that was just passed by the parliament. The most important power they have is the access to resources. All the provinces --

REP. ANDREWS: Now let's talk about resources. The -- at this point in time, the most important economic resource in Iraq is oil revenues. The Iraqi parliament has not passed a hydrocarbon law since September, has it?

AMB. CROCKER: No, it has not.

REP. ANDREWS: And finally, a very important thing is control of the military and the Interior Ministry, the police. Now, there was a de-Ba'athification law passed by the Iraqi parliament, enacted into law, but it's my understanding that the terms of that statute say that former members of the Ba'athist Party may not work in the military and may not work in the Interior Ministry. Is that correct?

AMB. CROCKER: They -- that the -- the most senior levels of the Ba'ath Party. There are --

REP. ANDREWS: Well, but aren't the people at the most senior levels the one(s) whose participation in political negotiation is the

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most important?

AMB. CROCKER: The -- as I said in my testimony, Congressman, the implementation of these laws, this one as well as the others, is going to be of key importance. I would note, though -- and we're still awaiting that, but I would note that these laws were passed in a new spirit of reconciliation that we would expect to see also inform the implementation phase.

REP. ANDREWS: I do understand that. I do understand that there is some discussion of a new spirit of reconciliation. But the argument that was made by you in September was that a reduction in violence would create the opportunity for a period of real political reconciliation.

And that was the rationale of the so-called surge.

Now, the record shows that there was a de-Ba'athification law, but as you just said, key members of the party, former members of the party can't work in the Defense or Interior ministry, which means they have no access to the guns. There have been some provincial statutes passed, but the meaningful elections, by my judgment, have not occurred, and we hear they'll occur by October 1st. We've heard that for a very long time. And perhaps the most important thing, which is the money, the hydrocarbon law has not been passed.

Now, I'm not meaning to say here that doing all those things since September is a mark of abject failure, but my goodness, not doing them since April of 2003 sure looks (that ?). You know, the world didn't begin in September. As far as the American people are concerned, it was April of 2003, when Saddam fell, when the forces which General Petraeus participated in did such a great job of making that happen. It is now five years. No hydrocarbon law. No meaningful distribution to the provinces. No de-Ba'athification law. Why should the American people wait five more minutes for that to happen?

AMB. CROCKER: Congressman, while there is no hydrocarbon law and revenue-sharing law, in fact revenues are being shared to the provinces. And they are -- this process is ongoing. It is seen as equitable both in predominantly Sunni and predominantly Shi'a provinces. The provinces have resources because the oil revenues in fact are being shared. And that, I think, is the important indicator.

You talked about Sunni resistors not wanting to be part of a Shi'a majority country. Well, in fact, as we have seen in Anbar, in Baghdad and elsewhere, the Sunnis have decided they don't want to have anything to do with al Qaeda and its supporters. They took a very courageous stand against them. And that actually triggered a broader reconciliation process.

REP. ANDREWS: Well, my time is expired. I will just quickly say that not having anything to do with al Qaeda is one thing; wanting to have something to do with the new government is quite another.

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REP. SKELTON: Thank the gentleman.

Gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Forbes.

REP. J. RANDY FORBES (R-VA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General, Ambassador, thank you so much for being here. And the question I'm going to ask you you might not be able to answer. I just haven't found who could articulate this answer best, so I'm going to try it on the two of you.

And let me set it up by saying how much I appreciate what both of you do. The chairman and I had the privilege of spending Christmas Eve with both of you in Iraq this year. We thank you for that opportunity.

I know, General, you mentioned yesterday you thought your men and women who were serving there were America's newest greatest generation. And that's certainly true. And to all the people we talked to, not one exception, they believed in what you're doing and the mission that was there. I get frustrated sometimes too when I see charts coming up that suggest \$1 trillion over the next 10 years but then I don't see a chart that talks about the fact that just from the deficits we'll have on Social Security and Medicare, it'll be 53 times that amount. We talk about borrowing money. We just borrowed \$168 billion to give to people to help feel good about the economy. And all of that that we put in a bag, shake it up and put it on a shelf -- I want to cut to the chase on this.

When I'm travelling around, I'm looking at average homemaker, factory worker, salesman who have children, and they're looking and they're saying some of what you've heard today. We're having to spend \$3 and something for a gallon of gas. We have to make a tough choice. We have to spend X number of dollars for a gallon of milk, that's a tough choice. And the question they're trying to grapple with inside is, how come it's worth \$608 billion for them and their family to spend in Iraq for safety and security?

And General, I want to preface it by yesterday, I think your response to Senator Warner was, when he asked you were we safer in America because we're in Iraq, and you said yes -- the resulting question though, I want to also ask. If we prematurely pull out of Iraq, are we less safe in America? And when we talk about things like we just mentioned earlier, enormous national interest, al Qaeda strengthening in Iraq, sectarian violence in Iraq, all things to people -- they say, that's wonderful, we support them, but is it worth \$608 billion? How do we answer the housewife, factory worker, whatever and say, this is why it's important to you that we spend these monies and do this fight?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well again, I think that what happens in Iraq has ripple effects that certainly will ripple all the way right into the United States. If there is a disruption to the oil flow, just as an

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example -- which is, by the way, flowing quite well out of Iraq and have exceeded their goals for oil export on top of, of course, what they're getting paid for it, but would find an even higher price at the gas tank. If there are again, if there's widespread regional instability and all the rest of that, again, the repercussions eventually will be felt in the United States.

More immediately, of course, is the impact of al Qaeda being able to establish a base there, from which it could then project trained and possibly equipped terrorists -- again, eventually, that all obviously has an impact as it has in the past on the United States and on our own citizens.

So as I've stated here this morning and said yesterday before the committees, we have an enormous interest in doing all that we can to get this right. It is of huge importance to our country.

REP. FORBES: Ambassador?

AMB. CROCKER: And I would just add to that, Congressman. I was in Lebanon in the early 1980s, and when we withdrew our Marines from Lebanon in early 1984 after the Marine barracks bombing in October of 1983, countries in the region made some judgments about what the United States was willing to do. Iran and Syria, in particular, made some judgments. And those judgments, which I think were incorrect judgments, continue to inform their actions today, over a quarter of a century later.

Were we to take the decision to disengage from Iraq without regard to the conditions and the consequences, the region and indeed the world would also come to conclusions about the will of the United States that I think would have some very grave consequences, not just in Iraq but for U.S. interests more broadly.

REP. FORBES: Thank you.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank you. We will have to close this hearing at 12:30 for the staff to prepare for the 1:00 hearing that we have scheduled. And we'll do our best to get as many (minutes ?) as we can between now and then.

Gentlemen, we thank you for your patience with us.

Ms. Davis.

REP. SUSAN DAVIS (D-CA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to you, General, Mr. Ambassador, and really, to all the men and women who are sacrificing along with you today.

I wanted to just speak -- ask you for a minute about the Status of Forces Agreement. And Mr. Ambassador, you referenced that in your

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remarks and I know also at the Senate hearing yesterday it was mentioned and that the Iraqi parliament would have an opportunity to vote, as I understand it, on the Status of Forces Agreement negotiated by the executive branch and the government of Iraq, while the United States Congress would not. That strikes people in our districts as strange.

And I wonder if you could please comment on that, why we would not have a say in that, as being proposed. I wonder if you could also talk about how it's being used as leverage in moving us to the outcomes that we're looking to in moving our troops out of Iraq.

AMB. CROCKER: It's our intention to negotiate the status of forces agreement basically as we have done with some 80 other similar agreements with different countries. Each one of those agreements has both its unique aspects and also broadly similar stipulations as well that are shared among the agreements.

This one will have as its unique aspects the authorities and the protections that our forces would need to continue operations after the end of the year. But it is our intention that this will be negotiated as an executive agreement, as all the other SOFAs are. We've had only one SOFA -- and that is with NATO -- that has risen to the level of requiring Senate advice and consent, because it does have explicit security commitments in it. We do not intend for this status of forces agreement to rise to that level. So it will not trigger the treaty ratification process.

Iraq has its own system, and I would say that at this point it's -- it is not clear exactly how that will play out, whether this agreement would actually go to the Council of Representatives for a vote or whether it would simply be read to the Council of Representatives. But we will handle this certainly within the context of our own system.

REP. S. DAVIS: Do you think that this -- is this a vehicle for leverage that would actually bring about a result that would not occur, with not -- were not for the agreement -- can you think of an instance in which that's true? And are we using that leverage appropriately?

AMB. CROCKER: I'm sorry, ma'am. Could you repeat that?

REP. S. DAVIS: I'm interested in knowing how we would use that status of force agreement for leverage, that some -- Iraqi actions that have to take place in order for us to move forward with that kind of an agreement that would provide the kind of security that they're looking for.

AMB. CROCKER: Well, I think, like other agreements, this is a question of mutual interest. We both have interests in this process, in ensuring that our forces do have the authorities after the expiration of the Security Council resolution to continue operations. So it's not a question, I think, so much of having something to give

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to them that we should expect a payment, as it were, for. I think it is simply moving our relations to a more normal level while still ensuring that we've got the authorities we need. I think that's the benefit in it for us.

REP. S. DAVIS: I think that people would look at this -- and perhaps it's another way of explaining it, but this is a unique situation that we're in, and I think that the public believes that there's some role that we should be playing to at least be a greater part of the consultation on that agreement.

I wonder if -- just very quickly, going back to the awakening councils, because I think that we've had an opportunity to look at that as a very positive force -- and you know, you can interpret it that way, but I think others are concerned that the 80 percent or so of individuals that are not going to be included in the -- in either the army or the police, that that perhaps marriage of convenience that's occurred is going to shift back and that we're not developing the kind of strategic security there that we need.

Is that of great concern to you?

AMB. CROCKER: Actually, Congresswoman, we've had that discussion with the prime minister and other senior officials. Twenty to 30 percent, as you say, should be integrated into the security forces. The prime minister is committed to ensuring that the remainder receive employment in the civilian sector. He is committed to job training programs and employment opportunities. So the intention is that over time, all of these individuals will be receiving gainful employment, just not all of them in the security field.

REP. S. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. SKELTON: Thank the gentlelady.

Mr. Wilson?

REP. JOE WILSON (R-SC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And General, Ambassador, thank you very much for your service. It's with heartfelt thanks that I have for our service members and the civilians who are serving in Iraq and the region protecting American families. I say this as a veteran of 31 years in the Army Guard, as the parent of four sons who serve in the military, and as a grandparent.

And I'm particularly grateful -- my oldest son served for a year in Iraq. I'm so grateful for him. This weekend he and his wife, Jennifer, will have their first son. Michael Alan McCrory (ph) will be born this weekend. Additionally, when I visited with you last month, I had the privilege of visiting with my son, who's a doctor in the Navy. And he arrived back home with his three children under 5 on Easter evening. And so it's been an extraordinary time for our family.

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Our family understands the best way to protect American families is to defeat the terrorists overseas. The best way to win the war is to have victory and not bring the war home. And so I really appreciate, again, what you're doing.

I believe the enemy have a clear plan. And I really refer -- Zawahiri, the al Qaeda spokesman for Osama bin Laden, on July the 9th, 2005, came up with the plan. The first stage, expel the Americans from Iraq. The second stage, establish authority in Iraq. The third stage, extend the jihad wave to the secular countries neighboring Iraq. That would mean Saudi Arabia. It would mean Turkey.

(TRANSCRIPT)