

## August 1, 2006 Congressional Leaders Validate Murtha Position on Iraq Withdrawal

For Immediate Release

August 1, 2006

### CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS VALIDATE MURTHA POSITION ON IRAQ WITHDRAWAL

Washington D.C. - A dozen Democratic congressional leaders Monday signed a statement urging President Bush to begin a pullout of troops in Iraq.

U.S. Rep John P. Murtha, D-PA, was one of the signers of the document that validates the position Murtha staked out last fall when he called for a redeployment of our troops in Iraq. It moves in the direction of Murtha's position by calling for Bush to begin withdrawing U.S. troops by the end of the year and to "transition to a more limited mission" in the war-torn nation.

The statement, according to today's Washington Post, told Bush that, "In the interests of American national security, our troops and our taxpayers, the open-ended commitment in Iraq that you have embraced cannot and should not be sustained . . . .We need to take a new direction."

Murtha, in a statement released by his office today said he was satisfied that his colleagues agree "we must change course in Iraq." He noted that his was not a popular position when he first stated it in November, "But I've thought all along, it was the right thing to do for our country, particularly the courageous fighting men and women in our military."

The congressional leaders included House Democratic leader, U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi and Senate Democratic Leader, Harry Reid. The group, mostly progressive and centrist in the Congress, sent Bush the same united message:

"Despite the latest evidence that your Administration lacks a coherent strategy to stabilize Iraq and achieve victory, there has been virtually no diplomatic effort to resolve sectarian differences, no regional effort to establish a broader security framework, and no attempt to revive a struggling reconstruction effort. Instead, we learned of your plans to redeploy an additional 5,000 U.S. troops into an urban war zone in Baghdad."

Murtha said, "Things are not getting better and what we Democratic leaders are saying is that we must set a new direction in Iraq. America is not safer today because of the war there, we must refocus our resources on fighting terrorism more effectively."

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The statement and list of signers follows:

For Immediate Release

Date: Monday, July 31, 2006

CONTACT: Jim Manley/Rebecca Kirszner, Reid, 202-224-2939

Brendan Daly / Jennifer Crider, Pelosi, 202-226-7616

## UNITED HOUSE AND SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP PUT FORWARD CONCRETE PLAN FOR CHANGE OF COURSE IN IRAQ

### Bush and Congressional Republicans' Open Ended Commitment Must End

Washington, D.C. - With violence exploding in Iraq, there is little evidence that the Bush Administration and Congressional Republicans have a coherent strategy to stabilize Iraq. Thousands have been killed in sectarian and insurgent violence in recent months, and now the American people have been told that thousands more U.S. troops will be redeployed into an urban war zone in Baghdad. The President's current approach is not sustainable. Today, the Senate and House Democratic Leaders and ranking members from the key national security committees wrote to the President calling upon him to begin the phased redeployment of U.S. forces before the end of the year, to transform the U.S. mission, and to launch a real diplomatic and reconstruction effort to help stabilize Iraq. These concrete recommendations draw upon the Levin/Reed Iraq policy amendment overwhelmingly supported in the Senate. Simply staying the course behind the President's failed policy is not in the interests of our troops, taxpayers or national security.

#### Quotes from the letter:

"While the world has been focused on the crisis in the Middle East, Iraq has exploded in violence. Some 6,000 Iraqis were killed in May and June, and sectarian and insurgent violence continues to claim American and Iraqi lives at an alarming rate. In the face of this onslaught, one can only conclude that the Baghdad security plan you announced five weeks ago is in great jeopardy."

"Far from implementing a comprehensive 'Strategy for Victory' as you promised months ago, your Administration's strategy appears to be one of trying to avoid defeat."

"Meanwhile, U.S. troops and taxpayers continue to pay a high price as your Administration searches for a policy. Over 2,500 Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice and over 18,000 others have been wounded. The Iraq war has also strained our military and constrained our ability to deal with other challenges. Readiness levels for the Army are at lows not seen since Vietnam, as virtually no active Army non-deployed combat brigade is prepared to perform its wartime missions."

"In the interests of American national security, our troops, and our taxpayers, the open-ended commitment in Iraq that you have embraced cannot and should not be sustained."

"Iraqi political leaders must be informed that American patience, blood and treasure are not unlimited. We were disappointed that you did not convey this message to Prime Minister Maliki during his recent visit."

"Mr. President, simply staying the course in Iraq is not working. We need to take a new direction."

The text of the letter follows below:

July 30, 2006

The President

The White House

Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President:

While the world has been focused on the crisis in the Middle East, Iraq has exploded in violence. Some 6,000 Iraqis were killed in May and June, and sectarian and insurgent violence continues to claim American and Iraqi lives at an alarming rate. In the face of this onslaught, one can only conclude that the Baghdad security plan you announced five weeks ago is in great jeopardy.

Despite the latest evidence that your Administration lacks a coherent strategy to stabilize Iraq and achieve victory, there has been virtually no diplomatic effort to resolve sectarian differences, no regional effort to establish a broader security framework, and no attempt to revive a struggling reconstruction effort. Instead, we learned of your plans to redeploy an additional 5,000 U.S. troops into an urban war zone in Baghdad. Far from implementing a comprehensive "Strategy for Victory" as you promised months ago, your Administration's strategy appears to be one of trying to avoid defeat.

Meanwhile, U.S. troops and taxpayers continue to pay a high price as your Administration searches for a policy. Over 2,500 Americans have made the ultimate sacrifice and over 18,000 others have been wounded. The Iraq war has also strained our military and constrained our ability to deal with other challenges. Readiness levels for the Army are at lows not seen since Vietnam, as virtually no active Army non-deployed combat brigade is prepared to perform its wartime missions. American taxpayers have already contributed over \$300 billion and each week we stay in Iraq adds nearly \$3 billion more to our record budget deficit.

In the interests of American national security, our troops, and our taxpayers, the open-ended commitment in Iraq that you have embraced cannot and should not be sustained.

Rather, we continue to believe that it is time for Iraqis to step forward and take the lead for securing and governing their own country. This is the principle enshrined in the "United States Policy in Iraq Act" enacted last year. This law declares 2006 to be a year of "significant transition to full Iraqi sovereignty, with Iraqi security forces taking the lead for the security of a free and sovereign Iraq, thereby creating the conditions for the phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq." Regrettably, your policy seems to be moving in the opposite direction.

This legislation made clear that Iraqi political leaders must be informed that American patience, blood and treasure are not unlimited. We were disappointed that you did not convey this message to Prime Minister Maliki during his recent visit. Reducing the U.S. footprint in Iraq will not only give the Iraqis a greater incentive to take the lead for the security of their own nation, but will also allow U.S. forces to be able to respond to contingencies affecting the security of the United States elsewhere in the world.

We believe that a phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq should begin before the end of 2006. U.S. forces in Iraq should transition to a more limited mission focused on counterterrorism, training and logistical support of Iraqi security forces, and force protection of U.S. personnel.

Additionally, every effort should be made to urge the Iraqis to take the steps necessary to achieve a broad-based and sustainable political settlement, including amending the constitution to achieve a fair sharing of power and resources. It is also essential to disarm the militias and ensure forces loyal to the national government. Finally, an international conference should be convened to persuade other governments to be more involved, and to secure the resources necessary to finance Iraq=s reconstruction and rebuild its economy.

Mr. President, simply staying the course in Iraq is not working. We need to take a new direction. We believe these recommendations comprise an effective alternative to the current open-ended commitment which is not producing the progress in Iraq we would all like to see. Thank you for your careful consideration of these suggestions.

Harry Reid, Senate Democratic Leader

Nancy Pelosi, House Democratic Leader

Dick Durbin, Senate Assistant Democratic Leader

Steny Hoyer, House Minority Whip

Carl Levin, Ranking Member, Senate Armed Services Committee

Ike Skelton, Ranking Member, House Armed Services Committee

Joe Biden, Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Tom Lantos, Ranking Member, House International Relations Committee

Jay Rockefeller, Vice Chairman, Senate Intelligence Committee

Jane Harman, Ranking Member, House Intelligence Committee

Daniel Inouye, Ranking Member, Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee

John Murtha, Ranking Member, House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee