

January 23, 2007 Testimony of Congressman John P. Murtha before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee 110th Congress

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TESTIMONY OF CONGRESSMAN JOHN P. MURTHA

Before the SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE 110th Congress

Washington D.C. - Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar and distinguished members of this Committee,

For the past five years, the U.S. has had, on average, over 130,000 troops on the ground in Iraq. The Pentagon reports that the Iraqi Security Forces have grown in number, nearly reaching their goal of 325,000 trained and equipped. The Iraqis have a Constitution and have held national elections. These milestones have been met, yet security in Iraq continues to deteriorate. The past four years of the Iraq War have been plagued by mischaracterization based on unrealistic optimism instead of realism. Reality dictates that conditions on the ground are simply moving in the wrong direction.

There are limits to military power. There is no U.S. military solution to Iraq's civil war. It is up to the Iraqis.

Beginning in May 2005, after two years of mischaracterizations and misrepresentations by this Administration, the Defense Appropriations sub-committee required the Department of Defense to submit quarterly reports to Congress on the facts necessary to measure stability and security in Iraq. Since July 2005, we have received these reports. They are dismal and demonstrate a clear lack of progress in vital areas of concern. Electricity, oil production, employment and potable water remain at woeful levels.

The average weekly attacks have grown from 430 in July 2005 to well over 1000 today. Iraqi casualties have increased from 63 per day in October 2005 to over 127 per day.

The latest polls show that 91 percent of Sunni Iraqis and 74 percent of Shia Iraqis want the U.S. forces out of Iraq. In January 2006, 47 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces. When the same polling question was asked just 8 months later, 61 percent of Iraqis approved of attacks on U.S.-led forces.

The support of the American public continues to erode and there is little confidence in the current strategy. Today less than 30 percent of Americans support the war and only 11 percent support the President's plan to increase troop levels in Iraq. A February 2006 poll showed that 72 percent of American troops serving in Iraq believed U.S. should exit Iraq within the year and 42 percent said their mission was unclear.

Wars cannot be won with slogans. There must be terms for measuring progress and a clearly defined purpose, if success

is ever to be achieved. General Peter Schoomaker, Chief of the United States Army, said in a recent hearing that in order for a strategy to be effective we "have to be able to measure the purpose." Yet the President sets forth a plan with no defined matrices for measuring success and a plan that in my estimation is simply more of the same plan that has not worked. A new strategy that is based on redeployment rather than further U.S. military engagement, and one that is centered on handing Iraq back to the Iraqis, is what is needed. I do not believe that Iraq will make the political progress necessary for its security and stability until U.S. forces redeploy.

In order to achieve stability in Iraq and the Region, I recommend

- 1) The redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq
- 2) The execution of a robust diplomatic effort and the restoration of our international credibility
- 3) The repairing of our military readiness and the rebuilding of our strategic reserve to face future threats.

Redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq

To achieve stability and security in Iraq, I believe we first must have a responsible phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. General William Odom (U.S. Army, Retired) recently testified, "We are pursuing the wrong war."

Stability and security in the Region should be our overarching strategy, not a "victory in Iraq." I agree with General Odom and believe that Regional Stability can only be accomplished through the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq.

Who wants us to stay in Iraq? In my opinion, Iran and Al Qaeda, because we intensify the very radical extremism we claim to be fighting against, while at the same time depleting our financial and human resources.

As long as the U.S. military continues to occupy Iraq, there will be no real security. Maintaining U.S. troop strength in Iraq or adding to the strength in specified areas, has not proven effective in the past (it did not work recently in Baghdad) nor do I believe it will work in the future. The Iraq war cannot be won by the U.S. military, predominantly because of the way our military operates. They use overwhelming force, which I advocate to save American lives, but it is counter to winning the hearts and minds of the people.

How to Re-deploy

I recommend the phased redeployment of U.S. forces, first from Saddam's palaces, then from the green zone. Next, from the prime real estate of Iraq's major cities, out of the factories and universities, and finally out of the country all together. We need to give communities back to the Iraqis so they can begin to self govern, begin economic recovery and return to some type of normality. I recommend the adoption of a U.S policy that encourages and rewards reconstruction and regional investment and one that is dictated and administered not by the United States, but by the Iraqis themselves.

Restoration of International Credibility

I believe that a responsible redeployment from Iraq is the first step necessary in restoring our tarnished international credibility. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq, our international credibility, even among allies, has plummeted. Stability in Iraq is important not only to the United States, but it is important to the Region and to the entire world. Just this morning, the BBC released a poll showing that nearly three-quarters of those polled in 25 countries disapprove of U.S. policies toward Iraq. More than two-thirds said the U.S. military presence in the Middle East does more harm than good. Just 29 percent of respondents said the United States has a general positive influence in the world, down from 40 percent two years ago.

How do We Restore our International Credibility

In order to restore international credibility, I believe it is necessary for the U.S to completely denounce any aspirations of building permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq; I believe we should shut down the Guantanamo detention facility; and we must bulldoze the Abu Ghraib prison. We must clearly articulate and demonstrate a policy of "no torture, no exceptions" and directly engage countries in the region with dialogue instead of directives. This includes allies as well as our perceived adversaries.

Repairing of our Military Readiness and Rebuilding our Strategic Reserve to Face Future Threats

Our annual Defense spending budget is currently in excess of \$450 billion. Above this amount, we are spending \$8.4 billion dollars a month in the war in Iraq and yet our strategic reserve is in desperate shape. While we are fighting an asymmetric threat in the short term, we have weakened our ability to respond to what I believe is a grave long term conventional and nuclear threat.

At the beginning of the Iraq war, 80 percent of ALL Army units and almost 100 percent of active combat units were rated at the highest state of readiness. Today, virtually all of our active-duty combat units at home and ALL of our guard units are at the lowest state of readiness, primarily due to equipment shortages resulting from repeated and extended deployments to Iraq. In recent testimony given by a high ranking Pentagon official it was reported that our country is threatened because we lack readiness at home.

Our Army has no strategic reserve, and while it is true that the U.S. Navy and the U.S. Air Force can be used to project power, there is a limit to what they can achieve. Overall, our military remains capable of projecting power, but we must also be able to sustain that projection, and in this regard there is no replacement for boots on the ground.

How do we Repair Readiness and Rebuild our Strategic Reserve

We must make it a national priority to re-strengthen our military and to repair readiness. I advocate an increase in overall troop strength. The current authorized level is below what I believe is needed to maintain an optimal military. In recent testimony to the Defense Subcommittee that I chair, the Army and Marine Corps Commanders testified that they could not continue to sustain the current deployment practices without an adverse effect on the health and well-being of service members and their families.

For decades, the Army operated on a deployment policy that for every one year of deployment, two years were spent at home. This was considered optimal for re-training, re-equipping and re-constituting. Without relief, the Army will be forced to extend deployments to Iraq to over one year in country and will be forced to send troops back with less than one year at home. The Army reported that a

9-month deployment was preferable. Medical experts testified that in intensive combat, deployments of over 3 months increased the likelihood for service members to develop post traumatic stress disorders.

We must invest in the health and well being of our service members by providing for the right amount of troops and for appropriate deployment and rotation cycles.

Our military equipment inventories are unacceptably low. The Services report that at least \$100 billion more is needed to get them back to ready state. In doing so, we must not neglect investment in military technologies of the future. While we remain bogged down in Iraq, the size and sophistication of other militaries are growing. We must not lose our capability to deter future threats.

Let me conclude by saying historically, whether it was India, Algeria or Afghanistan, foreign occupations do not work, and in fact incite civil unrest. Our military remains the greatest military in the world, but there are limits to its ability to control a population that considers them occupiers.

I have said this before and I continue to say that there are essentially only two plans. One is to continue an occupation that has not worked and that has shown no progress toward stabilization. The other, which I advocate, is to end the occupation of Iraq, redeploy and re-strengthen our military and turn Iraq over to the Iraqis.