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THE CURRENT SITUATION AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

HEARING HELD
NOVEMBER 15, 2006

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[1] Mr. McKeon took a leave of absence from the Committee on June 29, 2006.
[2] Mr. Bilbray was elected to the Committee on June 29, 2006.

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THE CURRENT SITUATION AND MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, November 15, 2006.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 2:41 p.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Duncan Hunter (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DUNCAN HUNTER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. This afternoon the committee focuses its attention on the current situation in military operations in Iraq. Our witnesses are General John Abizaid, United States Army Commander, United States Central Command; and the Honorable David Satterfield, Senior Advisor to the Secretary of State and Coordinator for Iraq.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us. We look forward to your testimony. We are glad you are here.

No one can doubt this committee's pride in and gratitude to the dedicated United States military personnel who have participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom since 2003 and who are now serving in Iraq, currently numbering roughly 147,000. Many of these brave men and women have even voluntarily returned to Iraq with their units. The message I hear over and over again from them is, let us finish the job we started. These are truly great Americans.

I remain convinced that a calendar-based withdrawal from Iraq, one that has no regard for the security conditions or the fledgling Iraqi capabilities on the ground would empower and embolden extremists. We are basically in the second phase of a three-phase plan that we have used successfully in nations around the world for more than 60 years; that as you stand up a freely elected government, you then stand up military and police forces that can protect the new government, and last, the Americans leave.

Let me briefly touch upon phase one of the developments we have witnessed in the past year alone. In October 2005, Iraqi citizens headed to the polls to vote on a constitution which passed with an overwhelming 79 percent of the vote. December saw parliamentary elections with Iraqis selecting their first permanent parliament since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein. After some robust give and take, a broad unity government was formed in April of this year.

Good Iraqi men and women continue to step forward in the face of threats to them and their families and take active roles in their

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nation's stability and reconstruction. An Iraqi court independent of the political process also just convicted Saddam Hussein for murdering his own people. This phase has established a critical democratic basis that is unique to the region and that will serve the Iraqi people well.

Currently, coalition forces are in phase two, standing up the Iraqi security forces. This is not an easy or short phase, but it is essential because so much depends right now on properly training and equipping Iraqi forces. Our efforts to date on the military front at least are impressive. Since 2003, we have trained and equipped roughly 114 Iraqi military battalions. We understand, of these forces, 6 division headquarters, 50 brigade headquarters and 90 battalions are in the lead in their respective areas of operation. This represents a 25 percent increase in the last 3 months. Moreover, Iraqis are now responsible for stability and security in 2 of the 18 provinces.

However, a lot of work remains. We must allow Iraqi security forces to gain the hard combat experience needed to ensure that they are capable of accepting responsibility for their nation's stability and security. We must develop and battle-harden these forces, making the necessary adjustments to effect a successful transition of security responsibilities and providing to the Iraqi people that their own military people can protect them and their own national security. In fact, the recent increase in insurgent operations highlights the urgent need to deploy more Iraqi military forces in the critical areas, such as downtown Baghdad, that can test and hopefully confirm their combat capabilities.

Many of my colleagues here have joined me in urging the President to accelerate the process of deploying Iraqi forces to security environments that force them to engage in more challenging combat operations. We appreciate the determination and bravery of the Iraqi security forces who are stepping forward to defend their free nation.

During today's hearing I hope we can hear how we can help you as U.S. officials deeply involved in these efforts to stand up forces within both the ministry of cefense and ministry of interior that are willing, capable and free from the corruption that we often hear about in the news media. Only when we can successfully conclude such efforts can we be sure that the departure of American forces from the Iraqi nation will not result in massive instability and violence.

Let me just say, General, thank you for being with us. Thanks for your, General Abizaid, for your long service to this country. We have stood up, in terms of training and equipping, some 114 Iraqi battalions. About 35 of them, from the last figures that the committee has received, are operating in and around the Baghdad area, which is right now considered to be the center of conflict. That leaves lots of battalions in some of the more benign areas in the country.

The critical link between a free civilian government and their military apparatus is that responsive connection that is reflected when a minister of defense orders a battalion commander to move, saddle up his troops and move them into an area of contention and

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undertake that responsibility in that area of operation in terms of patrols, sweeps or whatever tactical movements are appropriate.

This is an opportunity for the Iraqi battalions to battle-harden. They can increase unit cohesiveness. They can increase their—reaffirm their own chain of command and become more battle-effective.

I would like to particularly hear from you today, and I know you have got lots of issues, and we have got lots of members with many, many questions, but I would like to particularly hear from you today about the responsiveness of Iraqi battalions that are in the fight; give us an idea of how many of them are in the fight, how many of them are in more benign areas, and the prospects for a rotation that will ensure that every one of the 114 battalions has in fact a combat tour or combat rotation.

So thank you for being with us today, and before we turn to our witnesses for their remarks, let me recognize my partner on the committee, the distinguished gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Skelton, for any comments he would like to make.

STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and General, Mr. Ambassador, thank you for being with us.

General, we haven't seen you testify here since March 15. Thank you for being with us.

I came across a book recently by a Sir Gerald Ellison, Lieutenant General late of the British Expeditionary Forces, about the British misadventure in Gallipoli entitled, *The Perils of Amateur Strategy*. I thought, isn't there a parallel to where we are today?

Looking back through recent history, we find some serious errors, such as not successfully through diplomatic means obtaining permission for the Fourth Infantry Division to enter Iraq through Turkey in the initial invasion; not having a plan for occupation after initial military victory; not having enough troops to secure the country after initial military success; allowing the massive looting to take place; extensive de-Baathification program which put so many necessary bureaucrats, civil servants and teachers out of a job; disbanding the Iraqi army rather than giving them a shovel and a paycheck, causing many of them to join the insurgency; not guarding the numerous weapons and ammunition caches, as pointed out by David Kay to John Spratt, Robin Hayes and me in September 2003, which allowed insurgents to use these devices against us; not accounting for the weapons that we gave to Iraqi forces, which have allowed some to end up in the hands of insurgents as revealed by the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction.

I also note that there are 12 nations that have withdrawn their forces from our coalition, with 6 more either partially or debating that. I wonder if, some day, some historian will write the book, The Perils of Amateur Strategy II.

General, Mr. Ambassador, it is hard to find reason for optimism in Iraq today. Operation Together Forward or the battle of Baghdad, which I have described as the critical battle for Iraq, akin to Stalingrad, Midway or El Alamein, has not thus far produced results we had hoped. Worse than that, sectarian violence is on the

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rise. Despite some 310,000 Iraqi forces actively operating, the American forces' numbers in Iraq are not coming down.

Perhaps most worrying of all is that the Iraqi government does not seem to have the political will to take responsibility for many issues. They have not demonstrated a plan for dealing with the militias. Their actions seem to be at odds with the best operational consideration, as when Prime Minister Maliki recently ordered American forces to remove checkpoints from around Sadr City.

General, you and the ambassador are in a better position to give us a true assessment of the real situation there on the ground. We rely on you for your best and most candid professional judgment. We also need, however, to assess, where do we go from here in Iraq? We know General Pace is leading the effort to consider this. We are awaiting the recommendations from the Baker-Hamilton study group. It's critically important that we in Congress and the Administration be able to find a bipartisan forward way that allows for the redeployment of American forces as quickly as possible. It should be done in a way that accounts for our interests in the region and allows us to attend to the current dire state of readiness of the American military, which we have had testimony right here in this room from General Schoomaker.

It is important, General, that we hear from you, that we hear from you before we hear from Secretary Baker and Congressman Hamilton, before we discuss the options with the nominated secretary, Bob Gates. With all that has happened in Iraq, I feel we have gotten off the track, and we need to go back to basics.

General Colin Powell's doctrine tells us we should not begin a conflict without a clear achievable mission, strong public support, overwhelming force, and explicit exit strategy. We didn't have these in Iraq, and we are now, I think, strategically lost. We must go back to the very beginning to consider our mission there, our basic objectives.

So, General, let me pose this to you. What is the objective you and General Casey have been given by the President? Is this a realistic objective? And for that which can be achieved militarily, what will it take in troops and time to accomplish that mission? These are very fundamental questions.

Let me say a quick word about our forces. If there is a hero out of all of this, it is the young men and young women in uniform. It is the national guard staff sergeant. It is the corporal in the Marine Corps. These are the ones that are standing—it is rather interesting, Mr. Chairman, that this is the first time, at least in recorded history, modern history, that the American public had fully supported those in uniform, but the support for the mission is waning, as you know.

Well, the training of Iraqi security forces, we hope you will discuss that at length today, because this is the key, being able to pass that mission over to them successfully so there may be a redeployment of our troops.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. I think it is appropriate to remind the gentleman that, of the $20 billion that were identified by the United States Army and the United States Marine Corps for reset, this committee supplied every penny that was iden-

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tified, and we found several million dollars more that they hadn't identified that was identified by General Schoomaker and by the commandant of the Marine Corps. That was manifested in our budget and followed by the appropriators, and that will be spent for resets for those forces.

General Abizaid, good afternoon. Thank you for being with us.

STATEMENT OF GEN. JOHN ABIZAID, COMMANDER, UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND, U.S. ARMY

General ABIZAID. Good afternoon, Chairman Hunter. Thank you very much, Congressman Skelton, Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I refer the committee to my 3 August opening statement where I outlined the broader strategic dangers to the United States' interests in the Middle East. That was before the Senate Armed Services Committee. Indeed, the dangers outlined in that statement, al Qaeda's extremist ideology, hegomonistic revolutionary Iranian ambitions, and the corrosive effect of continued Palestinian-Israeli confrontation represent major dangers to international peace and security for several decades to come. American regional and international diplomatic and security policies must be articulated and coordinated to confront these problems. Despite our current focus on the struggle underway to stabilize Iraq, the interests of the international community still require the confrontation and defeat of al Qaeda's dark ideology, the containment of Iranian expansionism and progress toward Arab-Israeli peace.

In the current atmosphere in the region, with the use of powerful non-state militias, the development of weapons of mass destruction and the acceptance of some of terror as a legitimate tool of normal discourse, American leadership and diplomatic, economic and security elements of power is essential to protect the international order.

How we confront these problems and empower forces of moderation in the region to resist them will define our future. Today over 200,000 men and women of the Armed Forces are deployed in the Central Command area of operations. They protect the flow of global commerce, they confront terrorists. They work hard to stabilize young, unsteady yet elected governments in Iraq, Afghanistan. And they indirectly support stability by increasing regional security capacities of our partners and friends in the region.

Well over 1.5 million Americans have served in the region since September 11th, 2001. Many have given their lives and even more have suffered life-changing injuries. Whatever course our Nation chooses in the years ahead, we must be ever mindful of the sacrifice and courage of our troops and the debt we owe our veterans and their families. We must also remember that hundreds of thousands of coalition and partner forces fight directly or indirectly with us in the broader region.

Today the committee will no doubt focus on the way ahead in Iraq, and rightfully so, yet we must be mindful of increasing threats from Iran as evidenced by its recent military exercise which was designed to intimidate the smaller nations of the region. We must also be mindful of the real and pervasive global threat represented by al Qaeda and its associated movements. Failure to sta-

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bilize Iraq could increase Iranian aggressiveness and embolden al Qaeda's ideology. It could also deepen broader Sunni-Shia fissures throughout the region.

The changing security challenges in Iraq require changes to our own approach to achieve stability. Let me remind the committee, however, that while new options are explored and debated, my testimony should not be taken to imply approval of shifts in direction. It is my desire today to provide an update on current security conditions in Iraq and elsewhere and current thinking about the way ahead on the security lines of operation.

I remain optimistic that we can stabilize Iraq. I just departed Iraq where I visited with General Casey and his senior commanders. On the Iraqi side, I had meetings with the prime minister, the defense minister, and the interior minister.

Over the past four weeks, the levels of sectarian violence are down in Baghdad from their Ramadan peak, but it is clear to all of us that sectarian violence levels remain unacceptably high. The Iraqi armed forces, while under sectarian pressure, continues to perform effectively across Iraq. Our focus against al Qaeda and Iraq continues to take a toll on Iraqi al Qaeda members and foreign fighters. Operations against selected targets on the Shia death squad side also have had good effect, and our understanding of these complex organizations continues to improve.

Sunni insurgent attacks against the Iraqi security forces and the multinational forces remain at high levels and our forces continue to experience attacks from armed Shia groups especially in the Baghdad region. In the north, significant progress is being made in transitioning security responsibilities to capable Iraqi forces. Currently, around 80 percent of the sectarian violence in Iraq happens within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad. Nonetheless, security transitions to capable Iraqi forces continue in most of the country.

Iraqis and Americans alike believe that Iraq can stabilize and that the key to stabilization is effective, loyal, nonsectarian Iraqi security forces coupled with an effective government of national unity. In discussions with our commanders and Iraqi leaders, it is clear that they believe Iraqi forces can take more control faster provided we invest more manpower and resources into the coalition military transition teams, speed the delivery of logistics and mobility enablers, and embrace an aggressive Iraqi-led effort to disarm illegal militias.

This is particularly important with regard to the Jaish al Mahdi elements operating as armed death squads in Baghdad and elsewhere. As we increase efforts to build Iraqi capability, we envision coalition forces providing needed military support and combat power to Iraqi units that are in the league. Precisely how we do this continues to be worked out with the Iraqis as ultimately capable independent Iraqi forces loyal to an equally capable independent Iraqi government will set the conditions for the withdrawal of our major combat forces.

Our commanders and diplomats believe it is possible to achieve an end state in Iraq that finds Iraq at peace with its neighbors, an ally in the war against extremists, respectful of the rights and lives of its own citizens; and with security forces sufficient to maintain

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order, prevent terrorist safe havens and defend the independence of Iraq.

At this stage in the campaign, we will need flexibility to manage our force and help manage the Iraqi force. Force caps and specific timetables limit flexibility. We must also remember that our enemies have a vote in this fight. The enemy watches not only what we do on the ground but what we say here at home and what we do here at home.

Also Prime Minister Maliki and his team want to do more. We want them to do more. Increased Iraqi military activity under greater Iraqi national control will only work, however, if his government embraces meaningful national reconciliation. His duly elected legitimate government deserves our support, and his armed forces backed by ours deserve his full support.

While I know the committee has a wide range of interests including developments in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, and the Horn of Africa, I will defer comment on those subjects in order to take your questions.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, thank you for your support of our great soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines in the field. We could not ask for better or more support. There is still unfinished work that keeps us safe at home. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of General Abizaid can be found in the Appendix on page 59.]

The CHAIRMAN. General Abizaid, thank you.

Mr. Ambassador, do you have a statement you would like to make at this time?

STATEMENT OF AMBASSADOR DAVID M. SATTERFIELD, SENIOR ADVISOR TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND COORDINATOR FOR IRAQ

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I do, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Skelton, members of the committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today. The situation in Iraq which we are discussing is serious indeed. The Iraqi people as well as Iraq and coalition forces have suffered through months of extreme brutal bloodshed.

The insurgency and al Qaeda terror are responsible today for the majority of U.S. military causalities and remain lethal challenges to Iraqis. But it is increasingly clear that al Qaeda's strategy since the beginning of this year to undermine the Iraqi government, to undermine progress on all tracks by sowing sectarian conflict, has created and fosters today a dangerous and critically threatening cycle of violence.

Some Iraqis have responded by turning to armed militias and other extra-governmental groups to provide security while others have seized upon this security vacuum to pursue local political power, criminal or narrow sectarian interests. Sustained sectarian violence and the associated rise in armed militias and other extra-governmental armed groups are now the greatest strategic threat to a stable, unified and prosperous Iraq.

Sectarian differences in Iraq have long historic roots, but coexistence of communities has been the rule rather than the exception in Iraq; yet sectarian differences can be turned into sectarian divi-

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sions and into violence, and that is what al Qaeda has done through the campaign of violence targeted at Shia since February of this year and in the violent reaction by Sunnis to those attacks.

If there is not an addressal of the phenomena of sectarian violence and the growth of militias with a sectarian color or identification, then, inevitably, Iraq's national identity will erode and the hope for a unified Iraq will with that erode.

Such an outcome in Iraq is not acceptable. It would undermine U.S. national interests both in that country, in the broader region and in the world, and it would lead to a humanitarian disaster for the Iraqi people themselves.

The goals of the United States in Iraq remain clear: We support a democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, defend itself and be an ally in the war against terror. While we have not and will not change those goals, we are constantly reviewing, adapting, adjusting our strategies and our tactics to help make progress toward them possible. It is for this reason the President has asked all of his national security agencies, civilian and military, to assess the situation in Iraq, to review options to recommend the best way forward.

We will appropriately consider and seriously consider the report, when it is issued, of the Iraq Study Group. We look forward to their recommendations, as the President has said. But I want to reiterate our goal is success in Iraq. We will look forward to any recommendations, any ideas that can help achieve that goal.

At the Department of State, we have adapted over the past year by significantly increasing our staffing levels and by mobilizing interagency civilian government staffing levels not just in Baghdad, at our embassy, but also at the vital provincial reconstruction teams which operate throughout Iraq, often at considerable risk to those employed there.

Our post in Basra has been under near continuous indirect fire. Civilians have died in service to the United States at their posts, and we honor their sacrifices as well as our brave men and women in uniform.

We are doing all that we can to mobilize the best resources of the United States on the civilian side to support and to work with our military partners. Indeed, our mission in Baghdad, the mission headed by General Casey and Ambassador Khalilzad is truly the most joint undertaking in the world today. It has to be.

The challenges we face are not challenges which can be addressed in isolation or neatly compartmented into military or civilian. The challenges require a team effort. Iraq's future is dependent upon the performance and the commitment of three fundamental groups of actors: First and foremost, and I want to underscore this, the Iraqi government, it is political leaders and the Iraqi people; second, the United States and our coalition allies; and third, the international community, in particular Iraq's neighbors, the states in the region. All of these groups need to act together to help make progress possible. And that progress needs to occur along three critical strategic tracks, political, security and economic.

The President, Ambassador Khalilzad, and General Casey have all stated that it is essential that we, the United States, work with the government of Iraq to set out clear measurable achievable goals

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and objectives and a sense of the time to achieve those goals and objectives if progress is to be made. Iraqis above all must articulate goals for themselves before their own people and hold themselves to accomplishing those objectives.

On the security track, our current focus is on transitioning more control and responsibility to Iraqis. Prime Minister Maliki as General Abizaid said wants this and so do we. We are in the process of transitioning, as General Abizaid, has said more command, more control to Iraqi commanders, divisions and battalions. We have already moved Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces to full Iraqi control, and more provinces will move by the end of this year and next year.

We are working closely with Iraqi leaders to produce a set of security goals and objectives to ensure that this transition to their control is as smooth, as seamless as possible. We are also working with the Iraqi government on renewal of the United States mandate for coalition forces in Iraq for another year. I am pleased to tell the committee that in a letter delivered yesterday to the president of the security council, the Iraqi government affirmed its determination to see that extension take place as a transitional extension for a force transitioning to Iraqi lead. They want more control; we want to give it to them.

On the political track, we are pleased that the Iraqi Presidency Council agreed in October and published a set of meaningful political benchmarks and time line for those benchmarks to be accomplished. And on that political track, the Iraqi government has made some progress. It has passed a good regional formation law, an investment law and privatization law.

Last week, it pledged to introduce legislation that would significantly reform de-Baathification in a way that would make it much easier to draw moderate Sunnis into the government and out of the insurgency.

These are hopeful signs that there is still a point of convergence between Shia and Sunni, between Iraq's political groups, that can lead to national progress. But I have to tell you, much more work needs to be done. Prime Minister Maliki has focused his attention appropriately on national reconciliation, but there are key requirements for that reconciliation to be possible which must be pursued and pursued rapidly.

First, Iraqi security forces with coalition support must help achieve security conditions under which Iraqis will be more comfortable, better able to make the difficult choices needed to pursue true reconciliation. Second, the Iraqi government must reach out and engage all those willing to abandon violence and terror, including former members of the Baath, while credibly threatening to combat insurgents and those engaged in terrorist violence who remain wholly opposed to a democratic, stable Iraq.

Third, they must establish a robust process aimed at disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating (DDR) members of armed groups into normal society. To be successful, this DDR process is going to require agreement on a comprehensive amnesty that gives militants incentive to return to civilian life.

Finally, but critically, Iraq must pursue and complete progress on a national hydrocarbon law that ensures that vital national re-

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source is distributed appropriately to all Iraqis and that foreign investment in that sector is maximized.

On the economic track, we have seen real progress. The government of Iraq is moving forward aggressively together with the United Nations on launching a new international compact for Iraq. This will provide a new and very aggressive framework for mutual commitments between Iraq and the international community, particularly those in Iraq's neighborhood, to bolster Iraq's economic recovery and ability to be self-sustaining. The goal is very simple: it is for Iraq to demonstrate to the international community and to its own people its commitment to implementing needed social, political, economic reform. Iraq must commit, will commit to reforming its main economic sectors—oil, electricity and agriculture—to establishing the laws and building the institutions needed to combat corruption, assure good governance and to protect human rights. And in return, the international community will provide the assistance needed to support Iraqi efforts to become self-sustaining over the next five years. With this compact, Iraq is reaching out to the world, and I am pleased to report that the world is reaching back in response. The compact is nearly complete. The text is nearly closed, and we hope by the end of this year, the compact itself can be welcomed by the international community. Between now and then, Iraq will be asking its friends and neighbors to consider their goals and reforms to come forward with concrete pledges of assistance. We are urging Iraq's neighbors in particular to step forward and to support the future of a stable, moderate Iraq.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we will continue to support strongly the government of Iraq as it moves forward on these three tracks, but I want to make one point very clear, each of these tracks, security, political, economic, is inextricably linked to the other. All must move forward together, and failure on one will mean diminished chances of success on the others.

Militias must be effectively confronted and demobilized, but that will not happen in the absence of meaningful progress on political reconciliation. Political reconciliation itself cannot survive if the government does not have the economic tools in its hands with which to provide an alternative to the appeal of violence and criminal behavior. Iraqis will not be able either to modernize their economy or to pursue political reconciliation if there is continued sectarian violence in the street or the pursuit of sectarian agendas at the highest levels of government.

We believe, Mr. Chairman, that a successful path forward can still be forged in Iraq. As the transition continues for Iraqi governmental control and lead, we do need to help in the best and smartest ways possible Iraqis assume their responsibilities. There is much work to do, and there is limited time in which to do it. The months ahead truly will be critical. But we believe that the fates and the interests of our two countries are now intertwined; that the consequences of failure far beyond Iraq and the fate of Iraqis are too profound for the United States not to apply every effort possible to achieve success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Satterfield can be found in the Appendix on page 55.]

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The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador.

General Abizaid, let me ask you a couple of questions about the Iraqi battalions, the Iraqi armed forces. I understand there are about 35 battalions; that was the number that was given to us recently from the DOD in and around the Baghdad area. Is that essentially correct?

General ABIZAID. That is essentially correct, yes, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. Could you describe for us any discussions that are taking place now with the ministry of defense or Mr. Maliki about the injection of increased forces, Iraqi forces into that area. What is the state of play here?

General ABIZAID. The state of play is that the prime minister and the defense minister both know that Iraqi forces must take the lead more in the Baghdad area. They know that there is a deficit of Iraqi troops in the region and that they need to move more into that region. They are making arrangements to get more troops down there.

They have to correct some deployability problems that have taken place and disciplinary problems that have taken place, but I very much made it clear to them that we believe more Iraqi troops in the region will help, in the Baghdad region, will help. They agree, and they are endeavoring to correct that deficiency.

The CHAIRMAN. What do you think about a policy, as we stand up and mature the Iraqi force, of rotating all battalions, wherever located, into the fight, if you will, understanding there are some very benign regions in Iraq where nothing is taking place and yet you have some troop locations.

General ABIZAID. Congressman, I believe like, in any armed forces, if you leave one unit in combat indefinitely, it has difficulties that manifest themselves over time. The divisions of the Iraqi army that are in Baghdad have been in contact and heavy combat for a long time. Other units need to come in and give them rest, and we need to come up with a viable way to rotate those forces. I think the Iraqis know that, and it is very important that we come to that sort of a solution.

The CHAIRMAN. I have got a number of other questions, but let me hold those until the end. We have got, as you can see, a full house today. And the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Skelton, is recognized. I have got a critical thing I have got to run to for a few minutes, and I will be back shortly. But the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. SKELTON. General, what is your objective in Iraq?

General ABIZAID. The objectives in Iraq are, as I expressed, and I will read it back to you, in my opening statement: to achieve an end state in Iraq where Iraq is at peace with its neighbors, which it is; an ally in the war against extremists, which sometimes we forget, but which it is; respectful of the lives and rights of its citizens, which it is working on; and with security forces sufficient to maintain order, which it doesn't have yet; and prevent terrorist safe havens, which it can't do without American support; and defend the independence of Iraq, which it can't do yet out American support. I believe all those are achievable.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you.

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Mr. HEFLEY [presiding]. The entirety of our witnesses' prepared statements will be taken into the record. I want to acknowledge that most if not all of my colleagues have a strong interest in today's topic, and our witnesses today can offer valuable information about many aspects of the current situation in Iraq, particularly during our closed session. Because we have a hard stop at 5 p.m, I remind my friends that the committee is going to enforce the five-minute rule during the question period. I don't think Mr. Hunter mentioned that in his opening statement.

General, let me ask you, we have done a lot of good things over there from our vantage point here. We have thrown out Saddam, and actually, he has been convicted so we have a court system that is at least working somewhat. We have established a government, and after a fashion, that's working. We have trained a lot of Iraqi troops. The country is going again in many respects. But are we faced with a civil war there.

You talked about the sectarian violence, and I am wondering, there are sectarian elements in the Iraqi armed forces. Is that creating a major problem, because are we dealing with not an Iraqi armed forces but a Kurdish element of the armed forces and a Sunni and a Shiite elements of the forces? What is your feeling about that?

General ABIZAID. Sir, we are dealing with an Iraqi armed forces that is continuing to develop. We certainly have a situation in Iraq where sectarian violence is at an unacceptable level. I believe that the insurgency in and of itself can be defeated by the Iraqis over time, but the sectarian violence and the sectarian difficulties, if not brought under control soon, can actually destroy our hopes for a stable Iraq.

It is vitally important that the Iraqi armed forces be non-sectarian, loyal to the government and able to perform its military missions. And it is just as vitally important that the political leadership of Iraq understand that only their armed forces will bring them peace, stability and independence. Otherwise, I think that the situation could be bleak.

Are there sectarian elements within the armed forces? Absolutely. I talked to the prime minister. I talked to the interior minister. I talked to the defense minister just the other day. We had these frank discussions. They know that people who have sectarian agendas within the armed forces cannot be allowed to continue to serve. There are disciplinary problems. There are other problems.

But can the armed forces come together and make an effort or make a decisive effort in stabilizing Iraq? The answer is in my view, yes, provided the governance comes together also.

Mr. HEFLEY. Is the government and the military structure, are they cooperating with you? Do you sense that we are on the same side?

General ABIZAID. Certainly the ambassador wants to comment on the governance issue, but there is absolutely no doubt that we are on the same side. We have been fighting with these units, with these people in the Iraqi armed forces and in the Iraqi police for nearly four years now. We have got to know them, as soldiers, got to know them. We know they are fighting for their country. We also know they are under intense pressure from sectarian issues.

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We have got to stick with them and fight with them. They are taking casualties in this fight at three times the rate of our own. We have to understand that we are fighting together. They have made some good inroads against some of the terrorist death squads here recently that are quite impressive, but there is a lot of work that needs to be done with the armed forces, which is why I believe it is so important to increase our ability through our military transition teams to help them more.

Mr. HEFLEY. Thank you very much.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Prime Minister Maliki has detailed a very robust national vision, not a sectarian vision for Iraq, and indeed we have seen some movement on some of the critical issues that are part of that agenda. But the fundamental judgment that we must make, indeed have to make, on a continuing basis is whether a combination of actions and inactions by the senior political leadership of Iraq provide the appearance, constitute the reality of a national policy being pursued or sectarian agendas being pursued.

With respect to the relationship between the prime minister and the armed forces, as General Abizaid has said, we do need to see more unequivocal and comprehensive support and empowerment offered by the prime minister and all the political elites of Iraq to their armed forces. Confronting all of the militias wherever they are engaged in violence is an essential element here. It has to be pursued. Failure to do so will have consequences first and foremost on Prime Minister Maliki and his government, on their relevancy, on their credibility, on their ability to address a process of disintegration which in the end challenges everything that we and Iraqis would define as success.

Mr. HEFLEY. Thank you.

Mr. Spratt.

Mr. SPRATT. Thank you both for your testimony. We were told some time ago that, as the Iraqi forces were stood up, ours would stand down. We now have 312,000 Iraqi security forces trained and equipped today. They may not have combat services and combat support that our troops have, but they are trained and equipped at least to the first level of operational functionality. When can we expect them to attain the level to allow us to withdraw troops because theirs can take their place?

General ABIZAID. Sir, the other day, General Casey made the comment that he believes that the Iraqi army will be ready to assume the lead throughout the country in 12 to 18 months. In our discussions with his commanders and with him, we believe that we can accelerate that. I am not able to give you precisely what I think, but I think it is before 12 months.

It also needs to be brought out, I think it is important for people to understand that before the effects of the very corrosive sectarian violence and lack of governance after the February Samarra bombings, I believe that we were on track to do that much sooner. We certainly would have had more combat forces withdrawn by now. However, the sectarian violence worsened. We felt it was necessary and important to bolster the security efforts there, and we kept more forces there than we had expected.

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Mr. SPRATT. In his statement, Ambassador Satterfield says that al Qaeda's strategy to undermine the Iraqi government by sowing sectarian conflict has created a dangerous cycle of violence. I don't doubt that, but I understand that the latest phenomenon that has created particularly difficult cycles of violence is that of the militia, Shiite militia, increasingly taking the field in vengeance and vendetta. To what extent is this a greater part of the problem? And what can we do about it? In particular, it was proposed, the idea that they may be brought into some sort of official status; instead of being disbanded, they might be created into some kind of territorial—and at least kept under some kind of supervised control.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, as I noted in my testimony, indeed, the rise of armed militias, particularly those groups with a sectarian identification, are a fundamental challenge. They are a strategic threat to the future of Iraq. How to deal with them? Dealing with them needs to take place on two different fronts. One is kinetic. Those engaged in killing innocents have to be confronted, and they have to be stopped, and they have to be stopped effectively and comprehensively, and they have to be stopped soon.

Mr. SPRATT. So we take on the militia.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The challenge of stopping lies first and foremost with Iraqi security forces, as General Abizaid has said, with our support, with our assistance, but the lead must be in the hands of Iraqi forces. But security measures alone will not be adequate to achieve lasting security or stability, whether in Baghdad or elsewhere. It is a violent element of but not the exclusive component of a strategy that must also have a robust political process, and that process does have to include, as I said, a disarmament, demobilization and re-integration process as well as an amnesty proposal.

Mr. SPRATT. General Abizaid, do you have any observations on how we deal with the militia problem?

General ABIZAID. Congressman, I think that militia units, militia organizations that are involved in death squads must be killed or captured. I believe that those militia forces that are willing to come into the process can come into the process of demobilization and disarmament provided that we show a will to do that on the Iraqi governmental side. I think it is absolutely essential that there only be one security institution in Iraq ultimately and that be the Iraqi army and police forces.

Mr. SPRATT. Thank you.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Saxton.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And general, ambassador, thanks for your great efforts with regard to the very difficult job which we face. Clearly, the effort to provide security and stability in Iraq has proven to be a difficult task. Some advocate a slightly different approach than the one that we have used so far. The approach is not to set a date certain to withdraw our troops from Iraq and abandon our effort, but it is—but they do advocate an approach that would put the Iraqis into the fight more quickly. The approach would move our troops at some predetermined rate out of Baghdad and the Anbar Province and replace them with Iraqi units at a predetermined rate. Our troops would be redeployed to locations to the east along the Ira-

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nian border to limit the influence of Tehran and to the west along the Syrian border to limit the influence of that country, and along—and, at the same time, move our troops to less dangerous positions.

I guess the question is this, the question comes down to whether or not the Iraqis would be encouraged to step up at a more quick—at a quicker rate if they knew that Baghdad and the Anbar Province were going to be turned over to them while our troops would remain there to carry out the two missions that I just mentioned as well as to provide support and training for Iraqi troops. Would that be a helpful thing?

General ABIZAID. The prime minister wants to put Iraqi troops in the lead in as many different places in the country as he can, as soon as he can. He told me this the other day. It also is debatable as to how we would reposition our own forces because I think our own forces need to be in proximity of Iraqi fighting units to be able to offer support when they find a problem that they can't handle on their own for a period of time. How that repositioning might take place can be done in a lot of different ways. I think all of us are thinking in those terms. It first and foremost has to be demonstrated to us, sir, that the Iraqi army can take the lead, can take the fight, can stand up to the sectarian pressures and will be supported by the national government, which I believe can happen, but it will take some time.

Mr. SAXTON. Do you interpret the prime minister's stated intention of putting Iraqi's—Iraqi troops in the lead in as many parts of the country as possible? It seems to me like it would be fairly easy to put the Iraqi forces in the lead in many parts of the country, but Baghdad and the Anbar Province always prove to me, it would seem to me, to be the most difficult. And because they are more difficult it seems to me that that is not happening at a rate quick enough to satisfy many. Could you comment on that?

General ABIZAID. We want to increase the rate at which they are ready. The prime minister recently put $800 million worth of Iraqi funds against increasing the size of his own armed forces, recruiting in al Anbar Province, recruiting elsewhere. The al Anbar Province has been particularly difficult. Tribal elements there are now starting to operate in a way that is cooperative with the government and against al Qaeda. I believe that we want to move quicker toward Iraqi lead, the Iraqis want to move quicker to Iraqi lead, and now the tough work ahead of us is to make it happen in reality. I believe we can do that.

Mr. SAXTON. Let me just ask you a final question about the other side of this equation. Would it be helpful to have more coalition forces against the Iranian border as well as the Syrian border in terms of promoting a more secure situation?

General ABIZAID. I think, over time, coalition forces moving to help ensure the territorial integrity of Iraq is a responsible thing to do provided that Iraqi forces take the lead internally.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Ortiz.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that there are a lot of scenarios being played around by many people but they have talked about redeployment by systematic withdrawing of the

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troops. Are you aware of any diplomatic discussions with some of the surrounding countries, for example Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Egypt. If we were to either have a redeployment of our troops or a systematic withdrawal, have those countries been contacted, have there been any diplomatic effort on our part?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, there is concern on the part of all of our friends and allies in the region on the consequences of a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq that leaves Iraq not in a position to be a stable state capable of fighting al Qaeda but rather a divided state, a state in which al Qaeda has a base of operations from which to threaten their interests and finally a state in which Iran can project its negative policy, its hegomonistic designs more aggressively than it does at present. All are concerned at that.

Mr. ORTIZ. General.

General ABIZAID. The surrounding countries, especially the Arab states, have all indicated a desire to assist in stabilization of the border areas in particular. So Saudi Arabia, for example, is running very robust patrols on their border, the Jordanians are. The Syrians are not and they need to do more. The Kurds are operating in a way that is helpful to external Iraqi security and the Iranians are being very unhelpful by allowing weapons to pass through their territory into the hands of anti-government and anti-coalition militia and death squads.

Mr. ORTIZ. You know, and there has been talk about maybe increasing our troop level in Iraq, do we have the ability to have more troops in Iraq? And will the increase in troop levels decrease sectarian violence, given the current readiness level that we have in the area?

General ABIZAID. Do we have the ability to put more troops in Iraq? Yes, we have the ability, but I believe that exceeding the current force levels puts a tremendous strain on the Army. We could do it for a specific period of time, and that discussion has taken place within the Defense Department, my staff, General Casey's staff. I believe that the more troops issue needs to be more Iraqi troops. I believe there has always been a tension between what we can do and what they must do and we must insist that they do their duty and defend their country as the first line.

Mr. ORTIZ. You know, not being there myself, I have been there to Iraq before, but if for some reason things were stabilized in Iraq, I don't think that it would be smart to pull all the troops. This is why I question about the possibility of doing some diplomatic work with some of the neighboring countries so in case things get better, that we don't have to come all the way back and then go back into Iraq. This is why it is important that we do some type of negotiations or diplomacy with the surrounding countries.

General ABIZAID. We certainly agree.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I agree with that.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that the gentlelady from Texas, Sheila Jackson Lee, be allowed to sit in and participate with our committee.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Skelton, I would raise an objection to that, if that means asking questions, until every member has had an op-

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portunity. We have a full committee today and we will be hard pressed to hit that 5 deadline.

Mr. SKELTON. That is understood.

Mr. HEFLEY. I think it is fine for her to sit in and listen and if we get through with everybody, well then that is another thing. All right, do I hear objection? Okay. Mr. McHugh.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr Chairman. Gentlemen, welcome. Thank you for being here. It has been a long day I know for both of you.

Mr. Ambassador, in your comments you made the statement that I think I got mostly correct, but correct me fully if you feel it is appropriate, that there was much less to do and limited time in which to do it. Define for me as best you can the phrase "limited time." how much time do we have?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, that limited time comes from the fact that the more militias grow, the more sectarian violence proceeds in Iraq, the smaller the political space becomes, the smaller the convergence that still exists between Shia and Sunni national agendas, sectarian agendas becomes. How much time? I am very loathe to give a specific deadline, but I think it is clear that the next few months are absolutely critical for real progress to be demonstrated.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you. General, would you agree, a few months, does that work for you?

General ABIZAID. I think so.

Mr. MCHUGH. Okay. Obviously you at the table, I think many of us in the room agree the sectarian violence is a critical challenge, and it is critical particularly so because, as both of you have commented, it is really up to the Iraqis to solve this. I certainly agree with that as well. I have heard, General Abizaid, you repeatedly say in your discussions with the prime minister that he wants and the Iraqi government wants to do more. You said I believe Maliki and his team want to do more. Those are great words, but honestly I think many of us on this side of the ocean become troubled when we see the prime minister order down the barricades around Sadr City with apparently little or no notification to U.S. forces, recent criticism of the U.S. forces in their attempts to disarm the Mahdi militia.

One of the key reasons the Sunnis, in my opinion, have absolutely no confidence in this government is the ability to keep its security. Where do we find the bridge between what the prime minister is saying and what the prime minister is doing or not doing?

General ABIZAID. The prime minister needs to back his army when his army is in performance of a national mission. The prime minister has shown recently the willingness to target the death squads in the Sadr City area where Iraqi forces with U.S. transition teams have gone in there and taken out key leaders and key cellular structures. He also believes that he needs to have a political solution to some of the militia problems, as the ambassador talked about, both kinetic and political action coming together. I was very encouraged by not only my discussions with them the day before yesterday but the reaction of the government to the kidnapping that took place in the Karradah District yesterday where the government immediately ordered its armed forces into the area, re-

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leased many of the people that were kidnapped, and took action to arrest some of the perpetrators that were dressed in national police uniforms.

The prime minister has also shown a willingness by telling his minister of the interior that he must clean up the sectarian problems in the national police. Many people have been dismissed, many units have been retrained, and so I think those are indications of his willingness to do it. Of course it will be proven over time, and the key point is that people in Iraq must come to trust their armed forces and their national police over and above the militia units that are operating in and amongst them.

Mr. MCHUGH. Exactly. And that is where the true challenge lies, it seems to me. I hope his actions continue to become more overt, consistent with his words.

Let me ask, you mention the national police. Everything we hear, they are particularly problematic and, as juxtaposed with the military experience, has there been any consideration of embedding U.S. military police units into the Iraqi police units as we have done in a similar way with the army, which has been pretty successful?

General ABIZAID. There are police transition teams. They are behind the military transition teams in terms of their longevity in their service, but yes, sir, there is every intention to embed in those units.

Mr. MCHUGH. Good. Thank you both, gentlemen. I appreciate it.

The CHAIRMAN [presiding]. Thank the gentleman. The gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here, Mr. Ambassador and general. General, on previous trips to Iraq, in September and December 2003 come to mind, at a meeting in the green zone it was made very clear to us that we were spending money on Zogby polls and at that time we were consistently polling amongst the Iraqis something like 80 percent favorable. A while later, January of 2005 to be specific, I went back with several of my colleagues. By this time I had noticed as a Member of Congress that those poll numbers weren't just automatically showing up at my office. And so I said, are we still polling? And someone reluctantly said yeah, and I said, okay, what are the numbers? And if my memory is correct, someone said 80 percent, to which I said, that is great. We are still running at 80 percent favorable. To which someone said, no. 80 percent unfavorable. That is the way I recall this conversation.

My question is, since we don't get those numbers like we used to, I am presuming we are still polling. Where are we now? If the number is still where it was in January of 2005, what are we doing to turn that around? What are we doing to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people, which at the end of the day is what it is going to take, in my opinion.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, opinion on the street has continued to change. With respect to the Shia community where our presence enjoyed overwhelmingly positive numbers, those numbers over the course of the last five months have dropped significantly.

Mr. TAYLOR. To what, sir?

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Ambassador SATTERFIELD. They have dropped to well below 50 percent support. The reason for this is a perception that as we have aggressively pursued, as we have believed we must pursue with the Iraqi government, a campaign against all militia, including Shia militia, engaged in violence, engaged in killing, that this shows a tilt by the United States away from the Shia toward the Sunni community.

On the Sunni community, a very interesting development has taken place. On the street in Anbar Province, the province most afflicted with the insurgency, the view of U.S. forces has risen as protectors. Again, because of the phenomenon of sectarian violence.

Mr. TAYLOR. Going back to favorable-unfavorable, what is that number?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Still below 50 percent but significantly over those numbers which you are referring to from 6 months, 9 months, a year ago.

Mr. TAYLOR. So again, how do you turn that around, and what is being done to turn that around? There has got to be a specific course to turn that around.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, with all respect, it is not we, the United States, who turn that around. It is the government of Iraq and the conduct and composition of its security forces that turn that around by acting in a manner that sends a signal to Shia and Sunnis alike that violence, that killing any innocent citizen is not going to be tolerated.

Mr. TAYLOR. If I may, Mr. Ambassador, with total respect, the question was, how do you view the Americans here? Not how do you view your government. How do you view the Americans here? How do you turn that around?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Yes. Congressman, the view of our forces is an exact reflection of the state of sectarian violence as perceived by each of the two primary communities involved. It has much more to do with their narratives, their perception of the other than it does with us.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Ambassador, I was hoping that the answer would be that we would provide the kind of security in the countryside they have come to expect. I was hoping the answer would be, coming from hurricane country where people got very cranky when we lost our electricity for a couple of weeks, that we are going to try to restore electricity to their homes. I was hoping it would be that there would be some safety out there. I was hoping that those were the kind of goals that I think the average Iraqi would be looking for, would be some of our goals as well.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, those are indeed goals that Iraqis are seeking, but they are not goals they are looking to us to provide. They are goals they are looking to their government and their security forces to provide, and our mission is to do the best we can to support, with military and the civilian side, building the capacity, inspiring the will for Iraqis to achieve those goals for Iraqi citizens, not for us to endlessly take on those tasks ourselves. We can't do it.

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, to what extent are we achieving the goals that you outlined?

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Ambassador SATTERFIELD. General Abizaid has spoken on the security side. On the civilian side we have provided a very significant jumpstart on critical essential services capacity in Iraq, but a jumpstart doesn't mean that we can be responsible for meeting all of the development, all of the infrastructure, all of the essential services needs of Iraq. Those are very, very considerable needs. The Iraqi government is going to have to mobilize its own resources better, and we are providing the kind of training and assistance needed to build that capacity. The international community and the regional community, private sector and public sector are going to have to engage to provide those sources. Iraq's needs are tremendous. Some they can meet on their own. Others they need help with, but at the end of the day they must have the will. They must have the ability to meet those needs.

General ABIZAID. Congressman Taylor, if I could, I understand we are running out of time here, but I think the Iraqis need to know that we absolutely are going to make their armed forces a national armed forces that supports our government, and they need to see that their armed forces can defeat the militias, and that, that is so important. That will start changing their opinion. Right now they are not quite sure. They are not quite sure that we are supporting their armed forces to get in the lead. They think we are trying to prevent their armed forces being in the lead. So demonstrating what we both want to do, Iraqis and Americans alike, is in my view something that starts to turn the opinion around.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Hayes.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Abizaid, Ambassador Satterfield, we appreciate you being here and we appreciate even more the incredible men and women that you represent and the families that support them. We won the battle, toppled Saddam Hussein. We are winning the war against terrorists in Iraq. We cannot win the war for a self-governing Iraq unless and until the Iraqi people decide they want to govern themselves, not destroy themselves. Prime Minister Maliki has given everyone serious concern over his ability to lead the government of Iraq. It would seem to me, maybe other members of the committee, that we must find a set of tactics which protect our forces, and force the Iraqi forces to take over the fight. If a leader emerges we can and should provide support. If the Iraqis are determined and decide to destroy themselves and their country, I don't know how in the world we are going to stop them.

Ambassador Satterfield, if such an outcome is not acceptable, if according to what you said, and look to the Iraq Study Committee and anyone that has a good idea to decide what to do, well, wrong as far as I am concerned. This committee, I think, has the goal of our national security and the well-being of our forces first and foremost in our minds. Our goal is for the Iraqis to quit killing each other and our soldiers in the process. This committee, not an appointed group, is and will be responsible for the plan in Iraq. A few months, I don't know how long a few months will be. That means two.

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General Abizaid, what can you and our people, other people on the ground who have and will and must make the decisions, what can you do that has been asked in several different forms to force the Iraqis to take the fight? If there is a leader over there, they are going to have to emerge so the Iraqi people can fall in behind him. Help me out here. I just am completely frustrated and you all are—I know what you are trying to say, but if the Iraqis can't fight it, it is past time they show they can do it.

General ABIZAID. Congressman, it is a very interesting problem. We have gone through two elections where the Iraqi people have expressed their democratic choice and the prime minister has been duly chosen by the people of Iraq and he needs to be supported by the people and by those of us that are helping to ensure that Iraq moves toward stability. He also has a responsibility to demonstrate that he will lead Iraq as a nonsectarian leader, as an Iraqi patriot. I believe, contrary to what a lot of other people believe, that he is an Iraqi patriot, that he will lead the country, that he will take on the militias, that he will build an armed forces, that they will take the lead. Now, maybe that is a dumb bet, but I don't think so. I think it is a good bet. I think he is an honorable man that has enormous difficulties. Iraq is a nation unlike any other in the Middle East that is trying to sort itself out. It will take time. But I believe transferring security responsibility more and more to them will allow him to become more and more effective.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you. And I sense and share your frustration, again, given the fact that it is their fight, and I think this committee backs you and our other forces by saying the government of Iraq, whatever, whoever you are, get your act together, we are not going to stand in the way and let you kill us as you try to kill each other. So again, thank you for what you are doing. Get us out of the way, and if they can fight, they will fight, then let's support them. If they can't, then we have won that war for them.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman from Hawaii, Mr. Abercrombie.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Abizaid, I have in front of me the transcript of the hearing that we held here on February 16, 2005. I asked a question then of General Myers with regard—and Secretary Rumsfeld regarding the demobilization of the militias. February 2005, General Myers: "In the end it is up to the Iraqi government. But if you are asking when we are going to start reducing our forces, that is going to be a decision that General Abizaid and General Casey will make." I then asked the question, "Are the militias going to be demobilized in this process?" Answer from General Myers: "The plan is that the militias will be either demobilized or integrated into the Iraqi security forces." Myself: "Who was going to do it?" General Myers: "That is up to the Iraqis to do. That is as much a political issue as it is a military issue. So there is a question for our state department, is certainly not the Department of Defense." And can—and me: And you can't give an idea, is there a plan in place?

That is February, 2005. They assured me then that the demobilization or integration of the militias was to take place by June, and that you would be coming back to them in June to—I will tell you what his exact statement: Their next assessment is going to be

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sometime in June. They will come back to the Secretary and myself and say, quote, we think we see it going this way, unquote, and we will make decisions based on that. So that is June of 2005. They said it is up to the Iraqis. Now, in January of 2006 Representative Simmons took a group of us to Iraq specifically to deal with the question of training, timetables for training for the Department of Interior forces and Department of Defense forces. The timetables and benchmarks that we were shown at that time showed that the next phase of this training, this is now we are going into 2006, was to be up in and by the end of October; i.e., within the last two weeks. For the training as much as it was capable—as the U.S. military was capable of providing the training.

So it is two years later. Now there are apparently thousands of militia members and death squads operating in Iraq, some of which are attacking our troops, also killing Iraqis in the hundreds, perhaps the thousands. The testimony at least as I understand it today, part of which I caught in the Senate and part today, is that in effect you are still coming back to the secretary with the same—apparently the same answers, that they are still trying to demobilize, they are still—we are still trying to put the training together. Now we are being told, if I understand your testimony correctly, we have to start another round by my count, the third full round of training to get whatever capabilities are there for either the defense forces or the police forces in Iraq.

My question then, are the United States armed forces responsible for eliminating nongovernment armed groups; i.e., militias in Iraq or is the Iraqi government responsible?

General ABIZAID. Iraqi government is responsible.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. So we are right where we were in February of 2005 as best I can see. Now, if we are not responsible and the Iraqi government is responsible, what do we tell our troops when they go on patrol? Are they able to discern friendly militia groups from enemy militia groups?

General ABIZAID. Our troops on patrol that operate in areas where militias operate will engage those militias that they find. That the militias are not authorized to be there. The Iraqi government has not taken the action necessary to mobilize them. We need that to happen. We need to work with them.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Okay. Excuse me, then, general, how do our troops tell the difference? How do they tell the difference between those militias that are there that the government hasn't demobilized and therefore exist presumably to try to protect their areas or neighborhoods or something, how do our troops tell the difference between what might be called good, quote-unquote, militias from bad militias?

General ABIZAID. I think it is very clear that Iraqi security forces, national police and armed forces are the only people that need to be operating anywhere unless there is a specific agreement made by local commanders that authorize some sort of a neighborhood watch. That is different from a militia. It is a difficult circumstance for our troops.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Yeah. I am not trying to trap you into anything. I am trying to ask the practical consequences of what you have to deal with as a soldier day by day.

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General ABIZAID. The practical consequences in Iraq is anybody who happens to be armed who is not a member of the Iraqi armed forces, wearing a uniform or the Iraqi police wearing a uniform or a member of one of the various ministries that happen to have armed guard forces, et cetera, those people need to be considered hostile unless proven otherwise by our troops.

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. It is not uncommon for troops to encounter people though that are dressed in uniforms that are not necessarily legitimate, right?

The CHAIRMAN. If the gentleman will suspend for a minute, we have a hard stop in about 50 minutes and about 30 members that need to ask questions so if the gentleman could pursue this question at the end with the General, we would appreciate it. I thank the gentleman, and the gentleman from California, Mr. Calvert.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, ambassador, welcome. I have been to Iraq with the chairman several times and have talked to various factions within Iraq, and there is an ongoing, as you know, perception of fairness in how the division of the wealth with the various—between the Kurds, between the Sunni and the Shia is going to take place within the Iraqi people. The national regions law will allow, as you know, a creation of autonomous regions in 18 months. Do you think that if it is done successfully will—like the Sunni concerns that they will be able to share in the country's wealth and be able to be an active participant in their government?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, the debate that took place in the Council of Representatives that produced the law to set up procedures according to the constitution by which provinces could opt to become regions, and that then deferred any such steps for 18 months, we regard as a very positive step because what was involved here was cross-sectarian alliance formed between Sunni elements, not all of the Sunni community, Shia elements but by no means all of the Shia community, elements of the Kurdish bloc. They all got together on a proposal they believed was thoughtful and reasonable to both follow the constitution's prescription, to pass an implementing law for regional formation, but then by agreement to defer any steps toward such formation for a year and a half so the environment in Iraq politically and security could be more conducive to a thoughtful discussion, a thoughtful debate. We think that is a very positive step.

On revenue sharing, the Iraqis are still to pass a national hydrocarbon law. That is a critical step. Indeed, I think it is probably the most likely next step for Iraq to move on its national agenda. There is agreement between the Iraqi parties on revenue sharing. That is not the issue. It is a technical question but an important one involving ultimate authority over contract signature and contracting decisions. But all of the indications are that all of the parties involved see a national use of hydrocarbon resources as in the nation's, not any one group's interest, and that is an encouraging——

Mr. CALVERT. How are they dividing the resources right now?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The central government allocates petroleum resources based on national need.

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Mr. CALVERT. Is it being perceived in the various groups as being fair and equitable?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The manner in which petroleum development has taken place; that is, the exploitation of resources, is frankly very much retarded. And so the revenues that are truly available are very much limited. It is only with real exploitation of that sector, something that we hope will come with the national law, that you are going to see the issue of distribution really rise to the fore.

Mr. CALVERT. There has been significant criticism with the minister of the interior that there is a significant amount of corruption taking place within his own institution. Are they going to make the necessary changes for that to take place?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, the issue of accountability of consequences for criminality, whether it is human rights abuses or financial corruption, is critical to Iraq. It is what we mean by establishment of the rule of law, and there an enormous amount of progress has to be made. Very little has been done. Whether it is the ministry of the interior or other ministries where corruption or abuses have taken place, a transparent judicial process has to be undertaken in which individuals are taken into custody, brought before a court, appropriately tried, and if the evidence supports it, found guilty and sentenced.

Mr. CALVERT. Have you seen any progress in that?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We see some indications of progress but very frankly far below the level necessary, very far below the level necessary.

Mr. CALVERT. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Meehan.

Mr. MEEHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Ambassador and general, for your testimony.

Mr. Ambassador, I heard your testimony and you said the goal was simple and you listed all of the things that Iraqis have to do. Part of the problem is they haven't really been doing them over a period of time. And I listened as you said the next few months are critical. And it seems that we always hear the next few months are critical. I remember my first trip to Iraq in 2003, a couple months after Saddam fell, and everyone agreed that we had a window of opportunity to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people. And that was a critical few months that we had because if we didn't win the hearts and minds and the window closed, then we would never be able to win the hearts and minds, and what did we do? We made all kinds of strategic problems. We let Saddam's army go. We didn't vet them. Electricity and unemployment, electricity was down, unemployment was up. The average quality standard of life went down. Attacks, violence in the streets, chaos, and that window shut. And it seems to me when that window shut that put us in a situation where it really got difficult.

So where have we been? A year ago there were 400 attacks a day against our troops. It is up to 800 insurgent attacks now, and we are told it is just a matter of a few months, the next few months are critical. *The New York Times* a couple weeks ago, November 1, reported in a classified memo prepared by the Central Command,

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it stated that Iraq is not only on the verge of total chaos but is getting closer to chaos rather than further from it. In other words, it seems to me we have been going in the wrong direction in terms of levels of violence, in terms of the level of chaos for quite some time. And it gets frustrating to be on this committee and to continually hear that the next few months are critical.

I suppose there are some encouraging signs. The Iraq Study Group, made up of former Secretary Baker and Lee Hamilton, a former member here, I guess they are going to come in and say we are going to go in a new direction. But it seems to me that our country deserves an unvarnished apolitical assessment of how things are going in Iraq, and I would like us to get to that point in time. And as a member of the committee it gets frustrating after three and a half years, we are approaching four years, that we seem to always hear the same thing. It is up to the Iraqis to get up and running. And I don't know, I guess the President asked for the secretary of defense's resignation. We are going to get it. We are going to head in a new direction. I hope that we can have a dialogue of what has worked and what hasn't worked, and I hope the next few months are critical. But Mr. Abercrombie has testimony, we could go back the last three and a half years. And the next few months are always critical but it seems to be getting worse.

General Abizaid, one of the things I think is of paramount importance is the Department of Defense making sure that we get the best we can to protect our men and women in uniform who bravely volunteer to protect this Nation's interest, and throughout the Iraq War it seems to me the Department of Defense hasn't done as good a job as it should have in getting enough troops to secure the peace, in not giving soldiers the body armor they need quickly enough, not up-armoring Humvees quickly enough, and these mistakes in my view have cost lives.

There is another criticism of the Department of Defense, and that is that they have been slow to adapt. Three and a half years into this war we are still a step behind the insurgents, and I am sure that you recognize this insurgency is organized, they are efficient. Their intelligence, their efficiency flooded Iraq with the improvised explosive devices and the Department was slow to respond with the Joint Improvised Explosive Device (IED) Defeat Task Force, which became JIEDD TF. The insurgency has a new tactic, sniper teams. They are becoming increasingly lethal. In fact, over the last few months there has been a dramatic rise in U.S. fatalities as a result of small arms fire, including insurgent snipers. The data indicates that small arms fire accounted for 19.7 percent of American fatalities in April of 2006 while in October that number had ballooned to 43 percent, second only to IEDs. On November 1, I sent a letter to Secretary Rumsfeld calling on him to convene a task force to assess this new threat and offer the technological and tactical solutions that are needed to protect our soldiers. I am wondering, do you believe, general, that we are doing all we can to mitigate this threat, specifically looking at the technologies that is available?

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General ABIZAID. Well, thank you, Congressman. I certainly know we have made mistakes, and I certainly know we have also had some great successes.

The CHAIRMAN. General, if you will suspend for one minute. I just want to alert the committee the fact that we have got, as I understand, about 15 minutes left with the General. We were going to go into classified session. Is it the members' desire to just continue apace with questions? It seems like members are going with some good questions here so if there is anybody that has classified questions or we may have a few down here. So maybe we can take a few minutes at the end and maybe we will just go into one of the offices and do classified questions if we have some at the end.

Okay, general, go ahead and proceed, but if you can, Mr. Meehan's time has expired and we still have a lot of members that need their questions asked. So if you can make an abbreviated answer and we will try to get the expanded answer at the end here.

Mr. MEEHAN. I think, general, we can abbreviate, but the boomerang shooter detection systems that are deployed, the development of systems like the Red Owl, I want to know whether or not those things are being developed quickly enough to get them into the theater, given the number of troops that we are losing to sniper attacks.

General ABIZAID. I would prefer to answer this question in closed session.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Mr. Meehan, why don't we get those for the record.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

General ABIZAID. I would say in the open session that the most adaptive person on the battlefield is not our enemy. It is our soldiers. They are very adaptive. They are very capable. Many of the ideas that come back that we ask you to fund come from our soldiers, their ideas. And I am quite proud with the way that we have adapted to the threats of the enemy. And I also say that the enemy has a vote in what goes on out there.

The other thing I would say as we look to this campaign, we always tend to look at only what is going on in Iraq as the broader campaign still takes place in the broader Middle East. Fighting in Afghanistan, fighting in Pakistan, fighting in Saudi Arabia, Iraq, et cetera, et cetera, this is all part of a broader campaign and when I think about where we were on September 10, 2001, and where we are today vis-à-vis our ability to confront international terrorism and al Qaeda in particular, we are in much better shape than we were then. And that is often lost on people when they think about what is going on. Have there been mistakes made? No doubt. Do I share responsibility? Absolutely.

Mr. MEEHAN. I would agree, General, that there is some great innovation. I just want to make sure that their great ideas—that is where I get my ideas visiting with the troops. I want to make sure we have technology on these things.

The CHAIRMAN. And if you could have an expanded answer for that, General, on the systems Mr. Meehan talked about that would be good. I thank the gentleman. The gentlelady from Virginia, Mrs. Drake.

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Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Abizaid, the National Intelligence Estimate, when we were able to read what was declassified, said that the greatest tool that we have in defeating the terrorist is the perception that they are not winning between themselves and with the public. What is the perception right now in Iraq? Is there a perception out there of the status of the terrorist?

General ABIZAID. On the broader scope I would like to answer that question because there is some interesting polling data that we saw that I think came out of the State Department INL referencing how was al Qaeda doing as an ideology throughout the region? And I was very much struck how al Qaeda has discredited itself with the vast majority of people in the region because of its tactics, techniques, procedures, et cetera. And al Qaeda in particular in Iraq is not popular. I don't believe that it can become mainstream there. I think that the problems in Iraq are much more sectarian in nature and quite difficult to deal with. That sectarian nature of the problem in my mind requires Iraqi military units to be out front with us backing them up. And that sectarian nature of the problem requires Iraqi units that have the full support and dedication of the national government.

Mrs. DRAKE. Also, general, I know that in a way, your hands are tied because you are supporting the Iraqi government and you are not making all the decisions. Is there anything though that you need from us that we haven't given you or that you would want to ask us for? Is there anything that we could do that would help you?

General ABIZAID. This committee has helped us in every way imaginable. But there are threats out there that will evolve that we have yet to figure out that will appear on the battlefield, and we will ask you to help us move technologies faster or protective gear faster into the hands of the troops, and in particular evolving intelligence technologies are very, very important to get into the field quickly because this battle, this worldwide battle that we are engaged in is more about intelligence than it is about direct combat by heavy brigades.

Mrs. DRAKE. And thank you. Ambassador, I just wanted to say to you our last trip in April, we did visit with your reconstruction team and I think that is something we don't hear enough about, is what great work they are doing, the number of nations that have partnered in Iraq to help rebuild the different provinces. I did wonder—well, first of all, I wish there was a way we could get that information out, the number of schools rebuilt, children vaccinated. Have we made any progress in the issue of banking? I mean how are we handling money in Iraq? Is there any banking system yet?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. There is a very primitive banking system in Iraq. It is a factor that influences everything from security because many units are absent from their battalions, not because they are defecting or going AWOL but because they need to go home with their money. There is no way to transfer funds back and forth. We are working with the Iraqi authorities concerned, as is the international community, to develop a modern banking system for Iraq. It starts slowly but it is something that needs to be there, and we have seen progress made on that, but it is a major problem.

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Mrs. DRAKE. And the second question is about the oil. Have we been able to get our hands around how to monitor the oil and measure it so that we know it is all going where it is supposed to be going?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Well, not all oil is going where it is supposed to be going. There is significant diversion of crude and refined products and there is an extraordinary amount of corruption involved. Indeed, if you look at the attacks that have shut down pipelines or facilities in the north of Iraq because the south has been largely untouched, while there is some true insurgent activity responsible, without question, the majority of those attacks are probably for criminal purposes. They are to divert a product or crude shipment from one place to another place to keep it from moving to a point where it is no longer accessible to criminal elements to smugglers. We have taken or rather the Iraqis have taken a major step in addressing the problem of corruption in the oil sector simply by raising oil prices because the closer oil prices in Iraq approach to regional prices, the lower the incentives come for struggling. As long as oil is cheaper than oil in Kuwait or Saudi Arabia or Iran there will be a big motivation for that, and the government has moved in that direction.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you. Thank you both very much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentlelady. The gentleman from Arkansas, Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, we appreciate you being here. Did you all get some lunch today?

General ABIZAID. No.

Dr. SNYDER. Can we buy you a milkshake? They have great milkshakes here.

General ABIZAID. It is my fault.

Dr. SNYDER. No, it is not. It is our fault. I saw you on the Senate going late. We appreciate you being here so much.

General Abizaid, there is a lot of frustration, as you know, around the country and in the Congress with the war in Iraq, but one of my personal frustrations is that I know that we have got the top guy in Central Command. I mean, your skills and your professionalism and your expertise, your sensitivity to language and culture are unparalleled, and it is a difficult situation with a great guy running the operations. So I appreciate all that you have done.

I wanted to ask you one quick question. We have received some allegations in our office that the U.S. training teams that are training Iraqi National Army units, they sometimes have received pressure to move units along that they really didn't think were ready to move on. Have you heard any of those allegations? Those are just allegations. Have you heard any of those allegations or do you have any kind of independent audits to check on the status of training and quality of troops once they complete the training programs?

General ABIZAID. We have had independent audits. We are looking at it constantly all the time. General Casey is very adamant with his commanders about giving honest assessments of where we are. I think he has a good handle on where they are, and if at some level in the chain of command people are putting them under pres-

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sure to give a false report, that is wrong, and that shouldn't happen.

Dr. SNYDER. I think that is one of those issues in the new Congress this committee is going to be very interested in in a bipartisan manner. We will come back to that. There has been a lot of talk in the last few weeks and months about some four to six-month timetable. I heard your Senate testimony and then here today. Your thoughts about that. At some point in your own internal gut you are going to come to a conclusion that, well, sometime in the next four, five or six months we need to think about moving troops. At some point that is going to happen.

What is going to be—what are the four, five top things in your list of measurements or metrics that you are going to have on your checklist that says boom, boom, boom, boom, we have done these five things, I can now start talking to my folks about making arrangements to reduce troop strengths or we are getting to where we want to go? What are the measurable things you have on your mind?

General ABIZAID. Well, the most important thing which is actually not easily measurable is the degree to which Iraqi forces under Iraqi command are in the lead fighting and being effective against the enemy. And it is hard to measure because against an insurgent enemy, counting bodies is not exactly a good measurement for success. That they can achieve stability in their designated areas over time, reduce the influences of anti-government activity is the measure. General Casey actually has a very developed series of measures that he uses to judge how he wants to bring the force down as the Iraqis do more. I don't know if I mentioned it in this hearing. I mentioned it in the other hearing.

Back in January of 2006 after the elections where people were feeling very optimistic about the way ahead, we had postulated that at this particular point in the campaign we would have somewhere between 12 and 10 combat brigades, American combat brigades in Iraq, with that number continuing to drop. We now find ourselves at this stage of the campaign with 15 combat brigades in Iraq and we think until we see clear indications of the Iraqi armed forces gelling under a national leadership with effective governance that it will probably stay that way for a while.

Dr. SNYDER. I heard you discuss that on the Senate side this morning. With regard to your military transition teams, the troops that are embedded with our troops that are embedded with the Iraqi units that I think are so crucial as you have articulated, I think a topic that we will be discussing on an ongoing way in the new Congress will be what kind of help you need from us to be sure you are getting the personnel you need for those military transition teams. For example, I have heard—we have heard comments from people being sent to be part of these advisers that they don't have combat experience or they don't have proper language skills or very little cultural training. I think those are all things that are very important to you.

How do you see that issue now with regard to the folks that are stepping forward to do this? This is really important, really important work. Are there things that we can be doing to help them get

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the kind of training and experience that you want them to have and the numbers you think we need?

General ABIZAID. I think that the Army has come a long way in training the transition teams, the Marine Corps does an excellent job in providing transition teams with some cultural background although you can imagine it takes a long time to develop. You would also be appreciative of the fact that in some areas senior transition team members are on their second or third tour of duty. They have already developed a pretty good cultural understanding. There are good relationships between our transition teams and the units in the field, the Iraqi units in the field, but it is my opinion and the opinion of our commanders in the field that we must make our transition teams more robust. Ten to 15 people per team, it is pretty difficult for that to sustain operations in a combat zone over time at a battalion level. We need to increase their size and as we do that we will probably have to dip into the pool of available officers within the Army and the Marine Corps to come in and fill into additional transition team requirements.

There is also a need to make the national police and police transition teams more effective. We are examining how much of that can come out of the force structure that is already in Iraq, and I believe that probably most of it can. But again, we will certainly be coming to the Secretary with a detailed requirement here in the next couple of weeks.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you, General. Thank you for your service, General Abizaid.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman and before we go to Dr. Schwarz, I wanted to make a little announcement here. Every now and again we mention a personal thing or two about members, and the distinguished gentleman from Missouri, Ike Skelton, at 5:02 a.m. became a grandparent to Harry Page Skelton. So congratulations. So somebody's being productive around here.

So the gentleman from Michigan, Dr. Schwarz.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Thank you very much. General Abizaid, Ambassador Satterfield, thank you very kindly for your service. Mr. Ambassador, where were you stationed, where were you posted in late 2002 and early 2003?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. 2002–2003, I was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near East Affairs in the Department of State.

Dr. SCHWARZ. As the build-up to the campaign in Iraq was being made, you as an Arabist, and we have had few Arabists, true Arabists entered in the tradition of perhaps of St. John Philby before this committee, were you as an Arabist or those working in your office consulted about the appropriateness and perhaps—less the appropriateness but the difficulties we could possibly run into in a campaign in Iraq itself and in the City of Baghdad itself?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, my portfolio during those years was the Arab Israeli peace process and the responsibility for Egypt, Israel, and the Levant, Lebanon.

Dr. SCHWARZ. You were dealing with Egypt, Israel, and Lebanon.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, yes.

Dr. SCHWARZ. I won't pursue this line any further because I am not going to ask you to do a hypothetical for me.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Thank you.

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Dr. SCHWARZ. I am going to ask you to do one thing because I know we are on C–SPAN and one of the things that the American people, especially my constituents back in Michigan frequently ask me and I can answer the question but I would rather have someone like you answer the question because it is frequently asked. So I am going to take the rest of my time, Mr. Chairman, and just turn the time over to Ambassador Satterfield.

How did Iraq become Iraq? What is Iraq? From 1920 on, how did it get from something started by the British at the end of World War I to where we are now? And it is all yours for whatever amount of time I have. The American people ask this question all the time. They don't know the answer. They don't know what Iraq is.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, Iraq is a combination created following the dissolution of the Ottoman empire at the end of the First World War of different peoples, different ethnicities, different religious affiliations, Christian of many different stripes, Kurds, both Sunni and Shia. Shia Arabs, Shia Persians descent and Sunni Arabs. Tribal elements, you had balanced elements, elements that related very much to the outside world, to the broader Middle East, Southwest Asia and beyond, elements that were very much focused in their village life. Agriculture predominated until oil was exploited. Agriculture remained a critical underpinning of Iraq's national earnings up until the era of Saddam Hussein. But despite these disparate points of origin of the peoples that make up Iraq, as I said in my testimony, coexistence of communities rather than violence between communities was the norm, not the exception in the history of Iraq.

The challenge now that confronts the Iraqi people, that confronts us is how best to help the Iraqi government, its political leadership, to sustain that unity, to avoid the forces which would split Iraq apart and the consequences of such splitting. Now, that is not an easy challenge. If it were simple, we, our coalition partners, Iraqis themselves, Iraq's neighbors who are constructively engaged would have been able to achieve greater success. It is a difficult challenge. But it is not a challenge which we believe is insurmountable. It is a challenge though which must be addressed, must be surmounted in the time to come, in the limited time to come before centrifugal forces spin away that convergence at the center which we believe still exists. And Congressman, if I could offer a personal observation.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Please do.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I watched closely the evolution of Lebanon from the 1970's through the 1980's and 1990's, the beginning, the progress and the end of its civil war. Iraq today is not where Lebanon was in the spring of 1975. Civil war, the dissolution of any sense of cross-sectarian, cross-community ties and convergence was profound in Lebanon in the 1970's. It is not dominant in Iraq today. But it can't become dominant unless violence is addressed, unless militias who have a sectarian identification are confronted, stopped and a reconciliation process advanced that calls on Iraqis to do what most Iraqis want, to come together and live a normal life. That is the thought of most Iraqis, and we take great assurance in the fact that that is the will of most of Iraq's people, not

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separation. Their leadership needs to respond to that will by leading and leading courageously.

Dr. SCHWARZ. Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, for that superb tutorial. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman and the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Smith, is recognized.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to follow up a little bit on what Dr. Snyder was talking about in terms of the progress and training of Iraqi troops. As you mentioned, it is not easily measurable, and certainly that is part of the problem. One of the arguments as we have talked about phased withdrawal against it has been the Iraqi forces. Essentially they are not capable of stopping the violence or making progress against the violence. I guess the question I have as I look at the situation is, is whether or not our forces are capable of stopping the violence. And that, you know, depending on how you answer that question sort of leads to some troubling conclusions in a more difficult set of circumstances, but I don't see that question being examined very much. The assumption is sort of like, look, the violence is terrible in Iraq. By definition that means we have to be there. And the problem is, you know, we have been there now for over three years after Saddam's regime fell. There doesn't seem to be much progress being made, and I think what the American people are really looking for, if we can stand up and say we have got to tough it out, because the overall goals of not having Iraq be a terrorist haven, of having a stable government everyone is behind—and we understand how important those are. The serious question right now is whether or not our troop commitment is moving us toward accomplishing those goals, and we seem to sort of brush past that as if to say, hey, violent situation is bad. We have to be there. There really hasn't been much progress being made, and that is what we are trying to get at. So my question is, can you show me why our troops are going to be capable of getting this violence under control, and explain within that if that is true, how can we seem to be going backwards? And how come there doesn't seem to be any measurable progress? Because you could make the argument that, you know, a foreign force in a complicated country like Iraq is by definition incapable of sort of bridging it to heal and if that is true that has some serious implications for what we ought to be doing with our troops. That is sort of the line of questioning I would like you to explore.

General ABIZAID. It is a very complicated question. It is very interesting as I have traveled around the world, as you have, sir, to go to different countries and see what their tolerance is for violence. A place like Colombia, a place like Iraq. Iraq has been, is and will be a violent place for a lot of different cultural reasons. Our troops can provide the muscle necessary to defeat military threats. As a matter of fact, any military threat that emerges in Iraq we will master. At any terrorist threat such as al Qaeda we can attack, kill and over time master although you can understand that with the external support that al Qaeda has, it is a long-term proposition to keep after them. We are having a good effect against them. When it comes to criminality, when it comes to sectarian violence, kidnapping, assassinations, et cetera, where these things

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take place where our troops are not or where Iraqi troops are not, it becomes much more difficult. Our troops are not policemen.

Mr. SMITH. Excuse me. They seem to be taking place where our troops are as well. I mean I just want to make sure——

General ABIZAID. Congressman, where our troops are it very rarely happens. Our troops provide a good capability of a security blanket where they are. But they can't be everywhere. The lead needs to be progressively to Iraqi security forces and, in particular, Iraqi police to attack the threats to the society, and I believe that that solution is capable of attainment. I think the progress that we have made, you know, the notion that Iraq is in total chaos with everything exploding and falling apart day after day after day actually doesn't exist that way.

Mr. SMITH. That is not what I am saying, just to be clear. I mean you can argue chaos of war. What I am talking about is measurable progress over the course of those 3 years because presumably if we have 140,000 troops in there doing what you say they are doing, we should be able to say, here is why they are making progress and here is why we are confident that we can get to the point where we need to be.

General ABIZAID. I am confident we can get to the point because we have gotten to the point in a lot of places. Fourteen out of the 18 provinces, there are less than four incidents of security problems a day. Two of the provinces are completely independent. Three hundred thousand-plus Iraqi armed forces and police have been stood up in the areas where it is difficult, it is extremely difficult, but those are defined geographical areas. So I believe we have made progress. Can the Iraqi security forces over time take the lead in those areas? The answer is in my professional opinion, yes.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. The gentlelady from Michigan, Mrs. Miller.

Mrs. MILLER OF MICHIGAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and General Abizaid and Ambassador Satterfield, we certainly appreciate your testimony today as well as your service to our Nation, both of you gentlemen, very much. Your testimony was very enlightening. I think the questions that have been asked seem to be principally looking at prosecution of the war on terror and as well military strategies from where we go forward on this and that is appropriate, but I have a question which I think is sort of an important addenda to the impact of what is happening in Iraq on a particular segment of the population and, Ambassador Satterfield, I was interested to hear your response to my colleague from Michigan's question about how Iraq really came into existence and et cetera. In southeast Michigan we have the largest Arabic population, I think, in the Nation of which a principle component, actually I believe about 80 percent, of the population that we have in my state are Chaldeans, the Christians, even though it is my understanding that they were only about 10 percent of the population in Iraq. Although since, in the last several years the population there I believe, and you are much more familiar than I am on this, but has gone from several million Chaldeans in Iraq to now 5 to maybe 700,000 that are left and much, a number of reasons of that appar-

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ently but one of the principle reasons is because they are—the Christians, the Chaldeans, are being persecuted as well as they are having a higher incidence of kidnappings, the general mentioned. This is what I am being told by my population because there is an awareness that they have family or friends in the United States, in other countries, et cetera. There has been a lot of concern expressed to me that the state department has not been as sensitive as perhaps they could be in helping to resettle some of those individuals who do have family or friends in the states are now willing to sponsor them and help them, et cetera, but I wonder if either one of you gentlemen could address those concerns and if you have any comment on what we might be able to do to expedite them, some of them that want to leave Iraq, or stop some of the kidnappings and the persecution that is happening to this segment of the population.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congresswoman, our embassy, the Department of State, the National Security Council and our regional teams in those areas where there are significant Christian populations are very sensitive, they are very much alert to the violence that the Christian community in Iraq has suffered from. It is not a positive comment to make, but it is a fact nevertheless that Christians suffer in Iraq not because they are Christians but because they are Iraqis. They suffer in the same way that Shia and Sunnis suffer. Christians don't have militias and in that sense truly are innocent communities, but we don't see, and we look at this issue very carefully, deliberate persecution of Christians because they are Christians, they are Iraqis caught up in the midst of violence which afflicts large numbers of Iraqis of all sects, of all identities. We certainly want to see their suffering come to an end as we want to see the suffering of all Iraqis come to an end, and everything that General Abizaid and I have spoken to today in terms of what is necessary in Iraq to move forward greater security, reconciliation on the political side, greater economic development for the country will benefit all of Iraq's people, including the Christian community. We do not see them though as singled out.

Mrs. MILLER OF MICHIGAN. General, do you believe that to be so? Or do you have a comment on that? Do you feel that the Christian population is not being unduly singled out there?

General ABIZAID. In various areas the Christians have had problems and have had to move from particular geographic areas. I agree with the way that Ambassador Satterfield has characterized it. I think it is very clear that throughout the Middle East Christian communities come under pressure from extremist groups that have ideologies such as al Qaeda. And when that happens, it makes their life very difficult.

Mrs. MILLER OF MICHIGAN. Since I still have a moment left, very quickly, Ambassador, you mentioned about separation of the country there. I noticed even during these last debates, during the last election in some of the Senate debates there were people who were advancing the theorem that the country should be separated in three different sections, and I am just wondering what your position would be on that or if you could comment a little bit to that if you are—distressed people are even discussing such a thing.

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Ambassador SATTERFIELD. We are concerned. This Administration and the people of Iraq will have no part, no support for partition. Partitioning of Iraq can only be accomplished at a cost in terms of human suffering, bloodshed and forced displacement, which would be morally unacceptable for the people of the United States as well as for this Administration. There is no easy way to separate the intermingled populations of Iraq, ethnic or sectarian, one from the other without blood and this is something we will not countenance.

Mrs. MILLER OF MICHIGAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentlelady. The gentlelady from California, Mrs. Tauscher.

Ms. TAUSCHER. I didn't have lunch either!

General Abizaid would appreciate an extremely long question.

The CHAIRMAN. General Abizaid would appreciate an extremely long question.

Ms. TAUSCHER. General Abizaid, Ambassador Satterfield, it is so nice to see you. Thank you for your service. This is my problem, and I think that I can speak for my constituents, who are frustrated but also want to have success and want our troops home sooner and safer. It seems that for a very, very long time we have had this formula of delivering political reconciliation through a series of Iraqi governments at the same time that we have been training troops to stand up when we stand down and that everybody believes this should have been done and finished a long time ago. The Iraqi government that you have talked to recently, General Abizaid, Prime Minister Maliki, does he actually understand that unless he has a way to politically solve this insurgency through reconciliation, through offering oil revenues to Sunnis who feel that they are in the wrong part of the country, not sitting on the oil patch, to guaranteeing that the interior ministry is not going to be reprisal central, you name it, does he actually understand that our patience has withered to a very finite period of time, we are talking months now, not years, and that we don't believe that we can stay indefinitely until they get their act together?

General ABIZAID. It is very interesting that you would ask me this question because I heard the prime minister, if I was not mistaken, open our meeting with one another here the day before yesterday when he said what I have here is primarily a political problem, and while we need military help you need to understand that this is first and foremost a political problem, and so helping me with excessive military activity doesn't help me.

Ms. TAUSCHER. Well, with all due respect, General Abizaid, my 15-year-old has known that for 2 years. We have been training Iraqi military forces. Hundreds of thousands was the number. We are well over 300,000. Apparently we were more interested in throughput on quantity than we have been on quality because we now have lots of numbers but they cannot perform except in multiples of American forces. It takes three or four of them to do what one of our finest Americans can do. I am not surprised. We have the best. But you know I can't wait around for them to match our capabilities and apparently unless there is a political solution that this government is willing to sacrifice itself to deliver, we are never

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going to have enough Iraqis that are going to fight and die for the government. It is just not going to happen.

General ABIZAID. We should not wait around. We should not give the Iraqis a blank check. I believe that the armed forces developed in an expected direction until the period after February of 2006, when the sectarian violence became so severe and that in the light of the sectarian violence, without a government, in particular the cohesion of the military suffered greatly. Every military has to have good civilian leadership in order to hold together, and they were not able to have that civilian leadership as they went through the arguments about how the government was going to form.

Ms. TAUSCHER. Well, we fired them all to begin with. We started from basically zero, didn't we?

General ABIZAID. I believe Prime Minister Maliki knows what has to be done. He knows that political reconciliation must take place, that a national unity government must move forward, that changes need to be made toward debaathification, and he also knows that he has got to shift his support fully behind the Iraqi national security forces in order to be successful, and I believe his senior ministers know that as well.

Ms. TAUSCHER. Well, I am all for making sure that they unambiguously understand what our lack of commitment is going to be in the short term, that we cannot sustain what has apparently looked to them like a blank check, what apparently has looked to them like infinite ability to tolerate their lack of delivery of both a government that Iraqis will fight and die for, a cut in half of the insurgence by negotiations through political means. I mean this formula is no mystery. It has been obvious for years, and I am not blaming you, but I am saying that the American people have had it up to here and the Iraqi government has got to know that we have got to bring our troops home sooner and safer and that they have got to start to take this responsibility very seriously because we are not going to fight their civil war for them.

Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentlelady. The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Shuster.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, ambassador and general, for being here today. I have been here for the entire hearing except for about 15 minutes, so forgive me if I asked a question that you might have answered in the 15 minutes in my absence. The sectarian violence, the militias seem to be the big problem we face, and prior to you saying, general, today that Prime Minister Maliki is doing a good job, a better job, I thought that he was resisting and there was pushback from his political alliances on that. Especially I saw the Sadr City incident where he made us pull our checkpoints out. So can you address Maliki and his—what he is doing in a little more detail but also Muqtada al-Sadr, how central is he to the problem of the militias and the sectarian violence in Iraq?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, we regard, on reflection and based upon our experience with Prime Minister Maliki as both a patriot and as a national rather than a sectarian leader, I know that is the way he looks at himself. He has enormous pressures to deal with, pressures from inside Iraq including from the Shia com-

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munity itself, pressures from outside. He has acted in a manner which is articulated publicly, a national agenda. It is moving on that agenda through actual steps taken rather than just words that is essential. We know how difficult the challenges are that he faces. We are trying to work not just through military means but through our diplomacy to provide greater support for the prime minister and for his colleagues and governance as they collectively need to lead this country forward because lead they must.

When the President has talked with Prime Minister Maliki—and he has done so on several occasions of late—he has underscored we support him because we regard him as a national leader, we regard him as a commander-in-chief of a sovereign Iraq with its own security forces. But leaders must lead and commanders-in-chief must command in a way that makes sense in terms of responsibilities, chain of command, and effective leadership and empowerment for the armed forces.

Now what can we do to enhance the ability of Prime Minister Maliki to move forward on all of the areas where progress must be made? We need to think through as carefully as we can, which is what we are doing, how we can mobilize the assets that we have at our hands. There are military assets. There are civilian assets. There are assets that are diplomatic outside the country as well as within. How can we use them best to try to move the dynamics inside Iraq to a much more positive place?

Now, this is not a promise of overnight transformation, but it is the need to turn around the threat of disintegration, the threat of increased violence, alienation and separation and move it to a much better point where achievement of the goals we and most Iraqis hold for that country can become more possible than it is at this moment. That is our challenge.

Is Prime Minister Maliki able to do it? We believe that he is. But decisions are going to have to be taken rapidly.

Mr. SHUSTER. Is that threat—Muqtada al-Sadr, is he a threat to it? How big a problem is he?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Muqtada al-Sadr as an individual lives in two different worlds. One is a world of politics in which he has shown the capacity and the will to take decisions which are not inconsistent with national goals. The other world, though, is one of violence.

Many members of the militia that associate themselves with him follow a path which has produced tremendous suffering, death and violence. They are, those elements, a key part of the problem in Baghdad, of the killings in Baghdad. But there are elements in his movement which have little allegiance to him, whose allegiance lies elsewhere, who are criminal in their motivation and background; and it is very important that Muqtada al-Sadr make a decision, a national decision where he wishes to cast his lot and how he wishes to direct his own future as well as the future of his country and his community. We hope that is in a positive direction.

Mr. SHUSTER. Are we putting the pressure on him to make that decision? I understand there was a raid, that supposedly he was supposed to have been there. That is the kind of pressure we are putting on him? We are going to capture him if he doesn't?

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Ambassador SATTERFIELD. General Abizaid has just said, as we find elements of the Jaish al-Mahdi engaged in conducting acts of violence, they are confronted and they are dealt with. Iraqi forces deal with them. There needs to be both a kinetic aspect to this as well as a political process.

General ABIZAID. In the past several weeks in particular—in consultation, by the way, with the Prime Minister—Iraqi forces, in conjunction with some of our special forces, have gone after some of these death squads in a pretty effective way in difficult parts of Sadr City and been successful.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Andrews.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Abizaid, thank you for your service to the country, and I hope that you will convey to all those under your command that what I perceive as a growing conclusion here at home that the strategy and policy is failing is met with a steadfast appreciation for and respect for the sacrifice and success of the people you command. It is very much appreciated.

Ambassador, in your testimony you say, on the security track, our current focus is on transitioning more control and responsibility to the Iraqis. And you later say, the Iraqis want more control and we want to give it to them.

The record gives me great cause for skepticism when I look at the recent history in Diyala. The plan in Diyala as of July was to turn over lead responsibility for security to the Iraqi security forces. The plan was to essentially implement that fully, as I understand it, by October 1. It didn't happen.

Here is why it didn't happen. Reading from a report that was in the November 12, *The New York Times*, it talks about a colonel named Brian D. Jones, and it talks about Colonel Jones beginning to have doubts about the new Iraqi commander. And I quote:

"The commander, Brigadier General Shakir Hulail Hussein al-Kaabi, was chosen this summer by the Shiite-led government in Baghdad to lead the Iraqi Army's fifth division in Diyala Province. Within weeks, General Shakir went to Colonel Jones with a roster of people he wanted to arrest. On the list were the names of nearly every Sunni Arab sheik and political leader whom American officers had identified as crucial allies in their quest to persuade Sunnis to embrace the political process and turn against the powerful Sunni insurgent groups here.

"Colonel Jones says, where is the evidence? He commands of General Shakir, where is the proof? What makes us suspect these guys? None of that stuff exists." Close quote.

To that, Colonel Jones recalled, the Iraqi commander replied simply, quote, I got this from Baghdad.

The record indicates that there are 312,000 Iraqi security forces that have had some level of training. So, therefore, some subset of that group should be ready to stand up. Some have, and we are grateful, very grateful. But no Americans have stood down. They are all still there because they need to be there.

Two questions: is the experience in Diyala the exception or the rule? And, second, is the problem with stand-up, stand-down the competence of the Iraqis that have been trained or their loyalties?

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And if it is their loyalties, then why shouldn't we simply take a section of the country, turn over full operational control in that section, and see how they do, to see whether this fragile government can be protected by its own instead of by ours?

General ABIZAID. Is it an exception or the rule? It is an exception. And, yes, there are sectarian agendas that, unfortunately, play out through the security forces. And it has become particularly bad in the Diyala region, but it is also bad in portions of Baghdad.

Are there places where we can point to Iraqi control and ability to control levels of violence where they are essentially in the lead? The answer is, yes. There are two provinces where, essentially, we don't have any coalition forces that are in the Shia south, where they have been very effective. Provinces in the north progressively show more and more capability to control the security situation.

Most of the violence is within 35 miles of Baghdad. Al Anbar Province is a separate problem. It is very, very violent, and it is very sectarian. But even in al Anbar Province, many of the tribal leadership now understands that they have to confront al Qaeda, they have to move toward stability and security. Because this difficulty out there has just gone out too long, has taken too much of a toll.

Do I believe that we can move in the right direction with the Iraqi Armed Forces? I absolutely, positively believe we can do it, but only—and this is the key point—only if the government of Iraq gets behind their Armed Forces and supports them and ensures that they understand that nonsectarian issues and the good of the Nation come before all else.

They say they are going to do that. They are showing lately that they will do that. But it remains to be seen that that is going to be fully successful. And it has to be successful.

Mr. ANDREWS. Thank you, Ambassador.

Thank you, General.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, General Abizaid, for your service. Thank you, Ambassador.

I am very grateful that one of my sons served for a year, General Abizaid, in Iraq. I know that the veterans of Iraq are very proud of the civil action projects, the work that they have done to help the Iraqi people which, obviously, benefits American families.

Congressman Andrews has cited that there are 312,000 trained Iraqi security forces. That would be police and army. It is my understanding that the army may be adding 18,700 more troops. Is that sufficient troop strength?

General ABIZAID. As of the 13th of November—and, of course, these numbers move around—the total number of trained and equipped people in the Iraqi security forces, 322,714, that is at about 99 percent of what we said we wanted to achieve back when we established goals.

The prime minister does want to add more forces. He has funded the addition of additional forces. I would have to get back to you for the record on exactly what those numbers are. But he wants to do it two ways: one, to add additional strike forces to mobile strike forces that have heavy weapons to the force structure, and he has

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funded that. Also, have additional air mobility, which is a good thing. And then he wants to increase by 30,000 the general force pool to deal with some of the absentee problems that they have been having.

So, actually, you will see that number of 325 as an objective force go up to around 360 or so.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

Mr. WILSON. I had the opportunity to visit a police training facility. There were persons training the Iraqi police from 21 different nations. It was very inspiring to me to talk with the students that ran them. Are all the police training facilities in operation, or are more police going to be added to the force?

General ABIZAID. I would have to get back to you on the plan for police training. But I would tell you that many police units have recently—not many, but a number of police units, especially in the national police, have been retrained. And I do believe that there is—I will have to get back to you on the record. But Iraqi police training capacity has recently had to deal more with retraining than new training, although new training continues.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

Mr. WILSON. A couple of months ago I was very pleased to be with Congressman Henry Cuellar of Texas, and we were talking. He went with an interpreter to speak to a number of the recruits who were in training at the police academy, and he found out that a huge percentage actually spoke English. And it was, again, inspiring to hear their individual stories to him of how they wanted to serve their country and protect their countrymen.

There has been some reports that the numbers may not be accurate in terms of all the personnel. How close would these numbers be to actually personnel serving?

General ABIZAID. Again, I would have to get back to the record with you. But the numbers—clearly, there are well over 300,000 trained and equipped Iraqi forces in the field, police and army, and that number is increasing. There is always a number that are on leave, there is a number that are in school, and there is a number that are not present for duty. And that number that is not present for duty in the particularly tough areas needs to be brought down.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

Mr. WILSON. And, Ambassador, in terms of infrastructure development, can you identify some of the major achievements that have actually occurred?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Certainly. Over half of the capacity for the electricity that is transmitted today to Iraqis is the result of U.S. efforts. Five million Iraqis have access to clean drinking water because of our efforts, over three million to sewage systems. The ability of Iraq to meet its needs in terms of fuels is something that we have worked on very carefully with the Iraqi government to put forward much more aggressive regulations and laws. That is an accomplishment as well. Over 90 percent of the children of Iraq have been vaccinated as a result of our program. Hundreds of schools have been rehabilitated because of our efforts.

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Mr. WILSON. And what is the current school attendance?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I would have to get back to you, Congressman, with that figure.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentlelady from California, Mrs. Davis.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, General Abizaid. Thank you very much for being here and for your extraordinary service.

Ambassador Satterfield, I am happy that you are here as well. Because I think one of the things that we have felt all along is that there hasn't been the kind of interagency coordination, whatever you want to call it, between the State Department and the Pentagon, and that was lacking. I am glad that we are adapting and doing a better job in that area; and if we have a chance, I wanted to ask you a question about that.

But just going back, General Abizaid, to the concerns we all have. I think the American people—certainly people in my district—want very badly that our troops not be in harm's way in the middle of a civil war. How are we therefore planning if—in the event that that violence does escalate to a point that everyone characterize it as, in fact, a civil war?

Part of my question lies with how do we plan for that initially? I know that there have been statements that, in fact, of all the things that we plan for, humanitarian assistance and also perhaps a civil war was one of those. And, on the other hand, I hear that part of the plan is to just get out of the way.

Clearly, we now have an Iraqi force to fight with. But, on the other hand, if we have large militias on either side, that puts us in an incredibly precarious place, which we may be in already. But how are we planning better for that?

General ABIZAID. First of all, we are planning on increasing more and more Iraqi units in the lead, giving them more independent battle space, taking the fight on its own. We will do whatever we need to do to strike at those military threats that would start to move the country toward civil war.

To the extent that we have not moved to civil war as a result of some pretty impressive military actions by our forces in Baghdad and also by Iraqi forces in Baghdad, we should be grateful.

Back in August, the situation was quite difficult. I think it is somewhat better now, and I think it will continue to improve. But the key thing, in my mind, and especially in Baghdad, is that the Jaish al-Mahdi rogue elements must be disarmed, disbanded; and if they refuse to disarm or disband, they must be destroyed.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Can you clarify for us what it would look like if you believe that in fact that has gotten out of hand? How is that clarified?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. What you would see is a sectarian agenda taking over from any sense of national progress. It would mean no confrontation or only minimal confrontation with militia elements. You would see even greater sectarian displacements, sectarian killings. There would be a defection of remaining Sunnis

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from the political process. Indeed, the democratic institutions of Iraq would largely be paralyzed or would follow wholly sectarian agenda as they proceeded. That is not where we are today. But that is what the markers of full-blown civil conflict and division would look like.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Does the prime minister need to retain the support of Sadr to be successful?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. The prime minister wants the support of the Shia community. They are the majoritarian community in Iraq, and they are the majority of the democratically elected members of the Council of Representatives. He needs to have their broad support. There are many parties within the Shia community. The Sadrist Muqtadist party are one of them.

The prime minister certainly does not want to lose the support of any major element in the Shia community. And to the extent that it is possible to forge a political deal on the basis of national issues, that is a very positive thing; and we support him strongly in that. But where that national agenda is rejected by elements of any community, Shia or Sunni, where violence is engaged in and encouraged by national leaders, then a very different situation occurs.

The prime minister is working to build a coalition which will support him. We want him to have a coalition. But it cannot involve those who actively support or advocate the use of violence.

Ms. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know we are running out of time. And perhaps, ambassador, I would love to talk to you more about that coordination piece and how we can be helpful here on armed services to further those goals as well.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Certainly, we can have that conversation.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentlelady.

The gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. McIntyre.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you. Thank you, general and Mr. Ambassador, for your time, your service, your leadership, and your commitment.

Many of the questions have already been asked at this point, but I want to ask you just for some clarification. I believe the public wants to know and I know that many of us on this committee very much want to know that benchmarks show improvement, show progress, can show not only us as we look at this but also the public what is exactly happening in terms of that progress you have spoken of.

In the material we were provided for today, it stated that the initial fielding of the Iraqi Army combat units, 114 battalions were nearing completion. Can you tell us how many of those battalions are actually in the lead?

General ABIZAID. I believe the number is 90—hold on, let me—but there are a large number of Iraqi battalions on lead. I have here, as of November, 2006, 91 battalions, 30 brigades, and six divisions in the lead.

Mr. MCINTYRE. And then you stated that about the concern about the police.

General ABIZAID. That is a lot, by the way.

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Mr. MCINTYRE. Yes, sir. It is, and that is showing some progress from where we were six months ago and even a year ago.

And now, on the police, which you have stated earlier today that—and I believe your quote was, "The lead needs to be progressively with the Iraqi security forces, especially with Iraqi police."

In the material we were provided it said that there were—27 national police battalions are operational, two of those are in the lead. Is that a correct statement, that two of the 27 Iraqi police battalions are in the lead?

General ABIZAID. That is correct. And back in October, six of them were in the lead. So you can see that we are not going in a good direction there. It has been recognized. People have been relieved, people have been disciplined, and units have been stood down and retrained.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Can you tell us if you have set any benchmarks for the Iraqi police or the Iraqi ministers of interior with regard to when those police forces have to be trained so that we can have a benchmark to measure that progress?

General ABIZAID. We can provide you with that. I can't answer it off the top of my head.

But, yes, he has a plan to retrain, put them back in the field. General Hunzeker, who just recently came from command of the 1st Infantry Division, is now our senior police trainer and facilitator. They are developing a good plan, and we will provide them for the record.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

Mr. MCINTYRE. Would you say what your best estimate would be in terms of the amount of time it would take professionally to get those battalions trained for the security, for the police forces?

General ABIZAID. I don't want to guess at this. I need to provide it for the record. It is a matter of some—a month or two, I would estimate.

Mr. MCINTYRE. For each battalion?

General ABIZAID. No, for the battalions that need to be retrained.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 64.]

General ABIZAID. As far as the point where all 27 battalions will be in the lead, again I will have to provide that. But there is a benchmark that is out there. I just can't tell you, based on the sectarian problems that they have had, exactly where that is.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Do you think you have made it clear to them in terms—and as a follow-up to some questions that were recently asked—that this not only training but getting to the point that they can take the lead has to be within a definitive amount of time, that they realize their responsibility to do this and not simply to be waiting it out?

General ABIZAID. Yes, I believe it is very clear to them.

Mr. MCINTYRE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

And Mr. Langevin, you have got great timing. You came in here just in the nick of time. The gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Langevin.

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Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and, general, thank you for your testimony here today. Mr. Secretary, ambassador, thank you for being here as well. I know the hour is late, so I will try to be as brief as I can.

General, when you were last here and last testified before this committee on October 3rd, you said that, I believe, the sectarian violence is probably as bad as I have ever seen. I want to ask you now, is the situation worse or better than when you last testified before this committee?

General ABIZAID. It is slightly better.

Mr. LANGEVIN. You also said that you are optimistic that the slide toward civil war can be prevented. Do you still hold that opinion today?

General ABIZAID. I do, sir.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, I don't know that the American people agree with that, at least in terms of the situation not getting worse. And, obviously, very recently the American people spoke in a very loud and clear voice that we need to have some kind of change in direction in Iraq.

I know that you have said that you are opposed to artificial timetables in terms of any type of date of a withdrawal. But how do we bring this situation to conclusion and ultimately bring our troops home? And can you clarify what you mean by you oppose artificial timetables? Is it that you still believe we need to stay the course? Or is it that you oppose artificial timetables in terms of actually how we bring our troops home?

General ABIZAID. I believe that we need to enhance our ability to train, equip, and put Iraqi units in the lead. I believe as that takes hold it will create a dynamic where we will be able to reduce our major combat unit troop presence relatively quickly. I can't tell you how long that would take, and I don't think General Casey or the commanders in the field can tell you how long that would take. But, as they show their ability to be successful, we can provide some specific benchmarks with regard to units being ready, territory being turned over, et cetera, like we have in most of the country.

The part of the country—Baghdad, the al-Anbar Province, timing wise, it is hard to predict right now with the levels of sectarian violence. The rest of the country is progressing along the original time lines and benchmarks that we had established.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Well, let me ask this. I believe that everyone here agrees that establishing a capable Iraqi security force is a vital requirement that will allow U.S. troops to leave. But, despite the numbers of forces trained and equipped currently at almost 13,000, Iraq has had difficulty ensuring the security of its own people.

When the Coalition Provisional Authority disbanded the Iraqi army, I was concerned that the action would lead to later problems; and while I recognize the need to remove senior Baath leaders from military command, I certainly at that time feared that disbanding the army would leave thousands of Iraqis unemployed and angry. Do you right now know how many former members of the Iraqi Army have re-enlisted in the Iraqi security forces? And, in your opinion, what is the primary motivation for the people to join the

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Iraqi security forces? Are they motivated by loyalty to a united Iraq, or are they simply looking for employment?

General ABIZAID. The percentage of officers that were former officers in Saddam's army and security forces, I don't have that number, but I would say it is certainly well over half, if not more than that. The officer core, of course, is the key point here. Soldiers in the previous army were conscripts. And the professional officer corps, many of the officers had served in the professional officer corps, are now serving in the current army.

Mr. LANGEVIN. And the second half of my question, the people who serve, are they motivated by loyalty to Iraq, or are they simply looking for a job?

General ABIZAID. Sir, it is my opinion that most of them are motivated by service to Iraq, but they are also motivated to serve because jobs are scarce in Iraq. So there are a lot of different reasons that people serve. But the officer corps in particular is motivated to serve Iraq. They have a culture of service. They need to develop a resistance to sectarian impulses now.

Mr. LANGEVIN. I see my time has expired.

I want to thank you for your testimony today. General, irrespective of how frustrated we all are with the current course right now and the progress we are making and as much as we want to see a change in course and ultimately we want to see the troops brought home as quickly as possible, you are doing an exceptional job and especially our men and women in uniform. I hope you will continue to convey the support that they have of the American people and how proud we are of their patriotism and their dedication. That is without question.

Thank you.

General ABIZAID. Thank you, sir. They are great young troops.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Missouri had a few closing comments. And I understand now that Baby Harry, born at 5:02 a.m., was seven and three quarters pounds?

Mr. SKELTON. He is doing well.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. SKELTON. Thank you so much.

General, can Dr. Snyder and I tomorrow morning midmorning go down in Baghdad and have a cup of tea without any armed escort?

General ABIZAID. Could you?

Mr. SKELTON. With Dr. Snyder.

General ABIZAID. No, I wouldn't advise it. And I think that is the litmus test, isn't it, Congressman?

Mr. SKELTON. It is interesting to note that, in talking with a member of the news media, he said, in 2003, you can do that and yet you couldn't do that today. Is that the case?

General ABIZAID. I would say what he told you is correct. It is very dangerous for westerners.

Mr. SKELTON. General, you testified before the Senate a number of weeks ago—and I can't remember the exact phraseology—but you made reference to civil war in Iraq. Are we close to civil war in Iraq?

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General ABIZAID. We are in danger of having civil war if the government does not open a reasonable dialogue for national reconciliation and back its army in its attempt to gain stability 100 percent. I do not believe that we are close to civil war. I believe civil war is possible if the government does not seriously address the sectarian problem.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Ambassador, are we winning the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. No, we are not.

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Ambassador, a number of weeks ago several of us had the opportunity to visit with the President and several folks, including the secretary of state; and I raised the issue about the lack of state department personnel being stationed in Iraq for over 90 days. Number one, are there sufficient numbers of state department personnel in Iraq? Number two, are they there for longer than a 90-day period?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, state department personnel assigned for normal tours of duty to Iraq are there for a full year, which is the same tour that the majority——

Mr. SKELTON. Let me interrupt you there. Those I ran into were not.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Congressman, foreign service officers assigned to Iraq are assigned overwhelmingly to one-year tours and serve one-year tours. There are temporary duty (TDY) personnel from many agencies present in Iraq. There are contractors who have short-term contracts present in Iraq. Those tours vary to all different lengths. But foreign service officers are assigned for a year.

Mr. SKELTON. Let me ask you this. How many TDY state department members are there in Iraq?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. I will get you those numbers, sir, but they are a very small proportion of the total foreign service staff in Iraq, a very small proportion.

Mr. SKELTON. All right. Then give me the total number, if you know, of foreign service officers in Iraq.

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. Absolutely. Two hundred and twenty foreign service officers in the Iraq.

Mr. SKELTON. In the whole country?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. In the whole country. It is the largest presence in any country in the world.

Mr. SKELTON. Are you satisfied with that number?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. When you ask the question are we satisfied with that number, Congressman, the question is, what is the mission? What resources are appropriate to the mission? We believe that the personnel that we have in country are appropriate to the mission today.

Mr. SKELTON. Let me thank both of you for being with us. We know it is a monumental job and we have had tough questions for you and comments. But thank you for your service. We do appreciate it.

General ABIZAID. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

Gentlemen, thank you for being with us today.

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I just made a very brief question to open this thing up, but let me just give you my view. I have been here before. A lot of us have been here before. We were here during the Central American wars when we were trying to shield a fragile government in El Salvador, and the critics of the policy were pronouncing a new Vietnam, a new quagmire for this country. We had to get out now. But we provided that shield, we stood up a free government, and today soldiers from El Salvador stand us and the coalition in Iraq.

We have been here before in Central America or in Europe when the Soviet Union was ringing our allies with SS–20 missiles, and a guy named Ronald Reagan stood up to the Russians, moving Pershing-2 and ground launch cruise missiles, and American critics pronounced that we were close to World War III and that this President was wildly unstable and that we needed to have a more acquiescent relationship with the Soviet Union.

At one point, the Soviet Union picked up the phone and said, "Can we talk?" and the talks involved not a stand-off with the Soviet Union but the stand-down of the Soviet Union and the disassembly of the Soviet empire.

We accomplished those things with a policy of peace through strength, and we have now a different world that we are trying to change. And through those policies we freed hundreds of millions of people.

The new problem that we have and the new world we are trying to change doesn't grow out of the teachings of Karl Marx. It grows out of something that is much different. We are trying to change a much different part of the world. But we have learned that when we have areas in the world that were heretofore governed by tyrants that become free, they are not a threat to the United States.

This is a rough, tough, difficult challenge for us. And I would just say to all the critics who all claim that there was a smooth road that wasn't taken, I don't think there is a smooth road. I think this is a difficult road. It is part of the three-step process that we have used in every country that we have stood up over the last 60 years, whether it was Japan or the Philippines or Central America or dozens of others.

We stood up free governments, number one; number two, we stood up militaries capable of defending those free governments; and, number three, we, the United States, not coveting any territory in the world, left. Three steps.

We are in the second step right now, standing up that military, and it is a tough, difficult job that I think General Abizaid has described fairly robustly.

General Abizaid, I think this country needs to stand firm, and I would hope that we don't with a political commission displace the position of commander in chief who is the gentleman who makes the policy for our military, and I hope we don't displace the judgment of our military leaders. Because I think you and your subordinates in the warfighting theaters in Iraq and Afghanistan have a better handle on the problem than groups that visit on an irregular basis and do summaries and reviews and trot out recommendations. I think it is good to have fresh eyes on target, but there is no substitute for eyes like yours that have been on the target for a long time.

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So I would hope that you can report back to the committee on a regular basis with respect to the stand-up of the Iraqi forces, because that stand-up is the issue upon which I think all else turns right now. That is their ability to take this hand-off of the security burden from the American armed forces.

Thank you for being with us today. And I think the message for our country should be: stand firm as we undertake this transition. It is a tough and difficult and dangerous job. I think you are up to it, and I think your leadership in the theater, the warfighting theater, is up to it.

I think we are very concerned and very much interested in the deployment of the additional Iraqi battalions. Because even though you have decided you have 91 Iraqi battalions that are in the lead, that doesn't mean that they are in the lead in difficult areas. That may mean they are in the lead in some fairly benign areas. And getting those battalions into rotations, military operational rotations in the conflict I think will have salutary effect on their warfighting capability as well as strengthening this chain of command and this responsiveness to the ministry of defense. So please keep us informed on that.

We have a few other issues that we want to talk about off the record, and I think force protection issues we would like to discuss with you briefly. But thank you for the marathon testimony today. And at least Dr. Snyder brought a little refreshment here for you in between your testimony. Thank you for being with us.

I know we also have with us Mr. Ward, who is senior deputy assistant administrator for USAID; and, sir, I had a couple of questions for you, if you could come up to the table. I don't know, General Abizaid, if you want to stay around, but it is just going to be a short question or two.

Because one thing that concerns this committee greatly with respect to Afghanistan—and we have centered on Iraq, whereas the Senate talked about both Iraq and Afghanistan—is the displacement of the cultivation of opium precursors, that is, poppies in Afghanistan. And my understanding is that in Nangarhar province, where we have a couple of large U.S. foundations that are growing trees, orchards in an attempt to encourage the farmers there to move away from the drug production, that we have had extraordinary success in those areas or in that area in Nangarhar Province. At least that is what I am led to believe.

Are you familiar with that? And could you tell us briefly about the success in substituting out the precursors to heroin and the poppy production, substituting that out and substituting in orchards that include citrus and pecans and other types of orchard products? How is that project going in making these substitutions?

Mr. WARD. Mr. Chairman, you are absolutely right. Nangarhar Province has seen great progress in terms of a decline in the poppy production in the last couple of years. There was a slight increase this year, but it was nowhere near back up at the levels that we saw a couple of years ago.

The key ingredients are in part what you are talking about. That is, the introduction of cash crops that can in part replace the income from poppy. But it is just a piece of the picture. We also need strong leadership, which we saw in that province from the gov-

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ernor, that can lead farmers in the area not to plant poppy in the fall. And we saw that in Nangarhar Province, and we are very much trying to encourage that now in the south in Helmand and Kandahar as well.

The CHAIRMAN. What is the cultural thing where everybody gets together, the meetings called in the province where the elders traditionally get together and make decisions?

Mr. WARD. The local group is called ashura, and meetings are called jirgas.

The CHAIRMAN. Now I have been led to understand that, in following that traditional system, the people who have been developing the orchard substitutes have been extremely successful, not just because they developed the substitute orchard crops but also because of these jirgas, if you will. They convinced the elders in these villages in the province to move away from the drug crops.

So are you familiar with any of the foundations that have done that in that province?

Mr. WARD. We work with a number of different organizations, and we hire some of them, and then they have sub-arrangements with other organizations. But what you are talking about is absolutely right. It is listening to the local communities about what their concerns are, what they would like to turn to.

But getting that support from the governor, getting the strong support from the local leadership to say, hey, listen, you need to find an alternative to poppy; and, if you don't, there are going to be some sticks that are delivered in the next couple of months along with some benefits like seed and fertilizer and other things that USAID and other donors can provide.

The CHAIRMAN. The one thing that I have learned—at least that I have been instructed—is that in this province—in Nangarhar province they have had great success with the recommendation that you do the same thing in other provinces, but that they are not doing the same thing in other provinces, or we aren't. So maybe we could follow this up; and when we get finished here or when we are finishing up this hearing, if you could look into this with respect to Nangarhar province.

I have got some follow-up questions. If they have got a pattern that works, I think we ought to expand it.

Mr. WARD. You are absolutely right. But what we need is a couple of other ingredients, like the strong support from the governor. But the farmers seem to be willing, but they need to be encouraged a little bit by their leadership and with the threat of eradication and interdiction and some other things that have to go along with it. But you are absolutely right. It is a replicable model. But we have to get the other components in place as well.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. Thank you very much.

General, you have had a long day here. Thanks a lot. And you know something? I know that Ike is going to remember this as the day you testified and the day grandbaby Harry was born. Anything else you would like to say, sir, before you take off here?

General ABIZAID. Yes. I would like to say congratulations as well. There is nothing like grandkids.

The other thing I would like to say is, while we talked a lot today, Chairman, about the 140,000 troops that are serving in Iraq,

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there is also 60,000 other troops in my theater that are fighting and serving the country in incredibly important and dedicated and dangerous ways. And I would just like to add for the record that these young people that are out there in places like Afghanistan, patrolling the Persian Gulf, ensuring that air strikes are run and headquarters are manned in a difficult part of the world are really doing wonderful work and the country should every now and then think about them.

There is also 1,400 of them that are serving in the Horn of Africa in a very, very difficult circumstance fighting the Global War on Terror in a very effective way; and acknowledging their contributions I think is always important as well. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, thank you, general. May God bless them and bless our country. And a safe passage back to your headquarters. Thank you.

This hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:40 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

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APPENDIX

NOVEMBER 15, 2006

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PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

NOVEMBER 15, 2006

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Ambassador David Satterfield
Senior Advisor on Iraq to the Secretary of State
Oral Remarks Before the House Armed Services Committee
Wednesday, November 15, 2006

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to testify before your committee today.

The situation in Iraq is very serious. The Iraqi people, as well as Iraqi and Coalition forces, have suffered through several months of extreme, brutal bloodshed. The insurgency and al-Qaeda terror are responsible for the majority of U.S. military casualties and remain lethal challenges to Iraqis. It is increasingly clear that Al Qaeda's strategy to undermine the Iraqi government by sowing sectarian conflict has created a dangerous cycle of violence.

Some Iraqis have turned to armed militias and other extra-governmental groups to provide security, while others have seized upon this security vacuum to pursue local political power or narrow sectarian interests. Sustained sectarian violence and the associated rise in armed militias and other extra-governmental groups are now the greatest strategic threat to a stable, unified, and prosperous Iraq.

Sectarian differences in Iraq are like tectonic plates. Historically, they have been stable. However, if pushed too hard they can lead to tremors and, ultimately, to a devastating earthquake. While average Iraqis want nothing more than sanctuary from violence and a normal life, if they believe that the only source of security is their local sectarian militia, sectarian plates will shift, Iraqi national identity will erode, and hope for a united Iraq will crumble.

Such an outcome in Iraq is unacceptable. It would undermine U.S. national interests in Iraq and in the broader region. And it would lead to a humanitarian disaster for the Iraqi people.

The goals of the United States in Iraq remain clear. We support a democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, defend itself, and be an ally in the war against extremists. While we have not changed our goals, we are constantly reviewing, adapting and adjusting our tactics to achieve them.

At the Department of State, we have adapted over the last year by significantly increasing staffing levels at our Provincial Reconstruction Team sites located throughout Iraq. Fifty-five State employees are currently on the ground working from US- and Coalition-led PRTs (up from 21 State employees at PRT locations in February 2006) providing support to local Iraqi officials and communities to improve governance on the grassroots level. Many of our PRT staff are operating at great physical risk, particularly at PRTs located in Anbar province and in Basrah. State has also changed its Foreign Service assignments policy. Filling positions quickly and with the most qualified officers in critical threat,

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unaccompanied posts, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, is now the Department's number one human resources priority. Fill rates for US Mission Iraq for Summer 2007 are farther along now – just three weeks into the assignments cycle – than they were in February for Summer 2006. As of last Friday, we had 101 out of 194 available positions mission-wide, committed – that is 52%.

Three Pillars/Three Tracks

Iraq's future is dependent upon the performance and commitment of three pillars of actors: first and foremost is the Iraqi government and people. Second, is the United States and the Coalition; and third, the international community, in particular, Iraq's neighbors. All these pillars need to act together to help make progress in Iraq possible.

Progress must occur along three key tracks – political, security, and economic – for a stable, united, peaceful Iraq to emerge. As the President, Amb. Khalilzad, and General Casey have all stated, it is critical that we, the United States, work with the Government of Iraq to set out measurable, achievable benchmarks on each of these tracks. In short, the Iraqis need to set and then achieve clearly defined goals.

Security

On the security track, our current focus is on transitioning more control and responsibility to the Iraqis. Prime Minister Maliki wants this, and so do we. While I will leave the details to General Abizaid, we are in the process of transitioning more command and control to Iraqi commanders, divisions, and battalions. We have already moved Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces to "Provincial Iraqi Control" and expect to move the rest of Iraq's provinces to that status over the next 16-18 months.

We are working closely with Iraqi leaders to produce a set of security benchmarks to ensure that the transition is as smooth and seamless as possible. We are also working with the Iraqi Government on renewal of the UN mandate for Coalition forces in Iraq for another year. In its letter sent yesterday to the Security Council, the Iraqi government explicitly reaffirmed both its desire for such a renewal and the transitional nature of the extension. The Iraqis want more control and we want to give it to them. We hope the UN will approve the resolution.

Political

On the political track, we are pleased that the Iraqi Presidency Council agreed in October to a set of political benchmarks. The Iraqi Government has already made some progress. It passed a regions formation law, an investment law, and last week said it would introduce legislation that would reinstate thousands of

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former Ba'th officials as part of the de-Ba'thification process. These are hopeful signs that Iraq's leaders can find middle ground.

However, much more work remains. Prime Minister Maliki has appropriately focused his attention on pursuing national reconciliation. There are several requirements for reconciliation to be possible and the Iraqi Government must pursue all simultaneously.

First, the Iraqi Security Forces with Coalition support must help achieve security conditions under which Iraqis will be more comfortable making the difficult choices needed to pursue political reconciliation.

Second, the Iraqi government must reach out and engage all those willing to abandon violence and terror, including former members of the Baath Party, while credibly threatening to combat those insurgents and terrorists who remain wholly opposed to a democratic Iraq.

Third, they must establish a robust process aimed at disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating members of armed groups into normal Iraqi society. To be successful, the DDR process will require agreement on an amnesty plan that gives militants incentives to return to civilian life.

Fourth, the Iraqis must pursue and complete a national hydrocarbon law both to ensure that the country remains united as well as to spur much-needed international investment that will come only when Iraq's laws are firmly established and clear to all.

Economic - International Compact

On the economic track, the Government of Iraq is moving forward aggressively. Iraq and the United Nations announced on July 27th that they would jointly lead efforts to launch a new International Compact with Iraq. The Compact will provide a new framework for mutual commitments between Iraq and the international community, particularly those in Iraq's neighborhood, in bolstering Iraq's economic recovery.

The goal of the Compact is for the Iraqi government to demonstrate to the international community its commitment to implementing needed social, political, and economic reforms. Iraq will commit to reforming its main economic sectors -- oil, electricity and agriculture -- and to establishing the laws and building the institutions needed to combat corruption, assure good governance and protect human rights. In return, the members of the international community will provide the assistance needed to support Iraqi efforts to achieve economic and financial self-sufficiency over the next five years.

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In short, with the Compact, Iraq is reaching out to the international community for help. I am pleased to report that the world is beginning to reach back, though more commitment is needed, especially from Iraq's neighbors.

The Compact is nearly complete. On October 31, Kuwait hosted a preparatory group meeting where members moved closer to a final Compact text. They intend to complete the Compact before the end of the year. Between now and then, the Iraqis will be asking their friends and neighbors to consider their goals and reforms, and to come forward with concrete pledges of assistance. We are urging Iraq's neighbors, in particular, to step forward and support Iraq's future.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman,

We will continue to support the Government of Iraq as it moves forward on these three tracks. However, I want to make one point very clear. Each of these tracks – security, political, and economic – is inextricably linked to the other. While all must move forward together, a failure or setback in any one area hinders progress in the others. Thus, militias cannot be effectively demobilized in the absence of a larger political reconciliation agreement. Political reconciliation cannot survive if the government cannot agree on the distribution of oil revenue and create jobs. And Iraqis cannot modernize their economy and draw foreign investment if there is sectarian violence in the streets.

We believe that a successful path forward can still be forged in Iraq. As the transition continues to full Iraqi government control, we must stand firmly behind the Iraqis. They have a lot of work to do in the coming months to resolve their differences and reach compromises on issues that will determine their country's future. The fate and interests of our two countries are, for better or for worse, now intertwined.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee. I look forward to your questions.

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House Armed Services Committee Testimony
GEN Abizaid--15 November, 2006

Chairman Hunter, Congressman Skelton, Members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I refer the committee to my 3 August opening statement where I outlined the broader strategic dangers to United States interests in the Middle East.

Indeed the dangers outlined in that statement; al Qaida's extremist ideology, hegemonistic revolutionary Iranian ambitions, and the corrosive effect of continued Palestinian – Israeli confrontation represent major dangers to international peace and security for several decades to come. American, regional, and international diplomatic and security policies must be articulated and coordinated to confront these problems. Despite our current focus on the struggle underway to stabilize Iraq, the interests of the international community still require the confrontation and defeat of al Qaida's dark ideology, the containment of Iranian expansionism, and progress toward Arab – Israeli peace. In the current atmosphere in the region, with the use of powerful non-state militias, the development of weapons of mass destruction, and the acceptance by some of terror as a legitimate tool of normal discourse, American leadership in diplomatic, economic, and security elements of power is essential to protect the international order. How we confront these problems and empower forces of moderation in the region to resist them will define our future.

Today, over 200,000 men and women of the Armed Forces are deployed in the Central Command Area of Operations. They protect the flow of global commerce; they confront terrorists; they work hard to stabilize young, unsteady, yet elected governments in Iraq and Afghanistan; and they indirectly support stability by increasing regional security capacities of our partners and friends in the region. Well over 1.5 million Americans have served in the region since September 11th, 2001. Many have given their lives, and even more have suffered life-changing injuries. Whatever course our nation chooses in the years ahead, we must be ever mindful of the sacrifice and courage of our troops and the debt we owe our veterans and their families. We must also remember that hundreds of thousands of Coalition and partner forces fight directly or indirectly with us in the broader region.

Today the committee will no doubt focus on the way ahead in Iraq and rightfully so. Yet we must be mindful of increasing threats from Iran as evidenced by its recent military exercise, which was designed to intimidate the smaller nations in the region. We must also be mindful of the real and pervasive global threat presented by al Qaida and its associated movements. Failure to stabilize Iraq could increase Iranian aggressiveness and embolden al Qaida's ideology. It could also deepen broader Sunni-Shia fissures throughout the region. The changing security challenges in Iraq require changes to our own approach to achieve stability. Let me remind the committee, however, that while new options are explored and debated, my testimony should not be taken to imply approval of shifts in direction. It is my desire today to provide an update on current security conditions in Iraq and elsewhere and current thinking about the way ahead on the security lines of operation. I remain optimistic that we can stabilize Iraq.

I just departed Iraq, where I visited with GEN Casey and his senior commanders. On the Iraqi side I had meetings with the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister and the Interior Minister. Over the past 4 weeks levels of sectarian violence are down in Baghdad from their Ramadan peak. The Iraqi Armed Forces, while under sectarian pressure, continues to perform effectively across Iraq. Our focus against Al Qaeda in Iraq continues to take a toll on Iraqi AQI members and foreign fighters. Operations against selected targets on the Shia death squad side also have had good effect, and our understanding of these complex organizations continues to improve. Sunni insurgent attacks against ISF and MNF remain at high levels, and our forces continue to experience attacks from armed Shia groups, especially in the Baghdad region. In the north

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House Armed Services Committee Testimony
GEN Abizaid--15 November, 2006

significant progress is being made in transitioning security responsibilities to capable Iraqi forces. Currently around 80% of the sectarian violence in Iraq happens within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad. Nonetheless, security transitions continue in most of the country.

Iraqis and Americans alike believe that Iraq can stabilize and that the key to stabilization is effective, loyal, non-sectarian Iraqi security forces coupled with an effective Government of National Unity.

In discussions with our commanders and Iraqi leaders it is clear that they believe Iraqi forces can take more control faster, provided we invest more manpower and resources into the coalition military transition teams, speed the delivery of logistics and mobility enablers, and embrace an aggressive Iraqi-led effort to disarm illegal militias. This is particularly important with regard to the Jaysh al Mahdi elements operating as armed death squads in Baghdad and elsewhere. As we increase our efforts to build Iraqi capacity, we envision coalition forces providing needed military support and combat power to Iraqi units in the lead. Precisely how we do this continues to be worked out with the Iraqis as ultimately capable independent Iraqi forces, loyal to an equally capable independent Iraqi government, will set the conditions for the withdrawal of our major combat forces.

Our commanders and diplomats believe it is possible to achieve an endstate in Iraq that finds Iraq at peace with its neighbors, an ally in the war against extremists, respectful of the lives and rights of its citizens, and with security forces sufficient to maintain order, prevent terrorist safe havens and defend the independence of Iraq. At this stage in the campaign, we'll need flexibility to manage our force and to help manage the Iraqi force. Force caps and specific timetables limit flexibility. We must also remember that our enemies have a vote in this fight. The enemy watches not only what we do on the ground but what we say and do here at home. Also, Prime Minister Maliki and his team want to do more; we want them to do more. Increased Iraqi military activity under greater Iraqi national control will only work however if his government embraces meaningful national reconciliation. His duly elected, legitimate government deserves our support and his Armed Forces, backed by ours, deserve his full support.

While I know the committee has a wide range of interests, including developments in Central Asia, Afghanistan – Pakistan, Lebanon and the Horn of Africa, I will defer comment on those subjects in order to take your questions. In closing, thank you for your support of our great Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in the field. Their still-unfinished work keeps us safe at home.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

NOVEMBER 15, 2006

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. REYES

Mr. REYES. What recommendations have you made to the Service Chiefs in terms of developing capabilities—both human and technological—for the future?

General ABIZAID. CENTCOM has made numerous recommendations through a variety of venues. Counter-IED capabilities have been requested through the Joint Urgent Operational Needs (JUON) process and the Services have responded with technological solutions and supporting human capabilities. Our annual Integrated Priority List (IPL) submission, which identifies current and future capability shortfalls to the Services, emphasized the need for increased counter-IED capability, both in terms of the need for better technologies to counter or, neutralize the effects of IEDs, as well as biometrics technologies. We identified several shortfalls in counter-intelligence and human intelligence capabilities; to include personnel and supporting technologies. We further stressed the need for increased technical collection capabilities, including additional manned and unmanned airborne collection platforms and the required supporting infrastructure. We also emphasized the continuing need for greater bandwidth and enhanced force protection measures, in particular to support improved biometrics capability. These same needs are also emphasized through the CENTCOM Functional Capability Boards (FCBs) which engage daily with the Joint Staff and Services in the Department's overall Joint Capability Integration and Development System (JCIDS) process. CENTCOM also fosters development of these same Service capabilities through participation in key Advanced Concept Technology Demonstrations (ACTDs) and Joint Capability Technology Demonstrations (JCTDs).

Mr. REYES. Based upon your experience as CENTCOM Commander, what additional Combatant Commander authorities do you think are essential to prosecuting wars like Iraq and Afghanistan?

General ABIZAID. My staff is currently looking at this issue as we make enabling our partners a top priority. The fundamental issue is making sure our partners have the proper information and capacity to participate in the war on terror. Our ability to share information and intelligence within Coalitions, and with partner security forces, presents challenges for releasability. Also, the distribution of interagency train and equip funds to civilian and military security forces must be streamlined. Once our analysis is complete, we will likely seek assistance in these areas.

Mr. REYES. How confident are you in the ability of the Marine Corps and the Army to regenerate the equipment required by troops in the field in the CENTCOM AOR?

General ABIZAID. As the Combatant Commander, the service force providers continue to provide me with highly qualified troops and the equipment needed to meet operational requirements in the Central Command Area of Responsibility. As the proponent for manning and equipping the forces to meet their full spectrum of missions, the Service Chiefs are best suited to respond to this query.

Mr. REYES. Please explain how troops serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom have adjusted operationally to the fact that they are unable to train on the equipment they must use in Iraq prior to deployment?

General ABIZAID. The Services are responsible for ensuring that units/troops serving in Iraq receive comprehensive pre-deployment training to prepare them for their mission. Training during Coalition and Joint Reception Staging and Onward Movement (CJRSO) consists of mandatory and opportunity training. Training is based upon the resources available (time, ammo, instructors, equipment, facilities) and the commander's priorities. Training is tailored to meet the expected operational mission in Iraq. To this end all the Services go to great lengths to ensure that their Soldiers, Airman, Sailors and Marines are fully prepared to serve in Iraq. Units conduct training at their home station with their organic equipment and once they deploy forward they receive refresher/familiarization training in Kuwait and on the ground in Iraq before assuming responsibility for an area of operation.

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QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MEEHAN

Mr. MEEHAN. I think, general, we can abbreviate, but the boomerang shooter detection systems that are deployed, the development of systems like the Red Owl, I want to know whether or not those things are being developed quickly enough to get them into the theater, given the number of troops that we are losing to sniper attacks.

General ABIZAID. The Department of Defense, with the help of Congress through its enactment of legislation and appropriation of funding to advance promising technologies, has made considerable advances in streamlining the way we push technology to the warfighter. While the time from identification of a promising technology to actual fielding of a capable system has decreased dramatically, there is always room for improvement. United States Central Command staff continues to work with the Joint Staff, Office of the Secretary of Defense, and the individual Services to ensure that our technology needs are met.

Boomerang and RED OWL are good examples of technologies that have benefited from congressional support and the streamlined technology push processes. Boomerang had its genesis in Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), was identified early-on as a means to alert our forces (particularly in an urban environment) of the direction from which they were taking fire, and was fast-tracked into the hands of the warfighter. A significant number of these sensors are being employed today. It is our understanding that the Boomerang acoustic concept of identifying threat direction is being implemented in several follow-on systems, one of which is RED OWL. RED OWL is currently under development through a consortium working through Boston University, and will undergo additional materiel development, as well as, critical testing and evaluation prior to a final fielding determination in the near future. We look forward to learning of the results of RED OWL's testing and evaluation.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MCINTYRE

Mr. MCINTYRE. Can you tell us if you have set any benchmarks for the Iraqi police or the Iraqi ministers of interior with regard to when those police forces have to be trained so that we can have a benchmark to measure that progress?

General ABIZAID. Objective Civil Security Force goals were to have 135,000 Iraqi Police Service, 24,400 National Police, and 28,360 Department of Border Enforcement officers trained by the end of 2006. To date, we have trained 135,000 Iraqi Police Service, 24,400 National Police, and 28,303 Department of Border Enforcement officers which effectively meets the goals for these services.

Mr. MCINTYRE. What would you say your best estimate would be in terms of the amount of time it would take professionally to get those battalions trained for the security, for the police forces?

General ABIZAID. Multi-National Strategic Training Command-Iraq is implementing a National Police re-training plan to rid the organization of corruption. This plan is divided into four phases: (1) leader assessments and battalion "quick look" inspections; (2) retraining one National Police brigade at a time; (3) professional development and sustainment; and (4) deployment of four brigades outside of Baghdad into regional bases.

In phase two, all National Police battalions will undergo a four week re-training program that focuses on improving National Police capabilities to conduct law enforcement and civil protection. By the end of this re-training, National Police officers will have acquired new police and leadership skills to improve professionalism and restore public confidence in the National Police.

This re-training program began in October of 2006 and is scheduled to conclude in October of 2007.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. WILSON

Mr. WILSON. Congressman Andrews has cited that there are 312,000 trained Iraqi security forces. That would be police and army. It is my understanding that the army may be adding 18,700 more troops. Is that sufficient troop strength?

General ABIZAID. The "30,000 soldier" replenishment plan includes 12,000 soldiers to bring all combat units to 110 percent strength and 18,000 to replenish losses.

In addition, the Prime Minister's Initiative force of 19,200 additional soldiers will add one division headquarters, two strategic infrastructure division headquarters, five brigade headquarters, 20 battalions, and one Iraqi special forces battalion to the existing objective force.

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The total number of soldiers needed for these expansion plans is 49,000.

Mr. WILSON. I had the opportunity to visit a police training facility. There were persons training the Iraqi police from 21 different nations. It was very inspiring to me to talk with the students that ran them. Are all the police training facilities in operation, or are more police going to be added to the force?

General ABIZAID. Currently, all academies supported by Civilian Police Assistance Training Teams are in operation throughout Iraq. Additionally, the Jordanian International Police Training Center is in operation in Jordan. However, we are nearly complete in transitioning the training academies to the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. The Iraqi Ministry of Interior is in the process of determining which academies will remain open.

The original goals for training Iraqi Police Service, National Police, and Department of Border Enforcement officers have been met. However, attrition requires that the Government of Iraq continue to train personnel in order to sustain the current force levels.

Mr. WILSON. A couple of months ago I was very pleased to be with Congressman Henry Cuellar of Texas, and we were talking. He went with an interpreter to speak to a number of the recruits who were in training at the police academy, and he found out that a huge percentage actually spoke Englans. And it was, again, inspiring to hear their individual stories to him of how they wanted to serve their country and protect their countrymen.

There has been some reports that the numbers may not be accurate in terms of all the personnel. How close would these numbers be to actually personnel serving?

General ABIZAID. In the Iraqi Army, approximately 6–8 percent attrition during initial entry training is the norm. As a point of comparison, the US Army attrition rate over the first six months of a soldier's service is reported at approximately 10 percent, while the US Marine Corps initial entry training loss rate is approximately 14 percent.

Iraqi-reported absent-without-leave rates are typically about 1–4 percent for most Iraqi divisions. When a division faces sustained combat operations, absent-without-leave rates tend to rise temporarily to a level of 5–8 percent. The units with strong, competent leaders tend to have higher present-for-duty rates than those with weak leaders.

Deployments to areas of combat outside of a division's normal operational area result in absenteeism in excess of fifty percent. The Iraqis have taken this issue seriously and, with the help of Coalition advisors, are addressing the requirement to instill a more deployable mindset within the Iraqi military forces. Key elements of this program include, but are not limited to: providing soldiers some level of predictability by defining the length of deployment at the outset; providing additional maneuver training for units in preparation for deployment; providing monetary incentives; and improved leadership at the tactical level. However, there is currently no judicial punishment system within the Iraqi Army. Therefore, Iraqi Army commanders have little legal leverage to compel their soldiers to combat, and soldiers and police can quit with impunity. There is a military discipline law working its way through the legislative process. Given current timelines, this law could be passed in January 2007 with implementation 60 days after it passes.

Mr. WILSON. What is current school attendance?

Ambassador SATTERFIELD. UNICEF estimates that there are 4.3 million students in Iraq of which 2.4 million are boys and 1.9 million are girls. Beyond this estimate there is no accurate data in regards to total attendance.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SMITH

Mr. SMITH. General, in response to my question during the hearing, you indicated that sectarian and guerilla attacks are largely not occurring in the broad geographic areas where U.S. forces are present, but rather the violence is concentrated in areas where there is an absence of U.S. forces. Would you please clarify that statement? Are U.S. forces not deployed in heavy numbers in Baghdad, where a majority of the sectarian violence continues to occur? Is it true that security is largely being maintained where U.S. troops are physically present? If so, can you offer examples of such areas?

General ABIZAID. To clarify; violence in Iraq remains highest in Baghdad, its immediate surrounding areas, and in the western province. Currently, about 80% of sectarian violence occurs within a 35-mile radius of Baghdad. We, the Coalition and the Iraqi Security Forces, remain force oriented in order to defeat this insurgency. For instance, when the enemy was operating out of Fallujah we went to Fallujah. We will pursue this enemy relentlessly and allow the insurgents no sanctuary. Sim-

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ply put, the enemy is in Baghdad so we put together a comprehensive plan to deny the enemy freedom of maneuver, curb the sectarian violence, and set the conditions to allow the Government of Iraq and the citizens of Baghdad to defeat these insurgents.

The enemy by and large has avoided direct contact with US Forces—when they do attack they are defeated, incurring heavy casualties. Although, US forces are in Baghdad in large numbers, sectarian and guerrilla attacks occur where US forces are not located. Insurgents and extremists are increasingly attacking softer targets, such as civilians, infrastructure and Iraqi Security Forces in an effort to discredit the Iraqi Government. Nevertheless, security conditions are almost always significantly better in areas where a combination of Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, local governance and multi-national forces are present and functioning.

Mr. SMITH. You also commented in the hearing that the U.S. has had significant success at maintaining security in geographic zones that were once plagued with violence, but where U.S. troops intervened and have since departed. Can you provide examples of such once-insecure areas that remained secure after significant U.S. military intervention and departure?

General ABIZAID. In June 2004, no Iraqi Army units were in the lead, capable of coordinating, planning and executing security operations independent of coalition forces in their own areas of responsibility. By September 2005, eleven Iraqi battalions participated in Operation Restoring Rights in Tal Afar, controlling their own battle space, outnumbering Coalition Forces for the first time in a major offensive operation.

U.S and Coalition forces continue to transfer responsibility for security in provinces to Iraqis. The transfer of Muthanna and Dhi Qar to Iraqi Provincial Iraqi Control is one example where U.S troops succeeded in maintaining security in an area once plagued with violence. This transfer of Provincial Iraqi Control shows that significant progress has been made within the Muthanna and Dhi Qar regions and sets the template for future transfers of authority throughout Iraq.

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