Prepared Statement of
The Honorable Eric S. Edelman
Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
Before the
United States House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and
International Relations
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. I am pleased to appear

before the Committee today to discuss Iraq. I'm joined by Rear Admiral William

Sullivan, the Vice Director of Plans and Policy, Joint Staff. We will be providing

testimony on when the Iraqis can assume full internal security responsibilities.

The terrible events of five years ago mark this somber day. The terrorist attacks in

New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania serve as a daily reminder of the type of enemy

we are fighting. The main fronts against this enemy are currently in Iraq and

Afghanistan. Our soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and Coast Guardsmen are doing a

superb job fighting the enemy and laying the foundation in Iraq and Afghanistan to help

remove the radical ideology that spawns the terrorists.

A peaceful united Iraq, constitutionally ordered to democratic principles, will

undermine the insistence of radical islamists that Islam and democracy are incompatible.

It will also challenge the legitimacy of theocratic ideologies and the dead end of national

socialists theories of governance. Iraq is the fulcrum for all of this. The military

component of our national strategy in Iraq is to fight terrorists and train Iraqi Security

Forces. Our goal is for the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own security and be an

ally in the war on terror. As laid out in the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, our goal

is "an Iraq with a constitutional, representative government that respects civil rights and has security forces sufficient to maintain domestic order and keep Iraq from becoming a safe haven for terrorists."

Iraqi Security Forces continue to improve and become more effective and are on a firm path for self sufficiency. Our success in training and equipping over 294,000 Iraqi Army and Police personnel has hastened Iraqi assumption of responsibility for their security. As the Iraqis take control of their country we continue to hand over Forward Operating Bases to them. The U.S. military is on track to finish initial training of the currently projected Iraqi forces this December, although the increase recently proposed by Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki may lengthen this timeline somewhat.

You have asked when we can expect Iraqi Security Force units to take the lead in securing all of Iraq's territory and population. As of the end of July, there are five Iraqi division headquarters, 26 Iraqi brigade headquarters, and 85 Iraqi battalions as well as 5 Iraqi National police battalions operating in the lead across Iraq. Six months ago there were just two divisions, ten brigades and 43 battalions in the lead. Every day, the Iraqi Security Forces take more responsibility for parts of Baghdad and other areas throughout the country. Currently, over 65% of Iraq, including the major population centers, are under Iraqi Army Lead.

Iraq achieved a historic milestone on July 13th, 2006, with the transfer of security responsibility in Muthanna province from MNF-I to the Provincial Governor and civilian-controlled Iraqi Police Service. Muthanna is the first of Iraq's 18 provinces to be

transitioned to Provincial Iraqi Control, which represents the successful development of Iraq's capability to govern and protect itself as a sovereign and democratic nation. We expect to hand over Dhi-Qar soon and several more provinces by year's end.

The Iraqis still face the challenges they have struggled with for the last few years — lack of experience, logistics shortfalls, effective vetting, governing capacity, and changing enemy tactics among other things. One thing I believe the Iraqis do have is will. Iraqi Deputy President Abdel Mahdi said recently that the lines to enlist for the Iraqi Security Forces are still long. The Iraqis clearly want to win their fight for democracy.

Conditions on the ground, not arbitrary timelines, will determine our success in Iraq. The newly formed Joint Committee to Achieve Iraqi Security Self-Reliance is composed of the Iraqi Prime Minister, Iraqi National Security Advisor, Minister of State for National Security Affairs, Ministers of Defense and Interior, Director of the Iraqi National Intelligence Service, U.S. Ambassador, UK Ambassador, and Commanding General and Deputy Commanding General of Multi-National Forces, Iraq. The committee will develop a conditions-based roadmap for full transition of security responsibility to the Iraqi Security Forces. The roadmap will consist of recommended conditions intended to lead to the eventual and gradual withdrawal of multi-national forces from Iraq.

As with the overall war on terror, there are some serious and significant challenges that we must overcome in Iraq. The last several months have seen a rise in violence,

especially around Baghdad, although since July there has been a small reduction. Coalition and Iraqi forces are adjusting tactics to deal with the rise in violence. On July 27th, the Secretary of Defense extended the deployment of 3,700 troops in Iraq to help counter the increased violence. Prime Minister Maliki also pledged an additional 4,000 Iraqi troops. The Baghdad campaign is a critical test, and we have had some initial success. This success needs to be followed-up by the Iraqis, with civic projects and civil services. Military Commanders and the U.S. Embassy have encouraged the Iraqis take action of this sort.

During his recent visit to Washington, Prime Minister Maliki made it clear that he does not want American troops to leave Iraq until his government can protect the Iraqi people. As President Bush has said, conditions on the ground and the advice of military professionals will dictate the number and disposition of the U.S. forces in Iraq. The U.S. will stay on the offensive and continue to support and train Iraqis so they can develop the skills necessary to defend their country. Sectarian violence is leading some groups to see U.S. forces as a reassuring, stabilizing factor, especially now, for example, the successes in Baghdad mentioned earlier.

There is no denying that conditions that could lead to civil war exist. Sustained ethno-sectarian violence is perhaps the greatest threat to security and stability in Iraq. Militias and other extra-governmental armed organizations are a major factor in the continuing violence. However, during his visit to Washington in late August, Iraqi Deputy President al-Mahdi said that Iraq is not in a civil war nor will it be. He further

noted that all groups are committed to the unity of the country. No group is fighting for separation. He said that Iraqis understand the dangers of a civil war. We agree. Today, the situation is that: 1. there is a national government that includes leaders of all communities and 2. the Iraqi Security Force is intact and growing. We can stem the violence by continuing to provide sufficient U.S. presence while Iraqi security institutions develop. At the same time we will promote wider engagement between non-military elements of the national government and continue reconstruction at the local level to secure popular support.

Conclusion

Every day, the men and women of the U.S. military protect not only the United States but also our allies from our adversaries. They provide the backbone that enables Afghanistan and Iraq to have hope for the future. Our involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and many other places in the world is central to our fight against terrorism. The men and women of our armed forces will not falter in this duty.