

**Opening Statement of RADM Sullivan,
Vice-Director for Strategic Plans and Policy, Joint Staff
before the U.S House Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and
International Relations
Hearing: "When Can Iraqis Assume Full Internal Security Responsibility"
11 September 2006, 1000 hours**

Mr. Chairman, Representative Kucinich, members of the subcommittee, thank you for your interest in our nation's security and the honor of testifying before you this morning. I appreciate your support of the men and women of our Armed Forces who around the world, in every climate, and often far from home and family are serving our nation.

Our goal remains an Iraqi government that transitions to security self-reliance where all Iraqis unite against violence and perceive that the Government of Iraq provides security, law and order, and is the legitimate authority. The Iraqi Security Forces are on track and continue to make significant strides, as mentioned in Ambassador Edelman's opening comments, towards this goal. To highlight a recent major milestone, in the first week of September, the Ministry of Defense and the Joint Headquarters assumed operational control of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC), Iraqi Navy, and Iraqi Air Force. The Iraqi Ground Forces Command assumed operational control of the 8th Iraqi Army Division demonstrating the increased capability of the Iraqi Army to assume control of security tasks. Future transfers will be gradual but the Government of Iraq will dictate when the Iraqi Ground Forces Command is ready to assume more control. To reiterate the current status of Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi Army now includes five division headquarters, 26 brigades, and 85 battalions "in the lead" for security operations across Iraq (50% of ISF "in the lead"). All 28 Iraqi National Police battalions, in conjunction with 118,000 Iraqi Police Service officers, are executing daily security operations. As the Government of Iraq and Iraqi Security Forces mature, the capability exists to expand the current 325,000-man security force structure. Plans are being developed by the Government of Iraq to add up to 31,000 security forces to address future capability needs.

In addition to providing security, the Iraqi Army and police are also assisting in humanitarian efforts and other local civic actions, providing security for essential service construction projects, repairing local schools, and engaging in projects to improve local area appearance and pride. The highlight of current security operations is focused on the nation's capital ---Baghdad.

"Operation Together Forward" is an Iraqi-planned and led operation to ensure the security of Baghdad against attacks designed to uproot democracy and derail Iraq's commitment to progress. These operations are designed to reduce the level of murders, kidnappings, assassinations, terrorism and sectarian violence in specific areas of Baghdad and to reinforce the Iraqi government's control. Our joint operations continue to make progress and we are cautiously optimistic and

encouraged by the early indicators. More time will provide a better assessment – this operation will take not weeks but months.

In the military judgment of our commanders, a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq would have severe negative consequences. A withdrawal could increase sectarian strife, possibly embolden terrorists and other factions, and could also encourage already unhelpful neighbors like Iran. It is also our assessment that fixed timetables for withdrawal of coalition forces are not productive. We understand and concur with the need to keep the Iraqi government motivated to quickly address many of the complex economic and political issues that are contributing to violence. However, confidence that we as a nation are committed to succeed with the Iraqis, even when coalition forces are no longer necessary, is a key to enable political accommodation among many of the factions. The enemy, which includes Al Qaeda and certain armed militia groups, should not know of our plans. There are many ways to sustain pressure on the Iraqis to solve their political and economic issues. A timetable is not the best option, and in our judgment, would be counterproductive. We do not underestimate the challenges we face in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to personally thank you for your enduring commitment to our Armed Forces, as evidenced by your 14 trips to the Iraqi Theater of Operation. I also offer my thanks to the committee as a whole for their continuous support of our Armed Force.

In closing, Mr. Chairman and Representative Kucinich, thank you for allowing me to testify before you this morning. I look forward to your questions.