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Committee on Government Reform
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations

Iraq: Democracy or Civil War

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Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee; I am honored and hope to provide my views in such a manner as to assist your very important deliberations. Our Nation faces severe challenges, and these challenges demand great wisdom and courage by our elected and appointed officials in all branches of our government.

There has been a lot of commentary on many aspects of how the United States and its Coalition partners have conducted operations in Iraq. While there is much to learn from successes and failures in all operations, I argue that today's conversation should focus on where we are today, and how we as a Nation should go forward. To understand what has happened to date, there are many excellent studies of the war in Iraq. To begin an examination, I recommend reading: The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq by George Packer and Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq by Thomas Ricks. For a different view of post-war actions, Rory Stewart's memoir of his time in the British sector as a Coalition Provisional Authority official, The Prince of the Marshes is very useful. Of particular interest to this committee is a new book, Blood Money by T. Christian Miller, which addresses the role of contractors in Iraq.

One area of personal concern to me is how the United States is organized, equipped and trained to conduct post-war stabilization and reconstruction operations. Please note that I did not refer to just the Armed Forces in this context; the problem is in the whole government, and I strongly recommend this Committee become actively engaged in improving our capabilities.

In this context, there are four points that I would like to make that affect policy in Iraq today and U.S. foreign policy in the future. First, the importance of recognizing

stabilization and reconstruction operations as critical national security priorities; second, the need for leadership within the U.S. government for building and coordinating U.S. post-conflict capabilities; third, the importance of fully funding our nation-building capacities; and fourth, the recommendations made by the Council on Foreign Relations' Independent Task Force report on ways the U.S. government in general and the departments of State and Defense in particular can better address post-conflict challenges. The report is entitled, *In the Wake of War*, and I ask that the report in its entirety be entered in the record. The report is also available on the Council on Foreign Relations' website at <http://www.cfr.org/publication/8438/>. The co-chairs of the independent task force were Brent Scowcroft and Sandy Berger.

Now, I realize that with the many issues facing the Nation in Iraq, it may seem that it is too much to take on new government reform tasks, but that is exactly what is needed, and this Committee would seem to me to be perfect for energizing the effort. We must have the wisdom now to act so that in the future we will be better prepared to meet the challenges that are sure to come. Most importantly, we must improve Congressional oversight of overseas endeavors.

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Congressional oversight is a crucial element in any strategy designed to improve the interests of the United States with respect to Iraq. Simplistic statements about our goals for an Iraq at peace with itself and its neighbors, creating democracy, a free market economy, and respect for human rights alone is not a proper strategy. Equally un-helpful is the attempt by some to frame the alternatives in Iraq as either to "stay the course" or "cut and run." Such polemics do not provide the basis for an intelligent debate on a

profound national security issue, and are a disservice to the American people. At the same time a withdrawal time-table is no strategy either. It is a myopic measure designed to disengage American forces; it is not an action to advance U.S. interests today and in the future.

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In the summer of 2003, there was a senseless debate about whether or not a guerilla war or an insurgency was beginning in Iraq. Today, we argue over whether or not there is a civil war. In both cases the debate is really about domestic political advantage; Iraq is just the venue. And in both cases we dithered instead of taking decisive actions that would improve the changing circumstances. The bottom line is that today there is an insurgency, there is civil war, there is rampant crime, and the Iraqi people have far less security than before the U.S. invasion. Their confidence in the ability of Coalition forces to improve the situation is generally in the 5 to 10 percent range in the country as a whole with the highest ratings of less than 40% in Kurdish areas. Their confidence in the ability of Iraqi security forces (Army and Police) to provide security is directly related to ethnic identity. With Sunni Iraqis representing only ten percent of the Army, Sunnis are questioning whether the military is truly national and will prevent further sectarian fighting with the majority Shiite and Kurd populations. At the same time the presence of American forces does moderate out-right ethnic conflict. Unfortunately, I fear that in these circumstances a significant reduction of American forces in the next year to 18 months would trigger added violence. This is not only a function of improving the capacity of Iraqi security forces, but also of the maturing of the Iraqi political institutions and a settlement on a power sharing arrangements between the various actors

in the country. All this must be accomplished in the face of an Al-Qaeda inspired insurgency against the Iraqi government, the Coalition forces, Shiites and moderate Sunnis specifically designed to disrupt the development we seek. The hard part in all of this is that there are multiple wars being fought; all superimposed on top of each other...a situation that is not conducive to “bumper sticker” debate.

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There are two additional factors that are important to consider. The first question is how long the Armed Forces of the United States can maintain current force levels in Iraq. The unmatched dedication of the men and women who serve our Nation is our proudest accomplishment. However, the stress on units, soldiers and families is severe. Our reserve forces are hard pressed as well, maybe more that the active force. We must realize the realities of the limits of endurance of any force. I judge there is a period of 18 to 24 months that will be the limit on current commitments after which we will witness significant degradation in recruiting, retention and possibly discipline.

Second, we must recognize the impact of the persistent shortage of troops in Iraq. Recent evidence of this is demonstrated by the delay in the redeployment of an experienced brigade after being replaced in Mosul and its diversion to Baghdad in order to implement saturation operations to achieve acceptable levels of security in a portion of the city. Indications to date are that the additional troops in the capital have had a positive effect.

Given these two factors, and the limited tolerance by the people of the United States for much more commitment or casualties in Iraq, it may be wise to consider a relatively short term increase in troop strength by delaying redeployment of two to four

brigades as their replacements arrive in country. The basic idea is that we press our capacities for the next 18 to 24 months, make progress in security and political maturation, and begin the process of redeployment from a posture of success. Some would say this is an “all or nothing” imprudent action, and I would certainly recommend much more study before implementation, but it is an idea worth considering because change is absolutely necessary.

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To conclude, I recommend the following considerations for your use as you exercise your responsibilities as the elected representatives of the American people:

- Broaden the Course – Without a dramatic change in the perception of the role of the United States in the Middle East, we will continue to see a rise in anger against us, resulting in more conflict and a further drain on our resources. We must understand that U.S. actions with respect to Israel and the Palestinians, Iran, Syria and Lebanon have a direct and too often negative impact on our ability to stabilize Iraq. Less conflict – not more – is what is needed.
- Clarify U.S. objectives – We must recognize that U.S. interests and Iraqi interests are not identical. Further there is suspicion in Iraq and in the region about the long-term intentions of the United States with respect to control of oil, military presence and our future relations with the Arab and Islamic world. Without re-fighting the political debate over why the U.S. invaded Iraq, Congress has the ability if not responsibility to clarify our intentions by describing the United States’ concrete goals in Iraq. My view

is that we should send a clear message that the U.S. military presence there will not be permanent. This means we should stop permanent military construction activities throughout the country.

- Emphasize political, diplomatic and economic solutions – Time and time again our military commanders have made it clear that the solution to Iraq is political and economic, *not military*. But those solutions require a regional and international effort led by our country. We can not afford any other approach – politically or economically. While this may sound like a tall order, if we succeed in broadening the course and clarifying our objectives we will find much greater support from the international community.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity to appear today. I look forward to your questions.