



U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

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United States Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Opening Statement in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Hearings on Iraq: Alternative Plans
January 23, 2007
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****Remarks as Prepared for Delivery****

This afternoon, we continue our thorough examination of the remaining options in Iraq. We are honored to have with us Chairman John Murtha and Speaker Newt Gingrich. Both are men of stature; both are patriots; and both have offered serious and provocative ideas that have helped frame the debate on Iraq and our overall national security policies.

We will hear specific recommendations today. We have heard specific recommendations from 18 witnesses in the past two weeks. We will hear specific recommendations over the next two weeks. So much for Vice President Cheney's assertion that Members of Congress "have absolutely nothing to offer" in place of the current policy. For a White House that has grown accustomed to policy debates in an echo chamber, dismissing competing ideas has become a matter of routine. But it is a dangerous way to govern and to conduct war.

Our goal in these hearings is to strike a different tone. I start from the proposition that all of us are united in our devotion to this country and our desire to help see it through a difficult time.

I believe no foreign policy can be sustained unless it has two essential features. First, it must be bipartisan. Second, it must have the informed consent of the American people.

Our policy today lacks these two fundamental ingredients. It is my hope that the hearings held in this committee can help to generate a bipartisan consensus on the key elements of a successful strategy in Iraq. Our witnesses today will contribute mightily to that effort.

Chairman Murtha single-handedly shifted the debate on Iraq when he had the courage to challenge a policy that was clearly failing. Speaker Gingrich has argued eloquently about what is at stake in Iraq. He has offered creative proposals to succeed there and in the other foreign policy challenges confronting our nation.

Gentlemen, it's a pleasure to welcome you.

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