

**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Senator Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement for Hearing on the Future of Iraq**  
**April 3, 2008**

I appreciate this further opportunity for the Foreign Relations Committee to consider the future of Iraq in advance of the testimony of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker next week.

Yesterday, in two hearings, the Foreign Relations Committee examined the status of military and political efforts in Iraq. Today, our witnesses will look beyond immediate problems to the prospects for Iraq four or five years into the future.

This is an important exercise, because our consideration of policy in Iraq has often focused on short-term considerations. Demonstrations of progress in Iraq are welcome, and we are grateful for the efforts of our military and civilian personnel in Iraq who have risked their lives to improve the security situation during the last year. However, if we are unable to convert this progress into sustainable political accommodation that supports our long-term national security objectives in Iraq, this progress will have limited meaning. In other words, we will not achieve success without progress, but progress may not be enough for success.

I have cautioned against seeing Iraq as a set piece -- as an end in itself, distinct from broader U.S. national security interests. If we see Iraq as a set piece, we are more likely to become fixated on artificial notions of achieving victory or avoiding defeat, when these ill-defined concepts have little relevance to our operations in Iraq. What is important is not the precise configuration of the Iraqi government or the achievement of specific benchmarks, but rather how Iraq impacts our geostrategic situation in the Middle East and beyond.

Fifteen months ago at the beginning of the Foreign Relations Committee's January 2007 hearing series on Iraq, I suggested a set of objectives for American involvement in Iraq. These objectives were preventing the use of Iraq as a safe haven or training ground for terrorism; preventing civil war and upheaval in Iraq from creating instability that leads to regional war, the overthrow of friendly governments, the destruction of oil facilities, or other calamities; preventing a loss of U.S. credibility in the region and the world; and preventing Iran from dominating the region.

Although observers might quibble over the exact definition of these objectives and the importance of achieving them, they remain a useful distillation of U.S. motivations for continuing involvement in Iraq.

The questions before us now are: can the current U.S. strategy achieve these objectives; what adjustments can be made to our current strategy to improve its chances of success; if the current strategy cannot achieve them, is there an alternative strategy that might work; and if no strategy is likely to succeed at an acceptable cost, how do we minimize the damage of failing to adequately achieve some or all of these objectives?

We begin this inquiry knowing that we have limited means and time to pursue an acceptable resolution in Iraq. Testifying before us yesterday, Major General Robert Scales joined our other witnesses in underscoring the limits imposed by the strains on our armed forces. He wrote in prepared testimony, “In a strange twist of irony for the first time since the summer of 1863 the number of ground soldiers available is determining American policy rather than policy determining how many troops we need. All that the Army and Marine Corps can manage without serious damage to the force is the sustained deployment in both Iraq and Afghanistan of somewhere between 13 to 15 brigade equivalents. Assuming that Afghanistan will require at least 3 brigades troop levels by the end of the surge in Iraq must begin to migrate toward the figure of no more than twelve brigades...perhaps even less. Reductions in close combat forces will continue indefinitely thereafter.”

The limits of our military endurance elevate the importance of achieving political progress that can take advantage of the improved security on the ground.

But we have to be mindful that the task of stabilizing Iraq is not a fixed target. The lack of technical competence within the Iraqi government, external interference by the Iranians and others, the corruption at all levels of Iraqi society, the lingering terrorist capability of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, intractable disputes over territories and oil assets, and power struggles between and within sectarian and tribal groups can frustrate careful planning and well-reasoned theories.

The violence of the past week is a troubling reminder of the fragility of the security situation in Iraq and the unpredictability of the political rivalries that have made definitive solutions so difficult. Even if compromises are made, they have to be preserved and translated into a sustainable national reconciliation among the Iraqi populace.

I look forward to hearing our witnesses’ assessments of how the United States might achieve our objectives in Iraq, given these challenges. I thank the Chairman.

###