



U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

**For Release:
April 2, 2008**

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*****Remarks as Delivered*****

**United States Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Opening Statement in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Hearing on "Iraq After the Surge: Military Prospects"
April 2, 2008**

Good morning and welcome to all our witnesses.

Nearly 15 months ago, in January 2007, President Bush announced the surge of an additional 30,000 American forces into Iraq. The following September, when Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus testified before Congress, they told us that the surge would start to wind down this spring, at which point they would give the President and Congress their recommendations for what should come next.

That's the context for the two weeks of hearings we start today in the Foreign Relations Committee -- and for the basic questions we'll be asking: One, has the surge accomplished its stated goals? We're interested not just in tactical military progress, but also the strategic objective of buying time for political reconciliation. And two, where do we go from here, both in terms of U.S. force levels and U.S. policy for succeeding in Iraq?

Yesterday, we heard from the Intelligence community in a closed session about the current security, political and economic situation in Iraq -- and the trend lines for the months ahead.

This morning, we will hear from experts on the military aspects of the surge -- and what our military mission and posture should be when it ends.

At other hearings, we'll question experts on the political situation. We'll try to imagine a reasonable, best case scenario for what Iraq might look like in 2012 -- and what we can do to help it get there. We'll look at the long term security assurances the Administration has started to negotiate with Baghdad.

And we will bring back Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus to learn their recommendations for post-surge strategy.

Violence in Iraq has declined significantly from its peak in 2006 and 2007. That's in no small measure because our military did their job – as they always do – with incredible valor. But these gains are somewhat relative: violence is back to where it was in 2005. Iraq remains a very dangerous place - - and very far from normal.

Three other factors contributed to the reduction in violence. First, the Sunni Awakening movement, which preceded the surge, and which the Administration rightly helps sustain by paying monthly stipends to tens of thousands of former insurgents. Second, Muqtada al-Sadr's decision to declare and extend the cease-fire of his Jaysh al-Mahdi. This ceasefire is looking increasingly tenuous. Third, and tragically, the massive sectarian cleansing and killing that left huge parts of Baghdad segregated along sectarian lines and reduced the opportunities for further displacement and killing.

All of this underscores the fragility of the gains we've achieved. And it highlights that while the surge may have been a tactical success, it has not yet achieved its strategic purpose: to buy time for political accommodation among Iraq's warring factions.

Thus far, that strategy appears to have come up short.

Iraqis have passed several laws in recent weeks, but it remains far from clear the government will implement the laws in a way that promotes reconciliation instead of undermining it. Meanwhile, from my perspective, there is no trust within the Iraqi government in Baghdad, no trust of that government by the Iraqi people, and little capacity on the part of the government to deliver basic security and services.

Assuming that the political stalemate continues, the critical military questions remain the same as they were when the President announced the surge fifteen months ago: What should the mission of our armed forces be? Why are they there? What is the purpose? Should we continue an open-ended commitment, with somewhere near 150,000 troops, hoping that Iraqis will eventually resolve their competing visions for the country? Should we continue to interpose ourselves between Sunnis and Shi'a and seek to create a rough balance of forces or should we back one side or the other? Should we continue to intervene in an intra-Shi'a struggle for power?

Or should we move to a more limited mission – one that focuses on counter-terrorism, training, and “overwatch” as the British have done in Southern Iraq? Or should we withdraw completely according to a set timetable? What are the military and strategic implications for each of these missions? What missions can we realistically sustain and for how long given the stress on our armed forces? What are the opportunity costs?

These are some of the questions I hope our highly respected witnesses will address. In the interest of time, I will keep the introductions much briefer than their public service careers merit.

General Barry McCaffrey is a former SOUTHCOM commander, President of BR McCaffrey Associates and an Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at the United States Military Academy.

Lieutenant General William Odom served as Director of the National Security Agency from 1985 to 1988. He is currently a Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Ms. Michele Flournoy served in the 1990s in as Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Threat Reduction. She is currently the President of the Center for a New American Security.

Major General Robert Scales is a former commandant of the U.S. Army War College.

He is the President and co-founder of the Colgen defense consulting firm.

Again, welcome. I look forward to your testimony. Senator Lugar.

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