



# U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

**For Release:  
January 30, 2007**

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**United States Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
Opening Statement in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
*Hearing on Iraq: Alternative Plans – the Iraq Study Group*  
January 30, 2007  
1:00 PM  
**\*\*Remarks as Prepared for Delivery\*\*****

Today, we begin our fourth and final week of hearings on the remaining options for the United States in Iraq. These will not be the last Iraq hearings we hold. This Committee will conduct regular, aggressive oversight of Iraq policy in the weeks and months ahead. We are privileged to be joined by Secretary James Baker and Chairman Lee Hamilton, the co-Chairs of the Iraq Study Group.

The country owes both of you an enormous debt. Your willingness to seek a bipartisan solution to our most urgent and vexing national security priority is in the finest tradition of American statesmanship.

Bipartisan commissions are often criticized for producing the lowest common denominator. But your report broke new ground and changed the debate.

I don't agree with every detail. And I have proposed a different plan for a political solution in Iraq. But I am in total agreement with your central recommendations.

To quote from the report, the "most important recommendations call for new and enhanced diplomatic and political efforts in Iraq and the region, and a change in the primary mission of U.S. forces that will enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly. We believe that these two recommendations are equally important and reinforce one another."

The report goes on to recommend “by the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq.”

You also state that the recommendations “should not be separated or carried out in isolation.” As you said, Mr. Secretary, the report should not be treated as a “fruit salad.” Unfortunately, that appears to be exactly what’s happening here.

The President’s plan does not adopt your recommendation that our combat forces begin to leave Iraq; it does not condition political, economic, and military support on Iraq meeting key benchmarks; and it does not include the aggressive diplomatic offensive you urge to secure support from Iraq’s neighbors for a political settlement.

I hope we can brainstorm today on how to advance the policies you recommended and on which there is wide agreement. I also hope we can also hear your thoughts on how we can contain Iraq’s civil war in the event that your recommendations are not implemented and the situation continues to deteriorate.

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