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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

September 12, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you prepare to address the nation tomorrow, I write to request that you seize the opportunity and offer the American people a candid assessment of the challenges that we continue to face in Iraq and offer a change in course to your failing strategy.

Over the past two days, General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker have testified before Congress about the current situation in Iraq. General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker both have long and distinguished careers in service to our nation and in their testimony, they tried to put the best possible face on the difficult situation that we confront in Iraq.

In their testimony, however, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker could not mask the fact that the ostensible goal for increasing U.S. troops in Iraq earlier this year – to create the “space” for Iraqi political reconciliation – has not been met. And indeed, serious concerns have been raised about many of the metrics cited by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in support of their assertion that progress is being made in Iraq.

General Petraeus testified that he has proposed a decrease of five combat brigades in Iraq by July/August 2008 and press reports have suggested that you plan to announce your acceptance of this recommendation when you address the nation tomorrow evening. However, if completed, these troop reductions would merely bring troop levels in Iraq back to the levels before you announced the “surge” in January of this year. Moreover, as was discussed during General Petraeus's testimony, troop levels in Iraq must decrease by this amount in order to avoid extending Army deployments beyond 15 months and straining our military even further.

What you are planning to tell the American people tomorrow night is that one year from now, there will be the same number of troops in Iraq as there were one year ago. Mr. President, that is simply too little too late, and unacceptable to this Congress, and to the American people who have made clear their strong desire to bring our troops home, and end this war.

As Commander-in-Chief you have the authority and ability to greatly accelerate the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq, and to bring so many more troops home so much faster. I strongly urge you to choose this course of action.

Mr. President, it has been nearly four and a half years since you landed on an aircraft carrier and stood before the American people under a banner that read "Mission Accomplished." Do not repeat that mistake on Thursday night. Do not misrepresent the facts about the situation on the ground. And do not portray an unavoidable reduction in U.S. troops to pre-surge levels that would occur anyway as a marker of success. Be candid with the American people. They deserve it.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hillary Rodham Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping tail on the final "n".

Hillary Rodham Clinton