

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3204

May 22, 2007

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
The United States Department of Defense
The Pentagon
Suite 319
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Given the express will of the Congress to implement a phased redeployment of United States forces from Iraq and the importance of proper contingency planning to achieve that goal, I write to request that you provide the appropriate oversight committees in Congress – including the Senate Armed Services Committee – with briefings on what current contingency plans exist for the future withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Alternatively, if no such plans exist, please provide an explanation for the decision not to engage in such planning.

The seeds of many problems that continue to plague our troops and mission in Iraq were planted in the failure to adequately plan for the conflict and properly equip our men and women in uniform. Congress must be sure that we are prepared to withdraw our forces without any unnecessary danger.

At a Department of Defense operational update which you hosted earlier this month, you were asked whether contingency plans were being developed in the event that a future assessment concludes the surge is not working. In response, you noted that efforts at the Department of Defense included detailed planning and consideration of operational alternatives, but that “it’s more of just broader conceptual thinking.” General Pace reiterated that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had not received orders to prepare contingency plans.

Yesterday, however, it was reported that your Iraqi counterpart, Defense Minister Abdul-Qader al-Obeidi is preparing plans in the event that the United States and its forces departed Iraq quickly, reviewing worst-case scenarios, and conducting meetings with Iraq’s political leadership on this issue.

In light of growing violence and insecurity in Iraq, the continued lack of political progress by Prime Minister al-Maliki, the Iraqi Defense Ministry’s level of contingency planning, and the will of the American Congress to begin withdrawing troops from Iraq, it is imperative that the Department of Defense prepare plans for the phased redeployment of U.S. forces. As you well know, any military operation requires contingency planning so that the

are prepared if the current plan is unsuccessful. It would be irresponsible not to engage in similar planning in Iraq.

Thank you for looking into this matter. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hillary Rodham Clinton". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

CC: General Peter Pace, USMC
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff