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Herger Discusses "Profound Importance" of Mission in Iraq

(WASHINGTON D.C.) -- Congressman Herger today spoke on the House floor regarding our nation's mission in Iraq. Below is the text of his speech, as delivered, as well as a link to audio and video.

Mr. Speaker, I hope we all can recognize the profound importance of our mission in Iraq. History surely will.

The mission in Iraq will impact our national security for decades to come. The United States seeks a region of stability and peace to create a more secure world for our children and grandchildren. Al Qaeda seeks a region of terror and bloodshed. The President believes victory in Iraq is key to victory in the War on Terrorism. Al Qaeda believes our defeat in Iraq is key to its vision of violent Islamic rule. Our security is clearly at risk.

Americans are frustrated by the current situation in Iraq. We have witnessed the removal of a historic dictator, yet our men and women in uniform remain at risk. We have witnessed historic democratic elections, yet those elected have not yet brought security. We have been told about the progress we have experienced in training Iraqi Security Forces, yet violence continues to rage.

With growing uneasiness, we have watched a back and forth tug of war between progress and setbacks. And we mourn the loss of every single brave American who has fallen during this mission.

Mr. Speaker, I share this frustration and sorrow.

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Yet, I believe we must not allow our frustrations to blind us to the need for victory over radical jihadists. This House must work together in addressing the challenges in Iraq, because the outcome will be closely linked to our own national security for years to come.

Regrettably, the resolution before us does nothing to enhance this security. It does not offer a solution to the challenges in Iraq. It does not recognize the magnitude of failure. And it does not recognize the nature of our enemies. For these reasons, I strongly oppose it.

Mr. Speaker, we know terrorists friendly to Bin Laden are among the enemy in Iraq. Even before the fall of Saddam's regime, the terrorist mastermind Zarqawi had sought refuge in Iraq. His network of terror grew rapidly. Bin Laden's top deputy applauded his actions, and counseled him on achieving dominance in the region. Although Zarqawi himself can no longer do harm, al Qaeda in Iraq remains a threat to our security. An American defeat in Iraq would embolden terrorists like no event before, bolstering Bin Laden's view that America is weak.

Al Qaeda would enjoy more than just a morale boost. They would have a new operational base to plot attacks against Americans and train new recruits. An American defeat in Iraq would almost certainly bring forth a government that turns a blind eye toward terrorism. This, Mr. Speaker, would be catastrophic to our national security.

An American defeat in Iraq would also generate unspeakable chaos in the Middle East. The dangerous regime in Iran is already seeking to capitalize on what it perceives as our weakness. Iran is well on its way to developing nuclear weapons. And its fanatical president has publicly said that he wishes to destroy America and Israel. Syria would also take advantage of a power vacuum in Iraq, further destabilizing the Middle East. What is good for hostile regimes like Iran and Syria can be devastating for America's security.

In closing, Iraq is a central front in the War on Terrorism, and its future will greatly influence our future security. An American victory would foster stability in a volatile region and provide a resounding defeat for terror. For these reasons, we must give the President's new plan in Iraq a chance to succeed. Our resolve must override our frustrations. Our support for the remarkable members of our armed forces must be unwavering. And our determination in fighting radical jihadists who want to kill us and our families must never run dry. Mr. Speaker, that determination must never run dry.

Video and audio of this speech can be accessed at:

<http://www.house.gov/herger/images/CWHIraqSpeech2-15-7.rm>

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