

**Floor Remarks of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
On the President’s Proposed Troop Surge in Iraq
January 11, 2007**

Madame Speaker, before we can even consider sending more of our young men and women into harm’s way, we must first determine what our mission is in Iraq. Only then will it be possible to intelligently discuss the number of troops necessary to complete that mission. But four years after going to war in Iraq, the Administration has yet to clearly articulate a mission. Without a mission and a strategy with a credible chance of success, we should not be discussing an increase in troop levels.

Madame Speaker, before we respond to the President’s call for an escalation of the war in Iraq, we must put his speech in the context of the history of the war.

We need to begin with a discussion of what the current 130,000 troops are doing in Iraq now, before we can discuss what 20,000 additional troops might do. The original reasons we were provided as the rationale for going to war – that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that the Iraqi leaders were connected with the 9/11 attacks and that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States – all turned out not to be true.

We found no weapons of mass destruction, and we know that Iraqi leaders were not connected with the 9/11 attacks. And we were told before the invasion into Iraq that in the opinion of the CIA, Iraq posed no imminent terrorist threat to the United States. In fact, a letter from the Director of the CIA to the Chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, dated October 7, 2002, specifically stated that the CIA believed that Iraq and Saddam Hussein did not pose a terrorist threat to the United States, and would not be expected to pose such a threat, unless we attacked Iraq. Last night, the President once again attempted to associate our presence in Iraq with the so-called “war on terrorism”. The truth is that our presence in Iraq has actually increased our risk to terrorism. Furthermore, the term “war on terrorism” is a rhetorical term without any relationship to reality. “Terrorism” is not an enemy, it is a tactic. The enemy was al-Qaeda. We attacked Afghanistan because al-Qaeda was there.

But after the initial reasons stated turned out to be false, we have been subjected to a series of excuses for being in Iraq, such as the need to capture Saddam Hussein, the need to capture Al-Zarqawi and the need to establish a democracy. Saddam Hussein was in jail for almost two years before he was recently hanged, Al-Zarqawi was killed over six months ago and Iraq held democratic elections over one year ago, yet we remain in Iraq with no apparent end in sight, and we are now talking about increasing, not decreasing, troop levels.

So what are we doing in Iraq? Why did we go in? What do we hope to accomplish? And what will our strategy be for getting out? After we receive truthful answers to these questions, we can intelligently discuss appropriate troop levels.

Last night the President said that he was laying out a new mission in Iraq - thereby clearly acknowledging that whatever the old mission was, it was not working – but there was

still no clearly defined end goal and no clearly defined explanation of how failure or success could be measured. And so we remain where we were before his speech, which is on an unclear and undefined path while continuing to put more American troops in harm's way.

If our mission now is to stabilize Baghdad, military experts have already said that an additional force of 20,000 troops is woefully insufficient, so sending these troops will not accomplish that goal. And what happens if Iraq fails to meet its responsibilities or Baghdad remains unstable and the price is more American deaths. Will we send even more troops or will we cut and run?

How do we know this new initiative will work? Before our invasion into Iraq, then Defense Secretary Rumsfeld predicted that the war in Iraq would last "six days, six weeks. I doubt six months." [February 7, 2003 at a town hall meeting at Aviano Airbase.] And Vice President Cheney predicted that we would "be greeted as liberators." [NBC's Meet the Press, March 16, 2003.] At the outset of this war, the Administration advised the House Budget Committee that the expected cost of the war would be so minuscule that it advised the Committee not to include the cost of the war in the federal budget, and the administration official who suggested that the total cost of the war might exceed \$100 billion was fired.

On May 1, 2003, just about six weeks after we invaded Iraq, President Bush stood on the USS Abraham Lincoln under a sign that read "Mission Accomplished" and proclaimed: "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed." Now, it has been almost four years and we are still in Iraq with no end in sight. A year and a half ago, Vice President Cheney proclaimed that the Iraqis were "in the last throes" of the insurgency. [Larry King Live, June 20, 2005] And yet, we are now discussing an increase, not a decrease, in troop levels, and to date, this war has cost the United States over \$375 billion, with no end in sight. Over 3,000 courageous Americans have already lost their lives. How many more will die, if this new strategy falls as far from the predicted result as the original time and cost estimates? We need to be honest in clearly stating the likelihood that this new initiative might fail.

Furthermore, Madame Speaker, as part of developing a mission and strategy, it is imperative that we ask where these additional troops are going to come from. Many will come from the National Guard and Reserves, and the escalation will mean longer and multiple deployments. But our troops are already in Iraq for above average deployments and many have already completed multiple tours. Other troops may be redeployed from other assignments, so we must also ask what moving these troops will mean for our global national security? We cannot assess the wisdom of this escalation without first answering these crucial questions.

We need to develop a coherent strategy for Iraq and that can only begin by truthfully acknowledging our situation there. Unfortunately, all we have gotten from this Administration is essentially, "don't worry, be happy, success is around the corner and if you don't believe that then you are not patriotic."

Last November, the American people sent a powerful message that they wanted real change in Iraq, not more of the same. This Congress needs to hold substantive hearings on why we entered Iraq in the first place, what the present situation is, what we now expect to accomplish, what the strategy is to accomplish it, and only then can we intelligently discuss the troop levels necessary to accomplish that goal. It is absurd to discuss troop levels first, before we have answers to these critical questions.

The American people and our courageous men and women on the front lines deserve a clear, articulated and sensible approach to ending the war in Iraq. Starting with an escalation of military forces is a step in the wrong direction.