

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 12, 2008

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to you today regarding the discussions between the United States and the Government of Iraq that may result in a Strategic Framework Agreement and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between our two countries. These discussions have become complex, in terms of the form, the substantive elements, and the political dimensions of the agreements, and we hereby request an immediate briefing from your team regarding the progress of these discussions.

As you are well aware, the proposal to enter into a Strategic Framework Agreement and a SOFA, and reports we have received thus far regarding the negotiations involved, have sparked considerable concern in the both the House and the Senate. The House recently passed the Supplemental Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2008, and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, which contain provisions relating to this matter, including the Congressional role in approving these agreements. At briefings and hearings of our two committees, as well as in the Senate, issues relating to the form of the agreements, the nature of the security arrangement to be included in the agreements, the extent to which U.S. Armed Forces will be able to operate in Iraq with or without constraint, the impact of any agreement on force protection measures, the authority of the U.S. Armed Forces to keep detainees in custody, and the role of contractors, have all been discussed extensively. Moreover, a number of external factors have emerged that quite likely are affecting the dynamics of those negotiations. These include Iraqi domestic criticism at a level of intensity suggesting that the Iraqi Government's room to maneuver is more limited than originally anticipated

Given the complexity of the issues and the rapid developments related to the discussions of these agreements, we do not believe there has been adequate consultation with our Committees. Senior officials of the Administration, including two Cabinet secretaries, have pledged to keep Congress apprised of the progress of the negotiations throughout the course of these discussions. Unfortunately, we do not believe that your Administration has adequately fulfilled this pledge. For example, staff of the Committee on Foreign Affairs has requested a briefing of members of the Committee for over a month, but no time has been offered for such a briefing. While the Committee on Armed Services received a briefing last month, and some members of both our staffs have participated in staff-level briefings, we do not believe that information sufficient to make judgments about any of the issues we discussed above has been shared in these forums.

We now understand that members of the Administration's negotiating team are going to be in Baghdad for discussions of this agreement and will be unavailable to brief either Committee in the next few weeks. However, we further understand that the Honorable Ryan Crocker, the U.S.

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Ambassador to Iraq who has been designated as lead negotiator for these agreements, is in the United States. We urge you to ensure that Ambassador Crocker brief each Committee separately on the most recent developments regarding the progress of these negotiations before he returns to Baghdad. We believe that this could be a good beginning for the meaningful, substantive consultations that have previously been promised.

We look forward to your earliest possible response and to hearing from Ambassador Crocker at the earliest possible time.

Sincerely,



HOWARD L. BERMAN  
Chairman  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
U.S. House of Representatives



IKE SKELTON  
Chairman  
Committee on Armed Services  
U.S. House of Representatives