



## **LINES OF QUESTIONING FOR AMBASSADOR CROCKER AND GENERAL PETRAEUS**

### **IS IRAQ MAKING AMERICA SAFER?**

**DURING THE HEARINGS IN SEPTEMBER, GENERAL PETRAEUS AND AMBASSADOR CROCKER DEFERRED ON THESE QUESTIONS, ARGUING THAT THE TOPIC WAS OUTSIDE THEIR PURVIEW. IF THEY ARE NOT ABLE OR WILLING TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THIS SECTION, OTHERS SHOULD BE CALLED TO TESTIFY.**

***Question 1:*** *The nation's 16 intelligence agencies stated that the most direct threat to the U.S. homeland is actually from the borderland between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Do you agree and if not, why not? If you do agree, then why do some insist that the war in Iraq is the central strategy for protecting the homeland?*

- Edward Gistaro, the chief US intelligence analyst for international terrorism, told Congress that: “The primary concern is in Al Qaeda in South Asia organizing its own plots against the United States.” The top leaders of the terrorist network, Gistaro added, are “able to exploit the comfort zone in the tribal areas” of Pakistan and Afghanistan and are “bringing people in to train for Western operations.” [Boston Globe, [7/26/07](#)]
- Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Mullen recently stated that “So, should we be in a position where more troops are removed from Iraq, the possibility of sending additional troops there[Afghanistan] — where we need them, clearly — certainly it's a possibility. But it's really going to be based on the availability of troops. We don't have troops. [NPR, [3/28/08](#)]

***Questions 2:*** *We have heard a lot about the strains of our deployments in Iraq, particularly with regard to the surge, with the Army saying that more than 25% of soldiers on 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> tours suffer mental health problems, and Army COS Casey calling the Army “out of balance.” Does this extended time contribute to and exacerbate the strains you see in your soldiers and Marines? What do we need to do to reduce those strains? What impact do these strains have on our ability to respond to contingencies?*

- Army Chief of Staff Gen. George Casey stated that “The cumulative effects of the last six-plus years at war have left our Army out of balance, consumed by the current fight and unable to do the things we know we need to do to properly sustain our all-volunteer force and restore our flexibility for an uncertain future.” [Reuters, [2/26/08](#)]
- Multiple deployments are taking a heavy toll on our troops. “More than a quarter of U.S. soldiers on their third or fourth tours in Iraq suffer mental health problems partly because

troops are not getting enough time at home between deployments, the Army said...‘Soldiers are not resetting entirely before they get back into theater,’ said Lt. Col. Paul Bliese, who led the Army’s Mental Health Advisory Team survey for 2007.” [Reuters, [3/06/08](#)]

## **IS THE SURGE WORKING AND WHAT IS THE STATUS OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION?**

***Question 3:*** (For both), General Petraeus told CBS News that the inability to find jobs and integration for Sunnis was the thing above all else that keeps him up at night. ***How do you define success in terms of measuring what the Iraqi central government needs to be doing on this front? Have you set specific benchmarks? Has the Iraqi government been meeting those measures and integrating the Sunni groups into Iraqi security forces or giving them other work? How long will we need to pay them to keep them from returning to the insurgency?***

- “Of the roughly 80,000 concerned local citizens currently working alongside U.S. forces, only 25 per cent can be absorbed into the army and police. For the rest, there must be jobs, or they risk becoming disillusioned, frustrated, and perhaps returning to their old ways. Gen. Petraeus told CBS News a week ago that this, above all else, was the thing that kept him awake at night.” [CBS, [3/19/08](#)]
- The Sunni Awakening groups have become restless and are demanding more for siding with the United States. This is causing a conflict between the Iraqi Islamic Party, which is the Sunni party in the central government, and the local Awakening groups. “Now, the sheiks say, it’s payback time. They want more schools, better healthcare, clean water, and reliable electricity for their war-ravaged province. They want jobs for their followers. And above all, they want a stake in government for their Iraqi Awakening Conference movement...The sheiks accuse the Iraqi Islamic Party, which controls the local councils in most Sunni areas, of hijacking development funds and monopolizing jobs for their own supporters.” [LA Times, [1/6/08](#)]

***Question 4:*** Ambassador Crocker, we were told that the purpose of the surge was to create an improved security situation that would enable Iraq’s political leaders to reconcile. Prime Minister Maliki has stated that “national reconciliation among Iraqis has succeeded. We have succeeded in eliminating sectarianism.” [AFP, [2/28/08](#)] But General Petraeus in a recent Washington Post interview stated that “No one... feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation.” [Washington Post, [3/14/08](#)] ***Has there been sufficient political reconciliation? Why is our ally in Iraq saying that there has when General Petraeus has stated that “no one” thinks that?***

- Despite the fact that the Iraqi government has only met three of the 18 benchmarks laid out last year, an end to U.S. military and financial commitment is nowhere in sight. [Center for American Progress, [1/24/08](#)]
- The most crucial benchmarks including sharing oil revenue, the provincial power law, and the constitutional review have not been fully met. [Center for American Progress, [1/24/08](#)]

**RELATED QUESTION:** *The Administration has claimed that the de-Baathification law has been a major sign of political progress. Independent analysts say the law may end up removing more Sunnis from government than it brings back – and Sunnis in parliament did not support it. Do you have any specific measures you can share with us that would indicate progress or lack thereof? Has there been any impact?* [For more information see NY Times, [1/14/08](#)]

**Question 5:** *Ambassador Crocker, we have heard that Iraqis have earned a great deal of money from increased oil revenues and that billions of dollars are now sitting in bank accounts outside of Iraq while the government has not come close to spending its capital budget. Where is the money now? Why is so much of it not getting to the population and what is your timeline for getting it there?*

- “Sky-high oil prices are pumping tens of billions of dollars into Iraq's coffers, reaping a windfall for a war-torn nation plagued by unpassable roads, dilapidated hospitals and crumbling schools. Yet most of this desperately needed cash is languishing in the bank. The reason: Iraq's government is so ill-equipped to handle the basics of finance, it is having trouble spending the money.” [Wall Street Journal, [3/17/08](#)]
- "In 2006, the Iraqi central government spent just 22% of its \$6 billion capital budget, which is aimed at improving Iraq's infrastructure, while the oil ministry spent less than 3% of its reconstruction money. In 2007, Iraq's own official expenditure reports show ministries had spent 7% of their \$10 billion capital budget as of November; officials estimate the final figure will be at least 50%." [Wall Street Journal, [3/17/08](#)]
- "Baghdad's coffers are swelling: In three years, the country's foreign-exchange reserves have more than tripled, to over \$22 billion. Iraq also has more than \$8 billion in bank accounts in New York and Iraq reflecting unused funds from oil-export sales. This is in addition to unspent budget funds." [Wall Street Journal, [3/17/08](#)]

## BILATERAL SECURITY AGREEMENTS

**Question 6:** *Ambassador Crocker, what are your goals in negotiating bi-lateral security agreements with Iraq? Have you explicitly ruled out permanent bases in either the “Strategic Framework” or the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA)? Have you explicitly ruled out offering any security assurances in either the SOFA or the “Strategic Framework”? Do Iraqis see this as a long-term agreement to guarantee their security?*

## IRAN'S ROLE

**Question 7:** *Ambassador Crocker, hasn't Iranian influence across the region dramatically increased since we invaded Iraq? Isn't Iran's hand further strengthened by the significant role it played in mediating a truce between the Iraqi government and Sadr? There are even reports that the head of the Qods brigades of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard played a central role in mediating the conflict.*

- According to Iran expert Ray Takeyh, Iran has “not only survived the U.S. onslaught but also managed to enhance Iran's influence in the region. Iran now lies at the center of the Middle East's major problems -- from the civil wars unfolding in Iraq and Lebanon to the security challenge of the Persian Gulf -- and it is hard to imagine any of them being resolved without Tehran's cooperation.” [Ray Takeyh, *Foreign Affairs*, [March/April 2007](#)]
- “The backdrop to Sadr's dramatic statement was a secret trip Friday by Iraqi lawmakers to Qom, Iran's holy city and headquarters for the Iranian clergy who run the country. There the Iraqi lawmakers held talks with Brig. Gen. Qassem Suleimani, commander of the Qods (Jerusalem) brigades of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps and signed an agreement with Sadr, which formed the basis of his statement Sunday, members of parliament said.” [McClatchy, [3/30/08](#)]

***RELATED QUESTION: Can you verify intelligence reports that the Iranians are helping both Sadr / the Mahdi Army and ISCI / the Badr Brigade, and, if they are helping all sides, why? What is your understanding of Iranian objectives in Iraq?***

***Question 8: General Petraeus, who is benefiting the most from Iranian training and support: Shi'a militias or Al Qaeda in Iraq? Isn't the Iranian focus primarily on the various Shi'a groups?***

- In an interview in mid-March General Petraeus stated that: “the flow of foreign fighters and suicide bombers that help Al Qaeda typically is through Syria.” [CNN, 3/19/08]
- John McCain has repeatedly stated that Iran was training Al Qaeda operatives and sending them back to Iran. He made the claim three times during his trip to the Middle East in Amman Jordan and on the Hugh Hewitt Show. “Speaking to reporters in Amman, the Jordanian capital, McCain said he and two Senate colleagues traveling with him continue to be concerned about Iranian operatives “taking al-Qaeda into Iran, training them and sending them back.” [Washington Post, [3/18/08](#). Hugh Hewitt Show, [3/18/08](#) ]

### **WHAT HAPPENED IN BASRA AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?**

***Question 9: General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, CIA Director General Michael Hayden been quoted as saying that you did not know about the Basra operation before it began. Why, with all our intelligence and advisors, did we not know? What infrastructure was not in place that kept us from getting the intelligence we needed? Had you known in advance, would you have counseled against the operation?***

- GEN. HAYDEN: I, I don't know what on--what went on on the ground in Baghdad prior to the operation. I do know that this was a decision of the Iraqi government by the prime minister and personally by the prime minister, and that he's relying on Iraqi forces, by and large, to take this action.  
MR. RUSSERT: Were you aware of it?

GEN. HAYDEN: I was--in terms of being prebriefed or, or having, you know, the, the normal planning process in which you build up to this days or weeks ahead of time, no. No, I was not.

MR. RUSSERT: You didn't know it was going to happen?

GEN. HAYDEN: No more so than Dave Petraeus or Ambassador Crocker did. [Meet the Press, [3/30/08](#)]

- One senior Administration official said that "we can't quite decipher" what is going on. It's a question, he said, of "who's got the best conspiracy" theory about why Maliki decided to act now. [Washington Post, [3/28/08](#)]

***Question 10: General Petraeus, given that US forces were required to assist the Iraqis in a major operation, what does that tell us about Iraqi decision making and their ability to accurately assess their own capabilities? Haven't we created a culture of dependency wherein the Iraqis feel free to act, without even telling us, knowing that we will back them up even in overly risky and ill-advised operations?***

- U.S. forces played a central role in the fight in Sadr City, even though they were not alerted by the Iraqi government in advance. "U.S. forces in armored vehicles battled Mahdi Army fighters Thursday in Sadr City, the vast Shiite stronghold in eastern Baghdad, as an offensive to quell party-backed militias entered its third day. Iraqi army and police units appeared to be largely holding to the outskirts of the area as American troops took the lead in the fighting." [Washington Post, [3/28/08](#)]

***Question 11: Ambassador Crocker, serious observers have said that the Basra operation was an effort by one faction of the Iraqi Government – Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq – to go after another – the Sadrists. Can we expect Maliki to govern in what President Bush has described as an "even-handed manner" if this is simply part of a broader Shi'a power struggle?***

- Iraq analyst Tony Cordesman has written that "no one should romanticize Maliki, Al Dawa, or the Hakim faction/ISCI. The current fighting is as much a power struggle for control of the south, and the Shi'ite parts of Baghdad and the rest of the country, as an effort to establish central government authority and legitimate rule." [Chicago Tribune, [3/26/08](#)]
- President Bush supported Prime Minister Maliki's recent actions in Basra stating that "to go after the illegal groups in Basra shows his leadership, and his commitment to enforce the law in an even-handed manner." [Washington Post, [3/27/08](#)]

***RELATED QUESTION: Many analysts have speculated that Sadr won this encounter by not losing, and the Maliki government was weakened because it did not achieve its goals. In your opinion has the incident in Basra weakened Maliki's ability to govern and what does that mean for the upcoming elections?***