



HEARING OF THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS TO BE COMMANDER OF
U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND AND THE NOMINATION OF GENERAL RAYMOND ODIERNO
TO BE COMMANDER OF MULTINATIONAL FORCE IRAQ

CHAired BY: SENATOR CARL LEVIN (D-MI)

WITNESSES: GENERAL DAVID PETRAEUS, U.S. ARMY; LIEUTENANT GENERAL
RAYMOND ODIERNO, U.S. ARMY

LOCATION: 106 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING, WASHINGTON, D.C.

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SEN. LEVIN: Good morning, everybody. The committee meets today to consider the nomination of General David Petraeus for reappointment to the grade of general and to be commander, United States Central Command, and the nomination of Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno for appointment to the grade of general and to be commander, Multinational Force Iraq.

If confirmed, these two officers will continue to lead our military operations in Iraq, where we have 160,000 American troops deployed in the middle of a protracted and bloody sectarian battle. As CENTCOM commander, General Petraeus will also assume responsibility for our operations in Afghanistan, where an increasing level of violence poses new hazards to the government and the American troops who help support it.

Every member of this committee recognizes that the long hours and hard work put in by our senior military officials at the Department of Defense require commitment and sacrifice, not only from our nominees

but also from their family members. The sacrifice is particularly striking in the case of General Petraeus and General Odierno. Not only has each of these officers served more than 30 years in the military; each has already served multiple tours of duty in Iraq and is volunteering to return.

Over the last five years General Petraeus has served three tours of duty in Iraq, spending almost four years there, first as commander of the 101st Airborne Division, then as commander of the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, and most recently as commander of the Multinational Force Iraq.

Similarly, General Odierno has served two tours of duty and more than two years in Iraq, first as commanding general of the 4th Infantry Division and more recently as commander, Multinational Corps Iraq.

Over the last year and a half, General Petraeus has been the leading architect of a new tactical approach in Iraq, which has brought about some stability in a situation that a year ago was far more violent and unstable. General Odierno has been his able partner in executing that new approach.

If confirmed, these two officers will bring an unprecedented continuity of senior military leadership to a military operation, providing unparalleled knowledge of the situation on the ground and

fully utilizing the working relationships that they have developed with Iraqi political and military leaders over the years.

Regardless of one's view of the wisdom of the policy that took us to Iraq in the first place and has kept us there over five years, we owe General Petraeus and General Odierno a debt of gratitude for the commitment, determination and strength that they brought to their areas of responsibility. And regardless how long the administration may choose to remain engaged in the strife in that country, our troops are better off for the leadership that these two distinguished soldiers provide.

We appreciate the sacrifices that you and your families have already made in the service of our nation. We thank you in advance for your willingness to bear the burden of continued service.

The committee has a long tradition of recognizing the families of our nominees. I know that General Petraeus's family was unable to make it here today. General Odierno does have a number of family members present. And general Odierno, we'd very much like for you to introduce your family to the committee.

GEN. ODIERNO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to do that. First, as are many soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines, we're indebted to our families and all that they've sacrificed, as you mentioned. First I'd like to introduce my wife, Linda, who -- we've

known each other through high school, went through four years of West Point, 32 years in the military, where she has volunteered for countless hours for our soldiers and families and led family readiness groups at the company, battalion, brigade, division and the corps level. And I am indebted to her for not only taking care of our family, but taking care of our soldiers and their family as well.

I'd also like to introduce my son Anthony and his fiance, Daniella (sp). Tony's a 2001 graduate of West Point, served in Iraq. He's an airborne Ranger infantryman who earned the Combat Infantry Badge, the Purple Heart and the Bronze Star Medal for Valor for his service in Iraq. He currently is attending New York University to get his MBA.

And I'd also like to introduce my daughter, Katie (sp), and her husband Nick. Katie (sp) lives in Baltimore. She's an interior architect. Nick is a construction engineer. And they're just great young people. I'm very proud of all of them.

So, thank you, sir. My son Michael, who's not here today, attends Texas Tech University, and he's -- I also appreciate all his work.

Thank you, sir.

SEN. JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (D-CT): Mr. Chairman?

SEN. LEVIN: Senator Lieberman.

SEN. LIEBERMAN: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could ask General Odierno where his son's fiance lives.

GEN. ODIERNO: She is from Greenwich, Connecticut.

SEN. LIEBERMAN: Thank you. (Laughter.)

SEN. LEVIN: I had a hunch we knew the answer to that one.

(Laughter.)

Well, we thank you and your families both, whether they are here in person, and we're grateful to them, or whether they're not able to be here in person. We're very grateful and we hope you'll extend, General Petraeus, our gratitude to your family.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Now, Senator Warner, I know, is stuck in traffic.

And so Senator Inhofe, would you like to make an opening statement?

SEN. JAMES INHOFE (R-OK): Mr. Chairman, I do not have an opening statement.

I would only say that we've been real pleased recently to even get from some of the generally unfriendly press the successes that are going on. I think the two of you have a lot to do with that, so we're very, very proud of you.

I don't have a statement.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Now, we have standard questions that we ask of our nominees. And here they are: Have you adhered to applicable laws and regulations governing conflicts of interest?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: Have you assumed any duties or undertaken any actions which would appear to presume the outcome of the confirmation process?

GEN. PETRAEUS: No, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: No, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: Will you ensure your staff complies with deadlines

established for requested communications, including questions for the record in hearings?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: (Off mike.)

SEN. LEVIN: Will you cooperate in providing witnesses and briefers in response to Congressional requests?

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

GEN. PETRAEUS: (Off mike.)

SEN. LEVIN: Will those witnesses be protected from reprisal for their testimony or briefings?

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

GEN. PETRAEUS: (Off mike.)

SEN. LEVIN: Do you agree, if confirmed, to appear and testify upon request before this committee?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: Do you agree to give your personal views when asked before this committee to do so, even if those views differ from the administration in power?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: Do you agree to provide documents, including copies of electronic forms of communication, in a timely manner when requested by a duly constituted committee or to consult with the committee regarding the basis for any good-faith delay or denial in providing such documents?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yes, sir.

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, sir.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

General Petraeus.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Senator Inhofe, members of the committee. Thank you for your swift scheduling of this

hearing.

I'm honored to have been nominated to command the U.S. Central Command and to have an opportunity, if confirmed, to continue to serve our nation in a critical region. Beyond that, I'm delighted that Lieutenant General Ray Odierno has been nominated to command the Multinational Force Iraq and I'm grateful to him for his willingness to take on this position and to his family for their sacrifice as well.

As has been noted already in recent days, one of this committee's senior members has just had a big rock added to his rucksack and I want to take this opportunity to applaud Senator Kennedy's inspirational spirit as he embarks on a course of treatment that we all hope will lead to a quick return to full duty.

As the members of this committee know, the U.S. Central Command is in its seventh consecutive year of combat operations and the CENTCOM AOR contains numerous challenges. The AOR includes 27 states and some 650 million people from at least 18 major ethnic groups. Stability in the region is threatened by a variety of religious, ethnic and tribal tensions, not to mention transnational terrorist organizations, insurgent elements, piracy and inadequate economic development.

The region is rich in oil reserves but poor in fresh water.

Economic conditions vary enormously with annual per capita incomes ranging from a low of \$200 to a high of over \$70,000. In 22 of 27 states in the AOR, young people age 15 to 29 constitute over 40 percent of the population and economic opportunities are often insufficient to meet their expectations.

Although the region is diverse, several transnational concerns affect many of its states, and I'd like to quickly review these and then discuss specific challenges and opportunities within the subregions, concluding by outlining concepts I'll use, if confirmed, to guide the refinement of CENTCOM's regional security strategy.

The survey of the CENTCOM AOR reveals four primary transnational concerns. The first is violent extremism. Al Qaeda is, of course, the highest priority terrorist threat to many states in the region as well as to the United States and many of our allies around the world. However, other extremist groups also threaten security in the CENTCOM region. In addition, Tehran and Damascus support militant groups and proxies that challenge the stability and sovereignty of several states in the AOR.

The second transnational concern is the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of WMD-related components and technical expertise. The lack of transparency in efforts by countries such as Iran and Syria to develop their nuclear programs is a major concern to states in the region and could spark a destabilizing regional arms

race.

Nuclear proliferation also, of course, creates fears about the acquisition of nuclear devices by transnational terrorist groups.

A third concern is the lack of sustainable economic development in a number of the region's countries. This is not just a domestic social or humanitarian issue; it is a serious security concern as well, for without economic opportunity, poor and disenfranchised communities can serve as hotbeds for the spread of violent extremism. We have seen this in a number of areas in the region in recent years.

A fourth transnational concern encompasses narcotics and arms trafficking, piracy and smuggling. These damage societies, threaten legitimate commerce and the flow of strategic resources, and often benefit terrorist networks. These activities must be addressed if international efforts to combat terrorist financing are to succeed.

These transnational concerns are interrelated and have different manifestations across the subregions of the CENTCOM AOR. While they constitute far from an exhaustive list of the challenges in the AOR, they do provide perspective as we turn to the subregions and their challenges.

The CENTCOM region can in fact be described as a region of regions, consisting of the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf states, Central

and South Asia, the Levant and the Horn of Africa. The Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states comprise a region of vast complexity and strategic importance.

In Iraq, Iraqi and coalition forces continue to build on the security gains of the past 15 months as we also continue to reduce U.S. forces and transition responsibility to Iraqi security forces, strive to maintain the conditions necessary for political progress, help build governmental capacity and seek to foster economic development.

I should note here that the number of security incidents in Iraq last week was the lowest in over four years, and it appears that the week that ends tomorrow will see an even lower number of incidents. This has been achieved despite having now withdrawn three of the five brigade combat teams scheduled to redeploy without replacement by the end of July and also with the reduction of the two Marine battalions and Marine expeditionary unit.

Recent operations in Basra, Mosul and now Sadr City have contributed significantly to the reduction in violence, and Prime Minister Maliki, his government, the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi people, in addition to our troopers, deserve considerable credit for the positive developments since Ambassador Crocker and I testified a month and a half ago.

In the months ahead, coalition forces will continue to work closely with the Iraqi security forces in pursuing al Qaeda-Iraq and their extremist partners, and the militia elements that threaten security in Iraq.

As always, tough fights and hard work lie ahead. Nonetheless, I believe that the path we are on will best help achieve the objective of an Iraq that is at peace with itself and its neighbors, that is an ally in the war on terror, that has a government that serves all Iraqis, and that is an increasingly prosperous and important member of the global economy and community of nations.

Iran continues to be a destabilizing influence in the region. It persists in its non-transparent pursuit of nuclear technology and continues to fund, train and arm dangerous militia organizations.

Iran's activities have been particularly harmful in Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories and Afghanistan. In each location, Tehran has to varying degrees fueled proxy wars, in an effort to increase its influence and pursue its regional ambitions.

(Heckling.)

SEN. LEVIN: (Sounds gavel.)

Excuse me. Excuse me. Ma'am, we're going to have to ask you to

-- we're going to have to ask you to take your seat. Please take your seat.

We're going to -- I'm sorry that we're going to have to ask that you leave the room now. Please leave the room. Thank you. Please. Please.

(Heckling.)

We're going to have to ask you to now please the room. Please. Thank you. Please leave the room now.

(Heckling.)

You're going to have to now leave the room, ma'am. We're going to have to ask you to leave the room.

(Heckling.)

We're now going to have to ask you all to leave the room. If you're intending to demonstrate that way, we would ask you not to do it. We're going to have to -- you'll have to be removed if you demonstrate in the way we've just heard.

(Heckling.)

General.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Even as we work, with leaders in the region, to help protect our partners from Iranian intimidation or coercion, however, we must also explore policies that, over the long term, offer the possibility of more constructive relations, if that is possible.

Together with regional and global partners, we need to seek ways to encourage Iran to respect the integrity of other states, to embrace non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and to contribute to regional stability rather than regional instability.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Yemen and the United Arab Emirates are important partners in efforts to promote regional stability and improve regional economic and military cooperation.

Our relationships with these states present many opportunities for advancing common economic and security interests, such as engagement via the Gulf Security Dialogue. We need to continue our strong, productive relationships with each of them as we strive to deal with the challenges that confront them in the gulf region.

The countries of Central and South Asia face a variety of economic and security challenges. But they too offer abundant engagement and partnership opportunities.

In Afghanistan, our focus is on helping the elected government expand governance, security and economic opportunity while defeating insurgent and terrorist threats.

In assessing the situation in Afghanistan, it is important to recognize that we and our coalition partners are helping that country build, not merely rebuild. For even before its 30 years of war, Afghanistan was one of the poorest countries in the world.

Exploiting the security provided by the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force, many coalition countries are striving to help Afghanistan achieve sustainable economic development and assisting with the provision of basic services, the development of infrastructure and the creation of legitimate alternatives to poppy farming. Due to the scale of the challenges involved and the difficulties in the security arena in particular, we should expect Afghanistan to require substantial international commitment and support for many years to come.

Afghanistan's neighbor, Pakistan, has been an important partner in efforts to combat terrorism. However, the newly elected government faces serious economic difficulties and energy shortages, and it is still solidifying its coalition and coming to grips with how to respond to internal threats that have global implications. We have seen, for example, growth in Taliban and al Qaeda capability and control in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in the North-West

Frontier province. Foreign fighters continue to flow from Pakistan into Afghanistan, where they're a violent and destabilizing influence.

One of our challenges will be to increase the capability of Pakistani security forces, which are not adequately trained or equipped to secure their border or to deal with the growth of terrorist elements and the insurgency in the FATA. It is clear that we and other countries supporting Pakistan should support Islamabad as Pakistani leaders develop a comprehensive approach to countering the extremist and insurgent activity.

In Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, abundant opportunities exist for building security, political and economic partnerships and for pursuing common interests. To varying degrees, we have, in fact, partnered in security efforts and in countering terrorism with these countries in the past, and we will have similar opportunities in the future. U.S. partnerships can also help these countries efforts to build governmental capacity and continue economic growth while also reducing the prospects that extremism will gain influence and be exported.

In the Levant, we see continuing challenges of instability and terrorist activity and facilitation in Lebanon and Syria, even as we enjoy robust security partnerships with Jordan and Egypt. In Lebanon, the government is grappling with the political and militia activities of Lebanese Hezbollah. Recently, Hezbollah attempted to break the

political deadlock through violent action, forcing Sunni Arabs from some neighborhoods in Beirut and intimidating the government and Lebanese armed forces. Yesterday's agreement between the Lebanese government and the Hezbollah-led opposition needs to be seen in that context as it highlights the need to support regional efforts to help Lebanon as it seeks to deal with destabilizing Syrian and Iranian influences.

Syria presents another set of challenges. Of particular concern to Iraq, the Syrian government has taken inadequate measures to stem the flow of foreign fighters through Syria to join al Qaeda elements in Northern Iraq. Damascus also continues to undermine stability in Lebanon by encouraging and enabling violent opposition to the elected government. Finally, Syria's apparent effort to develop secret nuclear facilities is also very troubling. The region obviously would be more secure were Syria to realize that neither harboring terrorist facilitators nor sparking a regional arms race is in Syria's best interest.

As with Iran, the challenge with Syria will be to find approaches that can convince Syrian leaders that they should be part of the solution in the region, rather than a continuing part of the problem. Hopefully yesterday's announcement of renewed peace talks between Syria and Israel marks a first step toward that end.

Jordan and Egypt are important partners in U.S. counterterrorist

efforts, and they help to promote regional stability by encouraging neighboring states to participate constructively in the Middle East peace process. In addition, Jordan plays an influential role in helping inform attitudes in the Arab world on the situation in Iraq. Maintaining our robust partnerships with these countries can enable us to sustain mutually beneficial security and economic ties.

As it currently stands, the Horn of Africa is another subregion in the CENTCOM AOR. With responsibility for this region -- which includes Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sudan and the Seychelles -- scheduled for transfer to AFRICOM this fall, CENTCOM's challenge will be to provide a seamless transition of responsibilities and to establish effective coordination and liaison with AFRICOM to ensure unity of effort in the conduct of various counterterrorist and counterpiracy missions.

Having quickly addressed transnational challenges and the challenges in the regions of the AOR, I'd like to briefly discuss some broad principles that will guide our efforts if I'm confirmed. These approaches are consistent with those pursued by CENTCOM under the leadership of Admiral Fox Fallon and now General Marty Dempsey.

First, we'll seek to strengthen international partnerships. We will continue to pursue strong bilateral and multilateral partnerships and to identify, further develop and pursue mutual interests. Regional partnerships and consensus can create leverage and deter

destabilizing actors. Of course, the pursuit of common interests requires robust two-way engagement, understanding and accommodating the concerns of others even as we understandably seek to pursue our own. Engagement will be a central aspect of my responsibilities as the CENTCOM commander if confirmed.

Second, in most, if not all, of our activities, we'll partner with other departments and agencies within the U.S. government, taking a whole-of-government approach to the challenges and opportunities of the CENTCOM AOR. In most of the issues we'll address, a purely military approach is unlikely to succeed, and our strategy must recognize that. Indeed, many of you will recall that the campaign plan in Iraq is a joint U.S. Embassy Iraq and multinational Force-Iraq product, not merely a military one. A combined approach should also be a central feature of our efforts in the CENTCOM AOR.

Third, and related to that, if I'm confirmed we'll pursue comprehensive efforts and solutions in the region, attempting to address with our partners not just the symptoms of current conflicts but also their underlying causes. Last month in my testimony, I explained the strategy we have adopted in pursuing al Qaeda Iraq, acting along multiple lines of operation and employing a variety of kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. We'll seek to apply a similar strategy writ large in the CENTCOM AOR, recognizing that enduring security and stability require comprehensive economic, political, social and diplomatic efforts as well as military means.

Finally, we should both support the ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and ensure readiness for possible contingency operations in order to be prepared to assist in the event of natural disasters to ensure sufficient deterrence of actions that might threaten regional partners, and, if necessary, to be ready to defeat aggressors that threaten our vital interests in the region.

If I'm confirmed, these concepts will guide our approach at CENTCOM and inform the refinement of the strategy employed to address the challenges and opportunities in the CENTCOM region.

In closing, I want to thank each of you, once again, for the tremendous support you continue to provide to our men and women in uniform and to their families. Nothing means more to the wonderful Americans serving in harm's way or waiting for a loved one at home than knowing that their service and sacrifices are appreciated by their fellow citizens.

I also want to assure you that if confirmed I'll work tirelessly to meet my responsibilities as a combatant commander to partner with you, the service chiefs and secretaries, the chairman and the secretary to help ensure that those serving our nation in uniform have the best equipment available, the best care possible for those wounded or injured and the best preparation for the challenging tasks we ask our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen to perform

in combat. This is a sacred obligation that I take very seriously.

This committee knows well the extraordinary performance of our troopers downrange. Their selfless commitment to duty has, in fact, been foremost in my mind as I have considered the responsibilities of the CENTCOM commander. Command of CENTCOM would likely mean carrying the heaviest rucksack I've ever shouldered, but given our servicemembers' repeated willingness to shoulder their own heavy rucksacks in the toughest, most complex situations imaginable, there can be no alternative but to soldier on with them, drawing strength from them, striving to give energy to them and pressing on together with them to accomplish our assigned missions. If confirmed, it will be an honor to do that with them.

Thank you very much.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, General Petraeus.

General Odierno.

GEN. ODIERNO: Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

I want to first personally pass along my best wishes to Senator Kennedy and his family. We're all rooting and praying for him, his quick return back here to the Senate.

SEN. LEVIN: Let me interrupt you just for a moment.

Thank you and General Petraeus for your reference to Senator Kennedy. This is a Senate family which is a very strong cohesive family, and he is a very important part of that cohesion. And we're never a tighter family than when something like this happens to somebody that has such huge respect as Senator Kennedy, and that's true on both sides of the aisle. And we very much appreciate your reference to him.

And we just -- as we note the seat next to us, which is empty, we are all praying and hoping and believing that that seat will be occupied by Senator Kennedy in the near future.

SEN. JOHN WARNER (R-VA): Mr. Chairman, could I associate myself with those remarks and thank the general? I've had the wonderful opportunity to know Senator Kennedy for over 40 years. His older brother, Bobby Kennedy, and I were in law school together back in the late 40s. And I got to know him at that time. And we've been close working partners and good friends ever since. We thank you for that acknowledgement.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you so much.

General Odierno?

GEN. ODIERNO: Chairman Levin, Senator Warner, distinguished members of the Armed Services Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning.

Most recently as the commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, I had the honor of speaking with many of you during a number of congressional visits to the Iraqi theater of operations.

I want to thank you for your dedicated support to our forces serving there, your faith in their outstanding abilities and your understanding of the many sacrifices they and their families endure for the sake of country, comrades and their loved ones. For all of this, I thank the members of the committee.

As I reflect on my nomination to be appointed the next Multinational Force Iraq commander, I'm both humbled and honored. I understand the great cost that our nation has endured in Iraq. I also understand the importance of our mission there and the responsibility that comes with this position.

I'm inspired and I feel a tremendous sense of awe for the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, and their families, for their demonstrated resilience and accomplishments and commitment to the tasks at hand.

I consider myself blessed that I've had a chance to continue to

serve in their ranks. And if confirmed, I will do so with integrity, commitment and drive that such a special position of trust and responsibility demands.

With that, I look forward to answering your questions. Thank you, Chairman.

(Cross talk.)

SEN. LEVIN: Excuse this slight delay here. We're trying to schedule a vote of the committee on nominations. And if we can get a quorum, we will interrupt our questions in order to act on those nominations this morning.

We're going to have to limit our question period to a six-minute round because, I understand, we have four votes, up to four votes, starting at 11:30.

Whether we can function through that or not, we will have to determine as they -- as we proceed. But at least we're going to try to get one round each before that time. So we're going to, in order to do that, have to have a six-minute round.

SEN. WARNER: Mr. Chairman, if I could just say, we've discussed, those are the nominations of -- (names inaudible).

SEN. LEVIN: There's a number of other nominations that are included with that list.

SEN. WARNER: Right.

SEN. LEVIN: General Petraeus, when you appeared before the committee on April 8th, you said that your recommendation at that time was that after the drawdown, of the five brigades of surge troops, that would be finished in July, that you would first undertake a 45-day period of evaluation.

And that would take us through August, and that then following that, you would commence a process of assessment, to examine the conditions on the ground and over time determine when you could make recommendations for further reductions.

Three months later, the -- December of 2007 Defense Department report stated that, quote, "All remaining provinces are expected to transition in 2008." Is that still the department's expectation, that all provinces are expected to transition in this year of 2008?

GEN. PETRAEUS: It is not, Mr. Chairman. There are several additional provinces already scheduled for transition in the next few months. Interestingly, Anbar province, once the most violence provinces in Iraq and now one of the most peaceful provinces, will be transitioning, most likely in June. The final approval has not yet

been given by the Ministerial Committee on National Security, but I believe that that will be dealt with, perhaps later this week or next week. I expect Qadisiyah province, which has Diwaniyah (?) as its capital to go through a similar process later this summer, and then there are others racked up behind it for which we have projections. And we reassess those projections about every month. Frankly, the developments of the last month and a half are causing us to look perhaps for earlier -- in some cases, with some provinces, while still others will be undoubtedly in the 2009 time frame.

SEN. LEVIN: What happened since December of 2007 when the department said that all remaining provinces are expected to transition in 2008 and now when apparently a number of provinces will not be transitioned. What has changed? There seems to be greater stability on the ground, progress on the ground.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, there is now, Mr. Chairman. But again, you have to go back to that time frame. We were still -- in some cases, extending the benefits of the security progress that resulted from the additional coalition and Iraqi forces, still trying to determine how that was going to go and in some cases, grappling with some tough issues. Nineveh province, for example, the only province, actually, of the 18 in Iraq that did not see violence go down, had to be slid further to the right in that regard. Now all of sudden there is a major operation there, as you know, in Mosul and in western Nineveh province that appears to be improving the security there

substantially. So we'll be doing assessments during the course of this year, but I don't think that all of them will be done by any means by the end of the year.

SEN. LEVIN: And just a brief, final question. Is it your expectation that the October 1, 2008 date for holding provincial elections will be met?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I do not believe that they will be in October, sir, based on the very latest.

However, the provincial elections law has had its second reading, which is the step just before the conduct of a vote in the Council of Representatives. That could take place as early as this next week. If all of that goes, they've transferred the money to the higher electoral committee, they're doing the security assessments and a variety of other actions to prepare for the voter registration and then the conduct of the elections, Ambassador Crocker's assessment most recently is that probably November is a more accurate prediction. But again, there's every intention to have elections in the fall, and that is our expectation still.

SEN. LEVIN: That delay is not good news, obviously, to us, or most of us, I think, but thank you for your answer.

Senator Warner.

SEN. JOHN WARNER (R-VA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome both of you and thank you and your families for your service to country. Both of you represent two -- not only two of the citizens of this country, but you represent to our military two career patterns which I think incentivize the generations behind you to stay and try and achieve some of the successes that each of you have had, and that's important at this time.

On the question of Iraq, this morning's paper carried a very interesting article on the operations in Sadr. And it indicated -- Sadr City. It indicated that where operations were being conducted now, there's very few, if any, U.S. forces, and that's, in a way, helping the Iraqi forces to perform their mission because there's less retaliation from the insurgents over there.

Can you comment on that? Is that a new development? And it looks like a very encouraging one.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, it is an encouraging one, but it is one that has been brought about by very much joint action by coalition as well as Iraqi security forces. It was that joint action, and also, frankly, political dialogue and discussion and negotiation and deals and compromises, that led to the point where the major special group leaders, these elements that are funded, trained, equipped and

supported by the Iranian Qods Force, largely left Sadr city. Some of them were killed, by the way. And a number of the major -- of the militia leaders also departed, and there was an order for the militia essentially to stand down.

That is an important development, and the fact that it is Iraqi forces that then can patrol the streets of Sadr City. And they have found some significant weapons caches already, including a very large one in a hospital, I might add, in Sadr City. Again, this is -- it is encouraging. But it is not a model for everywhere. In Basra, for example, we have no ground combat elements with the forces there. We do have transition teams and we do, again, provide enablers. In Mosul we're very much partnered with them, but they outnumber us greatly.

General Odierno, do you have a comment on that? Because it seems to me that's one of the most encouraging signs that I've seen, that the Iraqis are able to handle these operations and there's less combat as a consequence of the absence of what they view us as, occupiers.

GEN. ODIERNO: I think, obviously, Senator, that each place of Iraq has different solutions. In Sadr City and in Basra I would argue as well that it's important for the Iraqis to lead in those areas and take on the majority of the responsibility. So in my mind, it is very important that that's occurring.

But the other thing is we help them significantly behind the

scenes, continue to plan. I kind of see that as a model for the future on how we want to do things. What we want to do is provide them --

SEN. WARNER: Well, I hope you just encourage it in every way possible, because the goal is to have the Iraqi forces take over the responsibility of this sovereign nation such as we can return home.

The strategic framework agreement and the other -- SOFA agreement -- are you being consulted on that, General Petraeus?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I am, Senator. We provided input to that. As you know, that is -- the lead for that is the Department of State and, in fact, Ambassador Crocker with a good deal of support from State. But I have been consulted. We did provide input.

SEN. WARNER: And General Odierno, will you likewise be consulted or are you getting up to speed on those two agreements now? Because we'd want to see them put in place as an impediment for the U.S. military from carrying out what it believes is the best operational situation to get ourselves out of here.

GEN. ODIERNO: Senator, obviously it's very important to us. We will provide -- continue to provide input. We will watch it very closely to make sure that it's crafted in such a way which allows us to continue to meet the goals of our mission.

SEN. WARNER: So right now you're being consulted. And once you take command, I would hope that you would be further consulted to the extent that those agreements have not been concluded. There's some optimism it could be concluded before you move on up to CENTCOM. Is that right?

GEN. ODIERNO: I think that is certainly possible, Senator. Again, I'm always cautious about events in Iraq.

SEN. WARNER: All right.

Back to Afghanistan, one of the major concerns that I've had is this drug trade. The dollars flowing from that drug trade -- which, incidentally, I think they're now the largest provider worldwide of these types of drugs. The dollars that are coming from that are being used to purchase weapons and those weapons are being used against our forces and other partners in the NATO alliance. What do you hope to do to try and end that, General?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, a country cannot be -- its economy can't be built on illegal activity, obviously. Everyone --

SEN. WARNER: But this country -- over half of their GNP --

GEN. PETRAEUS: No question about it. And there is clear

recognition of it. And obviously, over time there has to be an alternative provided to those who are currently farming the poppy. And it's as simple as that. But it is also, as you very well know, extraordinarily difficult and complex to make that transition.

SEN. WARNER: Well, I realize that. But it seems to me you can have a very strong voice -- I think Admiral Fallon did his best -- but we cannot just leave this to the Afghan government and turn our backs on it, because our people are on the other end of those weapons systems.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I agree.

SEN. WARNER: On the question of the NATO, while that operation in Afghanistan is largely under the command of the NATO -- we of course have a U.S. commander there -- NATO survivability depends on a measure of success in that country. What can you do to further facilitate NATO's ability to carry out that successful -- and to deal with these really difficult situations where some of the countries in those forces will not allow their forces, their troops on the ground, to participate in combat?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, first of all, of course, what we are doing already and likely will do a bit more of, which is our contribution of forces to that mission. You rightly point out that the commander of ISAF is American, but he is a NATO commander.

SEN. WARNER: That's correct.

GEN. PETRAEUS: He is not a U.S. commander in that billet.

Knowing General David McKiernan very well, though obviously I'll partner with him as closely as possible and with NATO's Supreme Allied Commander, and also knowing many of the coalition country leaders who also contribute troops in Iraq, to work with them, to do what has been done -- and that recently resulted in the pledges of some increases of forces -- additionally, we can help with the lessons that we have learned and, I think, have institutionalized effectively in our military services in the United States in terms of the doctrine, the education of our leaders, the training and preparation of our forces, and even the equipping for them. And we can help with that as well.

SEN. WARNER: Well, but the national caveats of some of those countries to prohibit their forces from engaging in risk-taking operations that ours and others are performing, to me, is a dichotomy that you just can't tolerate.

Thank you. Time is up.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Lieberman.

SEN. JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (ID-CT): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, and thank you, General Odierno, General Petraeus, for your service. Thanks for agreeing to take on these additional assignments, which are not the easiest for you personally or for your families. And we thank them as well.

I appreciate that you responded that your daughter-in-law is from Greenwich, Connecticut, because it shows that your son has very good judgment. And I would also say that he carries on a family tradition of heroic service to our country and is characteristic of the tens of thousands of Americans who have served under your command. Both of you have acknowledged that.

I think the two of you and those who have served in Iraq wearing the uniform of our country have really represented the best of our country and really, if we look at the record here, ought to give the whole country tremendous pride, no matter what one thought about the original reasons we went into Iraq. You have been a force that has been principled, understanding America's values. You've been personally strong. You've been resilient in the sense that when something wasn't working, in characteristic American fashion you figured out a way to make it work.

And I personally, of course, believe that in doing so, you have

greatly brightened the future for the Iraqi people, increased the prospects of stability in the Middle East, and protected the security and values of the American people. I can't thank you enough for that.

Military historians and analysts Fred and Kim Kegan (sp) recently wrote, and I quote: "Great commanders often come in pairs -- Eisenhower and Patton, Grant and Sherman. Generals David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno can now be added to that list," end quote. And that's heavy stuff, but it happens to be true, in my opinion. I think the two of you have now earned your place into the ranks of the most impressive military commanders in American history, and I thank you for it.

General Petraeus, as you know, I continue to be very angry about the role that Iran is playing in training and equipping Shi'a extremists who are coming into Iraq and are responsible for the murder of hundreds of American soldiers and thousands of Iraqi soldiers and citizens. I wanted to ask you -- I know you share that view, of course. I wanted to ask you what the current state, to the best of your knowledge, is of Iranian support of these special groups and others in Iraq.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, first of all, we know that it continued well after Iran's most senior leaders made promises to Iraq's most senior leaders that they would stop the training, funding, arming and directing of the so-called special group leaders and

elements and also support for the militia. We know that because we have detained individuals who were recipients of that training and funding and arming. They have explained in great detail the process for that. As you know, we had previously captured the deputy commander of Lebanese Hezbollah Department 2800, which was created to support this effort and to use the lessons that they had learned with Lebanese Hezbollah in southern Lebanon.

We know from having captured and from Iraqi troops having captured massive weapons caches in Basra, some of which bear markings that denote that they were made in January or February of 2008, some of which contain fuses made only in Iran, others which follow the chain to get to Iran and then into the hands of the special groups from Syria through Lebanese Hezbollah, in the case of RPG 29s.

This is all very clear. It's evidence, it's not supposition. We have laid this out for Iraqi leaders in the past. We're going to do it with an update again with their intelligence agencies, as well. Their leaders have laid it out for the public in Iraq.

And frankly, it has galvanized a degree of opposition, resentment and so forth by a government that views that it's a sovereign government of a sovereign country that is being interfered with by its neighbor to the east, a neighbor that should, by rights, want to see it succeed, to see a Shi'a-led government in Iraq succeed, given that Iran is also Shi'a, given the common interests they have, the

commercial interests, economic interests, religious tourism with Najaf and Karbala being in Iraq and so forth.

Delegations have recently gone to Iran and shared the concerns of the Iraqi government. It is our hope that this will lead to some change in the activities, that there will be a recognition that this has been very destabilizing, that it has challenged again the sovereignty and the government of Prime Minister Maliki. And we are looking for signs of that, frankly.

We know, though, that a number of the special group leaders have gone back to Iran. That's where they are seeking refuge, as they have been put under pressure in, first, Basra, then other areas in the southern provinces and now in Sadr City.

And over time, again, it is our hope that those two countries, which will always be neighbors of each other --

SEN. LIEBERMAN: Right.

GEN. PETRAEUS: -- can reach an understanding that the kind of lethal activities that have been undertaken in recent years are not in the interest of either country.

SEN. LIEBERMAN: I appreciate your answer. I think the most significant part of it -- I mean, the most disappointing part, of

course, is the Iranians are still doing what they've been doing, resulting in the deaths of Americans in Iraq. But the most significant part is that Prime Minister Maliki is now, from what you've said, recognizing that this is not only an attack on us, it's an attack on the sovereignty of Iraq, and is asserting that with the Iranians. And we can only hope that it draws a response.

In the time I have left, I want to ask you something else about Prime Minister Maliki. When you were here before the committee six weeks ago, the offensive the prime minister initiated and ordered in Basra had just begun. And there was a sense then, widely shared here in Congress and in the public, that the offensive had failed, that it was further proof of the inadequacy of Iraqi security forces, that Sadr was the winner, that Maliki was the loser. And obviously it looks a lot different six weeks later.

Give us your own sense of what the status on the ground is in Basra now and what it says about the ISF, Maliki and the extremists in the south of Iraq.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, you are correct that the operation in Basra did have a shaky start. But it has since seen enormous progress that has produced very positive tactical and strategic results.

The tactical results are the return of control, to legitimate security forces in Basra, something for which the Basralis, the people of that city and province, are quite grateful and they're pleased about.

The Iraqi security forces again after that shaky start very much stiffened. They were reinforced by two additional brigades brought down from Anbar province. By the way, our support here has been nothing more than transition teams, the so-called adviser teams, with their conventional and Special Operations forces, and the provision of enablers, ISR, attack helicopter teams on occasion and so forth.

They have continued to expand their areas of control. They conducted operations, this past week, some 50 or 60 kilometers north of Basra City, in Al-Qurnah, by the way, where the two rivers come together and the parent site of the Garden of Eden, according to some historians, and then even turned left and have now gone 20 or so kilometers in another direction. This is moving up towards Maysan province and the marshes and the city of Amarah, where there have also been some operations by Iraqi forces, after quite a long absence there as well.

On the strategic side, this has all been important, because there has been a degree of support for Prime Minister Maliki, in this subsequent period, that is unparalleled during the time that Ambassador Crocker and I have been in Iraq.

It appears that the Sunni coalition will return to government.

Touch wood on that, but that does look likely. The level of Kurdish support from the two senior Kurdish leaders is much solidified.

And Prime Minister Maliki then demonstrated that he's willing to go after al Qaeda as well, with Iraqi forces, in a very substantial offensive launched in Mosul, which is one that took place after about three months of very careful conditions-setting, of the establishment, of the infrastructure, combat outposts, joint security stations, the intelligence baseline and all the rest of that logistical stockpiling.

And that operation has also -- is also off to a good start tactically. We'll have to see over time, because al Qaeda will try to come back and try to regenerate. But they have also launched operations on the so-called ratlines, along which foreign fighters enter Iraq from Syria. And that's a very important development as well.

The result is, as I mentioned in my opening statement, that last week's level of incidents was the lowest in over four years. And this week's is even significantly lower. And it's a result of these different operations, plus now Sadr City.

Meanwhile in the council of representatives, the focus on the provincial elections law has been good. And as I mentioned, we hope to see a vote on that in the next week or so; it having had its second

reading.

And then they can start to focus, we believe, on the hydrocarbon law package, on which there has been much greater coordination between the different factions as well already. And there are new prospects for progress there that were not at all seen prior to the operation in Basra.

So it's had a political impact that is very significant, in addition to the tactical military progress that has been made there.

SEN. LIEBERMAN: Thank you for that very encouraging report, which I find nothing short of thrilling.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Inhofe.

SEN. INHOFE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In my brief opening comment, I made reference to an article, Success in Iraq: A Media Blackout.

Two days ago in the New York Post, and I'd like to ask that this be entered into the record at this point.

SEN. LEVIN: It will be made part of the record.

SEN. INHOFE: In there they talk about how the Iraq and the coalition forces are piling up one success after another. The media is not giving them a fair shake on this, which is something not too surprising. But we're now seeing the lowest violence indicators since April of '04, and the Iraqi government is asserting more control.

I was honored to be in -- right outside of Basra when that took place, and in fact I saw -- I talked to you at that time. And there is kind of a mixed feeling as to how the performance was of the Iraqi security forces. It is interesting that our forces that I talked to personally were very complimentary.

We've talked about how they are now expanding into areas, and we're real pleased with that. That's more of a functional thing. I'd like to ask each one of you, are -- how you're seeing, since you've been here a long time, the progress in the training, the performance of the Iraqis as soldiers.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, there has been a significant increase in the capacity as well as the capability of the Iraqi forces. And even though, for example, the operation in Basra got off to a shaky start, what preceded it was unprecedented, and that is the deployment -- and really throughout that week -- of over a division's worth of Iraqi

forces. That's a very substantial movement and something that would have been unthought of a year ago.

SEN. INHOFE: Which they really did on their own --

GEN. PETRAEUS: They did do it on their own, and they then had their C-130s turning several times a day, each of the two of the three typically that were operating on a given day -- again, not all smooth, not all the way we might do it, but it all got done. And the result, over time, after the initial, again, slow start, was that the units performed quite well.

Indeed, some of the units that did not do well -- among them were a brigade that had just literally come out of the unit set fielding, the whole process of basic training and so forth. That unit has actually been provided additional replacements, has gone through a retraining process, and its elements are starting to reenter the operations in Basra and so far have done well.

So again, there's been considerable progress in this regard, and you see it also in a variety of the other southern provinces -- in Mosul now, in Diyala province, Anbar, and also, of course, in Baghdad.

SEN. INHOFE: Good.

General --

GEN. ODIERNO: Senator, if I could just --

SEN. LEVIN: If you'll excuse me for interrupting you, General, we have a quorum here, and we've got to take advantage of it, as I indicated.

Since a quorum is now present, I ask the committee to consider a list of 142 pending military nominations. All these nominations have been before the committee the required length of time. Is there a motion to favorably --

SEN. : I so move.

SEN. LEVIN: Is there a second? (No audible response.) All in favor, say aye. (Chorus of ayes.) Opposed, nays. (No audible response.) The ayes have it. The motion carries. Thank you.

General Odierno, you were about to say --

SEN. WARNER: May I say thank you, though, Mr. Chairman, for that, expediting that list.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

SEN. INHOFE: Yes.

General?

GEN. ODIERNO: Sir, I would just add, with what General Petraeus said, is what we've seen consistently over the last 12 to 14 months is an improvement in the command and control, the ability of the Iraqis -- they're learning. They're starting to understand the command and control at brigade, battalion, company level. We've seen significant improvements in that, in their ability to do some planning.

Of course, the issue always becomes capacity, and we still have to work on their full capacity to do this across the entire force. But we are seeing consistent improvement in these areas, and that's what we have to continue to -- why it's so important to us to continue our transition teams, continue to be partnered with them, continue to liaise with them, and we'll continue to see this improvement.

SEN. INHOFE: Yeah. Well, that's why I wanted to mention it.

Quite frankly, I've been over there quite a few times, and what I always try to do is get the reports of our troops that are over there participating in training and working with these guys.

And it's been favorable. They're, you know, a different standard from us, but a dramatic improvement's taken place.

I've long been supporting the idea of the independent AFRICOM and

I've had a lot of conversations with General Ward and his predecessor. And I really think it's going to come along fine. I am concerned, however, because when you think about -- well, right now, AFRICOM has parts of PACIFICOM (sic/PACOM), EUROCOM (sic/EUCOM), CENTCOM, but the most aggressive part comes out of the Central Command. Now you've got that whole corner up there -- you have Somalia; you have Ethiopia, which has been very good in supporting our efforts in Somalia; then you have Eritrea, just right down there on the water; and the Sudan. So that's where really things are very active and a smooth transition's going to be necessary.

I recognize that they're talking about standing that up on October 1st, but I also realize or suspect and would like to have your comments that there's going to be a transitional period. If it's going to be seamless, it's going to take quite a bit of effort beyond the October 1st date. What do you think?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, I agree. There is a conference ongoing right now, in fact, in Tampa between the Central Command and AFRICOM staff to work out -- there are a host of different tasks and functions, dozens and dozens of these, identified that will be transitioned. And they are working out that process of transition and determining -- ensuring that AFRICOM will have, for example, the command and control operational center capabilities and those types of capabilities to take over the missions that Central Command is performing in the Horn of Africa, in particular. They --

SEN. INHOFE: Well, and we'd like to have -- go ahead.

GEN. PETRAEUS: They may make a recommendation on how to phase that over time as this process continues.

SEN. INHOFE: Yeah. And I would hope, also, we look at the resources that they have --

GEN. PETRAEUS: Right.

SEN. INHOFE: -- and that they need, that General Ward will have to have, particularly if he stays up in Frankfurt and tries to run the thing from there.

And lastly, the -- as I always bring up -- the CERP program. It's been working real well, although every time I get used to one thing, they change the name. So now it's CCIF, I guess, Combatant Commander Initiative Fund. But as far as in the areas of Iraq and Afghanistan, it's my understanding that the Iraqi government recently allocated \$300 million for that program. And I'd like to get a response from both of you as to how well that program's going and your feelings about the future of the CERP program.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Sir, the CERP program is of enormous importance to our commanders and troopers on the ground in Iraq. It's hugely

important that it continue. It saves lives. It enables commanders -- when you reach that point where money becomes the most important ammunition because of security progress, it enables them to achieve small but quick and important wins on the ground in small reconstruction projects where we have enormous capacity. In fact, it was in recognition of that capacity that the Iraqi government did provide that to us, although they're also doing that with -- certainly with their own ministries, provinces and elements as well.

SEN. INHOFE: Good. Good.

GEN. ODIERNO: Thank you. Senator, I would just add that it gives us flexibility, leverage and influence at the lowest levels of the company, battalion, brigade level. It's an extremely important program and that needs to continue.

We publish a manual that says "money is a weapon" that we give to all of our young leaders. And it has significant impacts. And I hope that we'll be able to continue that in the future.

SEN. INHOFE: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Inhofe.

Let me correct the record. I read 142 pending nominations. The correct number's 144 pending nominations, and I will -- if there's no objection, that will be the action of the committee. I think everybody who voted here before is still here. And without objection, we will correct the record in that way.

Senator Akaka.

SEN. DANIEL AKAKA (D-HI): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, let me add my welcome to you to the panel.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you, Senator.

SEN. AKAKA: And General Odierno, welcome to you and your lovely family here.

General Odierno, I've always thought of culture as important to people. Cultural awareness of our soldiers has become a strategic center of gravity in the Iraq conflict. The daily interaction of American servicemen and women with both their Iraqi counterparts and civilian population has really expanded the skills required of our military personnel, far beyond what which existed just a few years ago.

Given the importance of these skills, what cultural or language

training do units arriving in theater undergo that helps them to conduct these nontraditional aspects of the operations? And do you believe this training is adequate?

GEN. ODIERNO: It's a very important part, sir, of all the training that we conduct today. And it's done at the individual, it's done at the collective level. We do it at all our schools now. It's been incorporated into all of our warrior leader courses, our basic non-commissioned officer courses. It is incorporated in our unit training at home station. We have incorporated a large portion of this at our national training centers, joint readiness training centers. So it is critical to continue to do this as we move forward.

But we have to continue to adjust because we continue to learn more. We continue to understand it better. And we have to continue to change and continue to expand this program. So it is one that is extremely important. It's one that we have to continue. It's one that we must continue to learn from, adjust, so we can continue to give our soldiers the best tools they possibly can to be successful.

SEN. AKAKA: General Odierno, your position with respect to Iraq's neighbors is that they are an important element of achieving ultimate stability on the ground. I agree that the ability to get other nations in the region to actively support political compromise, reconciliation and stability in Iraq will be even more important for

the coalition effort in the months to come.

General, what are the best approaches to use in achieving cooperation with Iraq's neighboring countries, and should these approaches be any different when dealing with Iran?

GEN. ODIERNO: Well, I would just say, sir, that of course we want to continue to have dialogue with many of the countries. General Petraeus, I think, could tell you that we have tried to have dialogue with the ambassador in Iraq three different times with Iran, reaching out to them at that level. So far that unfortunately has not yielded the results we want. However, I would suggest that as we move forward, if we believe it could yield results, we would like to, at the ambassador level, continue to have those discussions if we think it will be fruitful.

We also should obviously reach out to many of the other countries, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, and I'll work with General Petraeus on that, if confirmed, to make sure we work together with those countries to make sure they are helping us to solve the problems and to help us with reconciliation, which in my mind is an extremely important piece as we continue to move forward is getting many of these elements to reconcile.

We've seen a good beginning in that, Senator, and we want to continue that.

SEN. AKAKA: General Odierno, you have identified the communal struggle for power as the number one threat to Iraq and asserted that sectarian conflict, fueled from both within and outside Iraq's borders, poses the greatest challenge to lasting security. As you know, the membership of the Sons of Iraq, which has been a significant part of recent security gains on the ground, stems from local militia groups, many of whom were former insurgents and are now being integrated into the Iraqi security forces. Given the tentative nature of the alliance between these groups and coalition forces, is there a plan to continue transitioning the Sons of Iraq into government controlled units so that they don't serve as a base for future sectarian conflict?

GEN. ODIERNO: Well, thank you, Senator. That's a very important question as we move forward.

Obviously we are going to try to integrate them as much as possible. What we've found is we've figured -- we believe somewhere between 25 and 30 percent are capable and want to be integrated sometime into the Iraqi security force, either physically or mentally capable or will have the desire to do that. With the other portion, we have to develop other programs to ensure that they can be employed. We are working with the Iraqis to do that. We were doing that several months ago. That policy has continued where we're trying to develop work programs, we're trying to have public works units that help not

only to then employ them, but to continue to build -- rebuild the infrastructure as well as -- or deliver basic services. We think this is a key as we move forward, and we must continue to work with the government of Iraq to fund this program, as well as helping us to get that instituted. And we will work that extremely hard, sir.

SEN. AKAKA: Do you feel this is an essential element of long-term stability that would help legitimize the Iraqi national government?

GEN. ODIERNO: I do. I think many of these individuals, as we've talked with them and dealt with them, what they're really looking for is legitimacy, and they want to be part of the government future of Iraq.

And so this is their way of reaching out, volunteering to first provide security in these areas and then become a permanent part of the government and part of the nation as it moves forward.

SEN. AKAKA: Thank you very much.

My time has expired, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Akaka.

Senator Graham.

SEN. LINDSEY GRAHAM (R-SC): Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I'd like to associate myself, with the statement you made earlier, at least in part -- I thought it was a very eloquent statement --

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

SEN. GRAHAM: -- that these two gentlemen represent continuity at a time when America needs it the most.

To both of you, I just can't tell you how proud we are of the job that you and those under your command have done. It was a enormous challenge that you both took on. A year-and-a-half ago, this thing looked very, very bleak.

Your personal dedication to those under your command, I think, have really -- will go down in history quite frankly as one of the most successful counterinsurgency operations ever.

But we're not here to talk about just the good news. We're here to talk about where we go. And I want to congratulate the president for nominating you both, and to Senator Levin for holding these hearings as quickly as possible.

General Petraeus, as you go into your new job, it seems to me that one of the biggest problems we face in Afghanistan is, we have many, many forces over there from different areas of the world. NATO has assumed this fight. To me, this is a test of NATO.

And are you concerned about the rules of engagement that some countries have imposed on NATO forces? And what do you intend to do about that, if it is a concern?

GEN. PETRAEUS: First of all, Senator, this is indeed a test of NATO. And the caveats, that are put on the uses of various national forces, are a challenge for the NATO commander there. I think General Dan McNeill, the current commander, about to hand off to General David McKiernan, has been very clear about that.

It's not unprecedented. I was the assistant chief of staff, for Operations, for the SFOR mission in Bosnia, and had a matrix on my desk of which forces were allowed to do which non-standard tasks, if you will, or different tasks. And that was challenging.

And it is the same situation in Afghanistan except more difficult because, of course, they're in tough combat operations, not just peacekeeping or peace enforcement.

I think that continued dialogue with the NATO authorities, with the supreme NATO commander, General John Craddock, and the other

authorities with the coalition countries, many of whom also contribute forces to Iraq and therefore have been able to get to know them and so forth, is going to be part of the answer.

I think also some additional provision, of U.S. forces and of those forces from those NATO countries that are willing and capable of conducting counterinsurgency operations, in the way that is required, will also be important in the months and years ahead.

SEN. GRAHAM: As you hand off command here in a few short months in Iraq, is it fair to say, from the American public's point of view, that we can expect in the future the Iraqis to fight more and to pay more for the cost of operations?

GEN. PETRAEUS: It is, Senator.

SEN. GRAHAM: What would you attribute to the turnaround -- I mean, you know, I think all of us have met Prime Minister Maliki and some of the key players over in Iraq, come away a bit frustrated at times. And last year I quite -- July, I think, I visited with him -- I had very little hope that anything was going to happen over there in a positive way. And I'm quite astonished at the amount of reconciliation that's happened in the last 90 to 100 days and the operations in Basra and Sadr City. If you could give us some insight, what happened? What changed?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, first of all, very, very significant, of course, is the decision that he made to take on the militia in Basra. This is a Shi'a-led government taking on a Shi'a militia, and it made an enormous statement about his willingness to serve all Iraqis.

The result was increased support from those who had criticized him for a long time for turning a blind eye to the militia or not taking action against them in the way that he did in Basra.

He's followed that up, of course, courageously, inside Baghdad itself. And then also, to show all -- he's willing to go after all parties that are threatening the security and stability of Iraq, he has of course launched the operation in Mosul and Nineveh province to go after al Qaeda and its Sunni extremist partners.

And there has been success in a number of these different areas. It's not solidified yet. As always, Ambassador Crocker and I are cautious in our assessments. But there is significant progress, and at the end of the day, nothing succeeds like a little bit of significant progress.

SEN. GRAHAM: Conversely, how is Sadr's standing among the Iraqi people?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, Muqtada al-Sadr is still certainly seen

as the embodiment of a very important movement in that country. The Sadr movement, which was founded on the martyr Sadr, his father, is a very, very important political element in Iraqi society. It is one that was founded on serving those most disadvantaged in the society. It stayed in Iraq during the Saddam era. It suffered enormously under it. And so it still has enormous influence.

However, Sadr himself has recognized -- in fact, by issuing the cease-fire order last fall, in the wake of the violence precipitated by the militia in the holy city of Karbala, and after the militia elements and special group elements were linked to the assassination of two southern governors and police chiefs -- that the armed elements associated with the movement were creating problems. And in fact it is that kind of assessment, we believe, that has prompted over time this directive to cease fire, to take a knee and so forth --

SEN. GRAHAM: Right.

GEN. PETRAEUS: -- because the people in Basra were rejoicing at being freed from the grip of the militia.

In fact, a man in Basra told me that now he'd been liberated twice in recent years: once by the coalition forces from Saddam and now by the Iraqi security forces from the militia.

SEN. GRAHAM: My time has expired. One very brief question.

General Odierno, thank you for what you've done and what you're about to do. The force structure that we have in place and the drawdowns that we're planning to implement over the summer -- are you comfortable with what we're about to do and how we're going to do it?

GEN. ODIERNO: I am, Senator. I was involved with -- I provided recommendations to General Petraeus as the Multinational Corps Iraq commander. I stand behind those recommendations, which is what is going on right now. So I feel extremely comfortable with what I've continued to see as to the progress we're making over there, that we'll be able to continue with those reductions as planned through the summer.

SEN. GRAHAM: Thank you both, and your families.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Graham.

Senator Ben Nelson.

SEN. BEN NELSON (D-NE): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you General Odierno and General Petraeus and your families for your continued willingness to serve and the excellence of your service in the past. We've come to expect that from you, but I want you to know we don't take it for granted and we truly appreciate

that. I know the American people do as well.

In terms of finding options, General Petraeus -- I can talk in football analogies because Nebraska football may be on its way back -- you remind me of an options quarterback who has to figure out all the options that are available and adjust to conditions -- as you say, conditions on the ground -- before you make a determination.

Senator Collins and I have been pushing for some time the idea, which seems to have gained favor, to transition the mission for the combat troops -- the coalition combat troops, particularly the U.S. forces in Iraq, in Baghdad -- to fighting -- into counterterrorism activities, which I think is what they've been doing, so that the Iraqi forces could take more responsibility for their own security. Apparently that's part of what the plan is right now. And is it because we've come to understand that that's necessary and/or is it because Prime Minister al-Maliki seems poised and prepared to do that now?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, again, to continue the analogy, you have to make the read at the line when you have the ball in each particular play, in each particular case, in each particular area.

As you'll recall, when I last testified before the committee, I laid out the so-called "Anaconda" approach or strategy that we have employed to focus on al Qaeda-Iraq. And it employs much, much more

than just what we have traditionally known as counterterrorist forces, our special mission units, our high-end special operations forces. Critical to it has been conventional forces that have cleared and then been able to help hold cities like Baqubah, large neighborhoods in Baghdad, Ramadi and so forth, and are now in fact doing the same to a lesser degree, slightly different approach in Mosul.

That has enabled us, if you will, when the level of violence is reduced to have Iraqi security forces shoulder more of the burden and allowed us to focus a bit more discretely on some of the, again, al Qaeda or Sunni extremist elements that try to come back into those areas and try to reestablish roots in them while Iraqi soldiers and police can handle some of the more day-to-day activity in those areas. And that's really what is going on, that this transition, if you will, has been the product of some tremendously tough, hard work and fighting by coalition and Iraqi forces, much of it, I might add, during the time that Lieutenant General Odierno was the operation architect of the so-called surge of coalition and Iraqi forces.

SEN. BEN NELSON: I guess that if Senator Graham's right that the goal is to get Iraq to pay more and to fight more, we may be succeeding in that. And of course, Senator Bayh, Senator Collins and I have worked to get Iraq in a position to pay more of the costs of the government -- from the government for the costs of the war, many of them being our costs which we have been underwriting for these several years. Will that -- do you believe that that will put them

more in charge, not only of their own destiny but more -- feel more committed to their destiny as well? Not only in charge, but stronger commitment.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, again, Senator, I think that transition -- some of that is very much well under way. You'll recall Ambassador Crocker here saying the days of the big reconstruction effort are over. There's still --

SEN. NELSON: Well, I knew that was --

GEN. PETRAEUS: -- (inaudible) -- finishing them and all the rest of that, but that is largely over. And in fact, in recent -- this past week alone, Prime Minister Maliki announced \$5 billion reconstruction effort and also they are working on a supplemental that will provide additional funds to all of their provinces, ministries and other activities. They have long since reached the point where they are paying a good bit more for their Iraqi forces development than we are, and that will just continue. Our line goes down and theirs goes up very dramatically.

When it comes to them fighting, their casualties continue to be well over -- right now, three times our losses, and that does not include the Sons of Iraq who are really a different category who are also targeted continually by -- in particular, Sunni extremists because they represent the communities turning against these

extremists, and that's a very, very difficult situation for those extremists.

SEN. NELSON: Well, the query I would leave you with in terms of Iraq and its future is the question of what if Muqtada al-Sadr ends up with the majority in the next elections, but we don't need to go into that. that's purely speculative. We certainly hope that that's not the case.

I'd like to turn to Afghanistan for just a moment. I'm leading a codel there next week as we spoke the other day. Given the challenges that there are in Afghanistan today, do we have any idea or any vision of what victory in Afghanistan will consist of? I'm not talking about when, but what -- can we describe what would be victory in Afghanistan?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, certainly it would be a situation where the security is much improved. It does not have these pockets in which reconstruction is challenged and of course where the economy is gradually starting to get to a self-sustaining stage. The differences between Iraq and Afghanistan could be -- could not be starker.

The differences between Iraq and Afghanistan could be -- could not be starker. I mean, you have one country which has what now may be the largest oil reserves in the world -- it certainly is number two or number three -- and pumping oil at substantial rates, and another

country that generates -- I believe it's about \$700 million in a year toward its own budget. So Afghanistan clearly is going to require very substantial assistance from the international community for a number of years, and very important that we continue it, remembering what it was that took place on that soil and the reason that we went there.

SEN. BEN NELSON: It sort of reminds us of the war on poverty, but it's the war over -- getting over poverty to be able to sustain their own government and their own future. That's not going to be very easy to solve simply with guns or butter.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Absolutely. Senator, that's again why I went to some length, and I appreciate your allowing me to provide an opening statement of that length, but to describe the comprehensive approach that's needed, the whole of government effort and the effort of very much partnering with all like-minded countries around the world, because that's what it's going to take.

SEN. BEN NELSON: Well, thank you both. And good luck to both of you.

Thank you very much.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you, Senator.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Nelson.

I just would quickly note that while we welcome the \$5 billion announcement by the Iraqi government of reconstruction funds, they've announced before reconstruction funding, they've budgeted reconstruction funding, but when it comes to spending it, their budgeted amount, it's been very, very slow. And so we assume you'll keep on top of that.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Absolutely. And it hasn't improved, as you know, Senator, from year to year, but there's no question that it has to improve a great deal more.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

Senator Dole.

SEN. ELIZABETH DOLE (R-NC): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Petraeus, I want to just underscore what Senator Graham had to say about both of you and to express my heartfelt thanks for your service to our country. It's really impossible to adequately express how much we appreciate the service that both of you are giving.

General Petraeus, you've probably learned as much or more about

the need for improving interagency cooperation over the past 16 months as anyone. And I hope, if confirmed, that you will speak on the need for improving interagency cooperation and to stress the consequences if we fail to heed the lessons learned from our efforts in both Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a topic that we simply cannot just pass along to the next administration.

With those thoughts in mind, would you share with us some examples of where improvements must be made, and what, in your professional opinion, are the potential consequences of merely maintaining the status quo?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, I think you know that a number of us in uniform and Secretary Gates are among the biggest champions for providing additional resources for the State Department, for AID and for some of our other interagency partners, so that they can in fact do just what you were talking about. We have learned an enormous amount about this over time, and the increase in the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the embedded PRTs has been a hugely important development and a very significant part of the progress that has been made, not just in the security front but again then in the establishment of local governments, revival of local economies and markets, and reconstruction efforts, again, that were possible because of the improved security situation.

I mentioned during my opening statement that the campaign plan

that we are executing in Iraq is not just a military campaign plan; it is a joint product of the U.S. Mission-Iraq, the embassy, and the Multinational Force Iraq. And it is signed by both the ambassador and myself. And by the way, the main effort in it -- you always identify a main effort in any such campaign plan -- is actually the political line of operation, not the security line. While the security line is a crucial enabler to it, the ultimate solution, as we all recognize, has to come in the political arena.

Now, recognizing that is of enormous significance, and I think it's very important -- in the answers to the advance policy questions I discussed a bit about steps that are being taken and further steps should be taken to improve in terms of developing doctrine, just as we have in the military, to develop doctrine for the kind of interagency cooperation and efforts that are required in the endeavors such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere in theater; that there then has to be an education process for those; you actually have to practice it, try it somewhere. And ideally we would welcome interagency partners joining us, for example, as our brigade combat teams, division and corps headquarter undergo the mission rehearsal exercises that we conduct for several weeks for each of these deploying units. And those are great opportunities in fact to get ready to perform the missions that are performed again in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. And then you need a feedback mechanism, a lessons learned center.

Now, a fair amount of this is actually now being done. It's led by the State Department. It is at the Foreign Service Institute. That's the right place for it. And I think that developments in that area will be very important in helping the interagency do better what it is we have learned they must do to enable military forces to be successful in these very complex contingency operations.

SEN. DOLE: Thank you.

General Odierno, earlier this year General Petraeus answered questions concerning a reassessment phase following the drawdown in U.S. forces to the pre-surge end strength in July. That assessment will, I presume, now become your responsibility. How long do you anticipate that security assessment will take to complete this before you decide if you should hold at the pre-surge level or at some point resume redeployment?

GEN. ODIERNO: Thank you, Senator. General Petraeus and I have talked about this. And if I'm confirmed for the position, I think General Petraeus will make an assessment prior to his leaving, and we will have some discussion about that as he does it. We'll confer about that, and so that we'll agree to that, that he will make some sort of an assessment as he leaves, and I will then execute that assessment and then continue to assess and identify and make further decisions.

SEN. DOLE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you very much, Senator Dole.

Senator Reed.

SEN. JACK REED (D-RI): Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for your service to the nation and to the Army, your extraordinary service. And thank you for your families' support. And I want to particularly recognize Captain Odierno, because his service is emblematic of the service of so many young Americans whose courage many times compensates for our lack of wisdom. Thank you for your service.

General Petraeus, you will now have responsibilities for a whole theater of operations. And it's interesting, the last DNA (sic/DNI) annual threat assessment suggested that al Qaeda has reconstituted itself in the FATA in Pakistan. In fact, Admiral Mullen has stated, if we're going to pick the next attack to the United States, it would come out of the FATA. Do you agree with those intelligence assessments?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I do, Senator. Clearly, al Qaeda senior leadership has been strengthened in the FATA, even though their main effort still is assessed to be in Iraq by them as well as by us. But

the organization of an attack, if you will, would likely come from the FATA.

SEN. REED: What does that say about our strategy? We have focused extraordinary resources in Iraq. And in the intervening years since we began our operations there, al Qaeda, by our own intelligence estimates, have reestablished themselves, strengthened themselves, have higher operational capacity today. We have under-resourced Afghanistan, which is the closest theater of our operations to Pakistan. We've been failing to engage the Pakistan military in effective counterinsurgency operations. And recently, the government of Pakistan has entered into another stand-down agreement with the tribal leaders there.

It seems to me that we've -- if that's the existential threat, we haven't made it the main effort in our campaign plan for your center of operations. What's your thought?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, as I mentioned in my opening statement, Senator, clearly we have to provide additional assistance to the new Pakistani government, which, as you mentioned, is still solidifying its coalition, is developing its -- essentially a counterinsurgency strategy, what approach it is going to take for dealing with the FATA, a significant problem that they have inherited and that was causing extraordinary violence in their country before they were elected, as you know.

We have very substantial programs in that area. I had a very long conversation with Ambassador Patterson, with the station chief, with others who are working that issue about two weeks ago, in Qatar. There are very substantial programs, but I think that the key need is to assess whether the overall concept that is guiding those on the Pakistani side in particular, of course, is adequate or not.

And one of the first trips that I would make, if confirmed, as the CENTCOM commander would be to Pakistan to sit down with a fellow U.S. Army Command and General Staff College graduate, General Kayani, to talk at some length about that and obviously to do the same with the leaders of the Pakistani government. That is a problem that has to be addressed. As I mentioned, it is a problem that has global implications, not just local extremist implications for Pakistan.

SEN. REED: If your conclusion is you need further resources in Afghanistan and further resources in support of the Pakistani forces within their own country, where are you going to get them except from further reductions in Iraq?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, again that would be, if confirmed, something I would have to discuss with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, with the service chiefs, and so forth, and perhaps with the current MNF-I commander.

SEN. REED: I appreciate, you know, what you're going to bring to this task, which is incredible skill and insight as to what's going on in the AO, but I think it's a serious, serious comment if our own intelligence agencies are suggesting that in the intervening several years of our great effort in Iraq, our existential enemies have become stronger and perhaps even more capable.

Let me switch gears briefly to an issue within Iraq, for both you and General Odierno, the status of the Sunni CLC, the Sons of Iraq. I know you responded to Senator Akaka that approximately 25 to 30 percent will be integrated. My guess is that the easy part of the integration has already taken place. I mean, I was out in Anbar with the Iraqi highway patrol, which probably a year ago were, you know, Iraqi insurgents. The harder part is the remaining 70-plus percent.

It doesn't seem that the administration of Maliki has come to grips with this issue yet. Is that a fair assessment? We're paying them. They haven't paid them. I know the response is we have to get them alternate employment; but they're still on our dole.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, actually there has been a transition of, again, well over 20,000 to a variety of different Iraqi security forces or other governmental employment, and that has been supported by Prime Minister Maliki. There will be additional ones that do integrate, but as General Odierno pointed out, one challenge is that not by any means do all of them want to go into the security forces.

Many of them want to have jobs in their own community. They just want to help with security until that's possible.

And then substantial numbers do not qualify because they don't meet the literacy or physical requirements. And that's why we've generally said between 20 and 30 percent might ultimately end up in some form of Iraqi security forces.

There are numerous other efforts that are now being in some cases piloted, in other cases starting to really gain traction in terms of job programs for them, funded by in some cases dual by the U.S. and Iraqi government, in some cases by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs of the Iraqi government solely.

These are starting to take off. They're something that we have to push very aggressively so that there are opportunities provided for these individuals who have stood up and helped to protect their communities when they were really needed.

SEN. REED: My time has expired. But if I could make a comment and then perhaps in subsequent discussions informally, you might respond. But my impression in a brief encounter with the prime minister is that he viewed these Sunni armed forces as just as much a threat as the Shi'a militias. And is he -- he may very well choose to deal with them as he's dealt in the last few weeks with the Shi'a, which is a military response which prompts some type of political

reaction. That could be a serious challenge, General Odierno, to your tenure and your stability.

I don't want to monopolize the time, but I will look forward to discussing this issue in detail with both of you.

And again, thank you for extraordinary service.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Reed.

Senator Sessions?

SEN. JEFF SESSIONS (R-AL): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would like to join with my colleagues in expressing my appreciation for your magnificent service. And Captain Odierno (sic), thank you and for so many of your brothers and sisters in arms who served our country under difficult circumstances. But you two generals represent the leadership that has proven itself under most difficult circumstances, have helped position us in a way that I think today we can believe we confidence that we have a realistic opportunity to establish a very decent, good government in Iraq, which will be so important for our strategic interest and the people of Iraq. And I can't tell you how appreciative we are and how much admiration we have for both of you. And General Odierno, you were there at the critical point of developing this new surge strategy.

And General Petraeus, your leadership and planning was just superb.

General Odierno, I asked General Petraeus when he took command in Iraq before he left, did he believe our forces could be successful in that country and achieve our essential national goals. He said that he did. He wouldn't take the job if he did not. Do you feel -- how do you feel? Just tell the American people honestly how you feel about our opportunity for a successful result.

GEN. ODIERNO: First, as General Petraeus said earlier, I would not take this job if I didn't think that we could be successful. Senator, I believe that we have made significant progress, specifically over the last 18 months or so, and I do believe that we are headed in the right direction. I will not say that we are out of the woods yet, but I would say that we are clearly headed in the right direction. And I believe a self-reliant government of Iraq that is stable, one that is committed to governance and protecting its own people and serving all its people, a place that's denied as a safe haven for terrorists and extremists and one that is integrated into the international community and a partner of the war on terror is absolutely possible in Iraq. And I think it's closer today than it has been.

SEN. SESSIONS: Maybe you would tell those who don't know your involvement in our effort there and how long you've been there, why don't you give a -- just a brief summary of what you've seen and how

you've come to reach that conclusion.

GEN. ODIERNO: Well, I would just say is that having been there on two separate tours and then several times inbetween, asked to conduct assessments both as an adviser to the secretary of State but also as an assistant to the chairman, I've spent close to 31 months in Iraq. I believe that we have -- what's been encouraging is we understand the dynamics better than we did, we understand the environment.

But the progression of the Iraqis is really now starting to show. And it started by first the enabling them, by providing additional security in some key areas, and then allowing them -- the fact that they've decided to reject al Qaeda initially, starting in Anbar, where they understood that they did not want to live under the control of al Qaeda and that they chose to work with the coalition in the Iraqi government to expel al Qaeda and defeat al Qaeda, and I think that was significant.

And as other Iraqis saw what happened in Anbar, they realized that they bright, right future for them is to reject these extremist groups and that they did not want to be controlled by militias. And I think we're starting to see that play out now with operations in Basra and Sadr City.

And the most important thing to me over the last few months has

been the even-handedness of going after all the enemies of Iraq, those militias as well as al Qaeda. But again, I would say we still have quite a bit of work to do, and they will do everything they can to try to reestablish their influence inside of Iraq, and it's important for us that we're able to build up the Iraqi Security Forces and the governmental capacity so that they can, themselves, not allow them to rebuild any influence at all inside of Iraq.

SEN. SESSIONS: Thank you very much.

General Petraeus, you've made brief reference to the fact that we've now seen, this past week, the lowest instance of -- incidents of violence in Iraq in four years, and that maybe this week would be even lower. Tell us, I know you don't want to be overconfident, but tell us what that means to you and what's been happening there?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, what it means of course is that other activities can proceed. The whole idea has been to achieve a security environment in which individuals can go about their daily lives with much less fear than they had previously. This is not to say there are not still violent activities taking place in Iraq, there aren't still people trying to blow up other Iraqis and so forth, but it does say that the -- again, the incident of violence is significantly reduced into a level, again, that has not been seen in over four years, back to 23 April 2004. And when you think about where we were, again, in the November, December, January, February and

well into the spring and early summer of 2007, 2006 into 2007, that is a very significant development.

SEN. SESSIONS: Well, it went from almost 1,600 incidents a little over a year ago to under 400. So that's a 75 percent reduction, and that really transformative event, I think, can -- we are proud of that. General Petraeus, my time is about up, but I know that the Senate Armed Services Committee reported a full authorization bill. It contains language that would ensure private security contractors are not authorized to perform inherently government functions in a combat area. It's my understand that the department relies on these contractors for many things. Can you tell us how -- what kind of impact this might have, and if we should reconsider that language?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, it would have a very significant impact, Senator, because they -- these private security contractors do perform very important missions.

They are securing a variety of different activities in Iraq and those are so important that we would likely have to use U.S. or other forces to secure them. The reason we have them there is that we don't have the forces to perform some of those missions. And so this would be a significant drain on our combat power if it were carried out.

If I could add that in the wake of the incident last year, there

has been significant progress also in the coordination and cooperation between private security contractors and those forces that, if you will, "own the train", are responsible for the areas. There are much closer efforts between the contractual units and our forces. And in fact, a lot of this was on General Odierno's watch. And the incidence of escalation of force from private security contractors has been reduced very dramatically.

There are also new authorities that you provided to the Department of Defense which were subsequently delegated to me, where I have Uniform Code of Military Justice authority over those DOD private security contractors and there are other provisions for those who are under contract for the Department of State. So I think that the unfortunate incident last year has actually led to a very considerable and good focus in this area that has helped enormously to improve the way these missions are conducted.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Sessions.

Senator Webb.

SEN. JIM WEBB (D-VA): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First of all, if I may add my personal thanks to Captain Odierno for your service and tell you how much I personally value it. You're getting a lot of comments today, but you're here symbolically on

behalf of a lot of people, I think. And I have very strong feelings about people like yourself, like my son, like Senator McCain's son who stepped forward and moved into harm's way at a time when the country needed you. And I think we're going to be wanting to benefit from the counsel and the experience of the people like you in the long future. So I just wanted to personally add my own thanks.

And I also would like to expand a little bit on something that Senator Warner said earlier when he was asking you two gentlemen about this strategic framework agreement that is being negotiated. It's a very important agreement. And he had asked if you were being consulted.

I would like to emphasize again, for the record, I'd like to see the Senate consulted on this matter. We had meetings at a staff level on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee yesterday and we were not -- or our staff were not receiving any of the specific information in this agreement. And I think that it's an agreement that's going to have a potentially long-term impact, presently constructed as an executive agreement.

I'm going to be among those who are going to be attempting to insist that we have the right kind of participation in accordance with the Constitution on that.

General Odierno, if I may, my view, having spent a lot of time,

in my life, thinking about military issues and strategic issues and policy issues, is that one of the most essential components, of laying down a strategy, is the need to be able to articulate clearly what the end point of that strategy is.

And I believe that the failure of the administration, to be able to do that or to be required to do that, is one of the reasons we've had so much confusion and debate after the initial invasion.

And in that vein, I would like to hear from you as to, in military terms, what do you see as the end point in our strategic direction here, with respect to our involvement in Iraq?

GEN. ODIERNO: Thank you, Senator.

First, I believe one of the most important pieces, it's got to be a self-reliant government that is stable; a government that will contribute inside of the regional context and the international context. And obviously that means we need a professionalized Iraqi security force, one that could handle those missions, which I think we're moving forward with.

Obviously a place where we do not allow safe haven for terrorists or extremists that can affect the security, not only of the region but also of the United States. And then obviously one that is integrated politically and economically and is an economic engine for continued

improvement for its people.

So I think those are the things that I think we look forward to.

From a military perspective, it's their ability to secure themselves; it's their ability to do it in such a way where their government is allowed to continue to grow. And we will do that by providing less and less assistance to them.

And I think --

SEN. WEBB: If I may, General, because I've got a very short period of time here.

All that being said, and those are political goals for the Iraqis, what does the United States military in Iraq look like when that happens?

GEN. ODIERNO: I think over time, I think, it will adjust over time. And we will have less and less responsibility for direct combat; more for assisting them in conducting their missions. And over time, that would change into an advisory mission as we felt more and more comfortable with them being able to do that on their own.

SEN. WEBB: So how long do you think we should be there if those conditions are met?

GEN. ODIERNO: It is -- once conditions -- once all those conditions --

SEN. WEBB: Right.

GEN. ODIERNO: -- how long will you be there? I think that would be a policy decision on how long we would want to have some sort of contact with the Iraqi government in the future. And so I think we'd have to have some discussions on that.

SEN. WEBB: Well, what is the end point of the United States involvement in Iraq? Let's say that Iraq meets the conditions you just talked about? Should there be a United States military presence in Iraq?

GEN. ODIERNO: I think that's a discussion we would have along several levels, not only from the MNF-I command or the Central Command level, and obviously our civilian leadership, to decide what their policy would be in the future towards Iraq.

SEN. WEBB: So, do you believe -- do you believe that if those conditions are met, there would be a need for United States military in Iraq?

GEN. ODIERNO: I do not. I believe what we would want, though, is to maintain, obviously, military contacts, as we do with many

countries around the world over time.

SEN. WEBB: All right. Thank you for that. That's a very important clarification.

General Petraeus, there's some language in response to questions that were submitted to you for the record that go to Iran that I would like to get some clarification or give you the opportunity to clarify. I mean, you use the word "malign" as an adjective. As someone who's written nine books, I'm trying to struggle with how this fits into what you're saying here.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I could use -- (inaudible).

SEN. WEBB: You say: We will continue to expose the extent of Iran's malign activities in Iraq. And then you say on the next page:

Our efforts in regard to Iran must involve generating international cooperation and building consensus to counter malign Iranian influence. And then you speak about its -- there are consequences for its illegitimate influence in the region.

Can you clarify for us how you're using those words?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I can, Senator. What I'm talking about there, I

am characterizing that influence. It is malign. And it is lethal. And it is illegitimate. The arming, training, funding and directing of militia extremists who have killed our soldiers, have killed Iraqi forces and have killed Iraqi civilians.

SEN. WEBB: Right. I've heard all of that.

GEN. PETRAEUS: It is very malign indeed. It is the same situation with what they're doing in --

SEN. WEBB: Would you -- in the interest of time here, because you have given those answers -- would you agree that historically one of the realities that we have to deal with is the notion that there will be some sort of Iranian influence in the region? Without -- I know what you're -- I know -- I'm not talking about the specific military incidents. I'm talking about the reality of dealing with the region.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, I have always --

SEN. WEBB: We cannot discount Iran. Would you agree with that?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I have always stated, in fact, that there will be Iranian influence, and that the hope is that that Iranian influence is constructive influence -- commercial influence, economic influence, perhaps political influence, and cultural influence, religious, and so

forth -- but not this kind of contribution to lethal activities. And that's exactly --

SEN. WEBB: I know. There would be no disagreement from me on the last part of what you just said. The difficulty that a lot of people in this country, including myself, have is that we would hope that we would be able to see some creative leadership in terms of how to bring a different set of diplomatic circumstances into play.

And probably the best example of that that I would just encourage you to consider while you're going through this is the way that we were dealing with China in the early 1970s. China was a rogue nation with nukes, with an American war on its borders. We had had no contact with this country for more than 20 years after the communists took over in 1949. When we aggressively moved forward diplomatically with China, we took nothing off the table.

And by the way, the Chinese were directly involved in Vietnam at the time. They were providing military hardware, the same which you're talking about with Iran. They had activities, military activities in Vietnam. We took nothing off the table. We didn't abandon any of our alliances. But we, through diplomatic process, tried to reach something that also embraced the historic realities of that region.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, I think if you'll read my statement that

you will see that kind of spirit in it. If you want to use the international relations theorist concept that what you would want to do is to try through every means possible to help Iran evolve from a revolutionary state, i.e. one that is not satisfied with the general status quo to one that is more of a status quo regional power. In fact, as I have testified before this body before, Ambassador Crocker and I supported the conduct of the three rounds of negotiations that have taken place, the trilateral talks between Iraq, the United States and Iran. Regrettably, it does not appear that there was progress as a result of those. That doesn't mean that you should necessarily stop them, but I certainly think that what Secretary Gates said the other day about determining how we can gather more leverage, again, more whatever kinds of support that we can, because right now, I think, as he said, it's an open question as to whether with the current circumstances, additional rounds of negotiations would be productive.

SEN. WEBB: Thank you. My time is up, but I'm glad we were able to get that on the record.

GEN. PETRAEUS: I am too, Senator. Thank you.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

Senator Webb, by the way, Secretary Gates, Senator Webb, has committed to consult with us on those agreements that you talked about, and I just want to reinforce your point, Senator Warner's point

on that. That commitment is out there. It's public and it's important.

SEN. WEBB: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you.

Senator Martinez?

SEN. MEL MARTINEZ (R-FL): Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Gentlemen, I want to extend my word of thanks to both of you for your service, and make that extension to your families, as well. I also want to commend you both for the undeniable success that you have achieved militarily in Iraq and the benefit that it has had to what we hope will be a more stable region and certainly to make our country more secure.

General Petraeus, when you were speaking earlier of the incidents, I wonder if you have the chart that shows -- this chart here, is that part of your --

GEN. PETRAEUS: I don't think we brought any of the (big boards ?) this time, Senator.

SEN. MARTINEZ: Okay. All right. I love your charts.

But, you know, when you look at the pattern, it clearly shows a steep decline, which I would say corresponds to the new initiative and the offensive that we went on in February of '07. Would you agree that that has had the kind of effect that we see now in the lessened violence? violence?)

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, it is certainly exactly what has happened. We had to have the surge of offensives to take away -- with our Iraqi partners -- to take away some of the sanctuaries and safe havens that al Qaeda and its Sunni extremist partners had, and in some cases, also that militia extremists were employing. That has enabled, over time, the increase of control by legitimate security forces of areas that were, at one time, beyond their control and has brought down the level of security incidents commensurate. And it is a very significant reduction, as you note.

SEN. MARTINEZ: You -- first of all, as you undertake your new command, I want to welcome you to Florida, to MacDill, to Tampa. We're awfully proud that you're going to be one of our residents, and we will welcome you there. It'd be an honor to have you as a resident of Florida.

But in this broader responsibility, we know that there are problems in Lebanon and continue to see Syria's activities in the region, including their own very obvious, now, nuclear ambitions,

which would be hugely destabilizing to the region. In the broader Middle Eastern situation, it does appear that the arm of Iran is ever-present in all these situations, and I know you discuss our diplomatic initiatives, who have really borne no fruit. How do you anticipate that we will deal with the continuing challenges that Iran poses to peace and security in the Middle Eastern region?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, Senator, starting inside Iraq, we will certainly continue what we have done now increasingly in support of our Iraqi partners. As I mentioned, one of the results of the operation in Basra is they have seen these massive caches of weapons -- for example, over 2,000 rounds of artillery and mortar rounds, hundreds and hundreds of rockets, thousands of pounds of explosive RPGs and all the rest -- is to realize that their neighbor to the east has been undermining their security. And they have indeed generated enormous concerns, as a result, sent their delegation, had other talks, and so forth.

More broadly, we have to assist the government in Lebanon as it comes to grips with what to do with a similar militia issue there, and we have just seen Lebanese Hezbollah, as I mentioned in my statement, carrying out a very intimidating activity in West Beirut and challenging, again, the sovereignty of that government.

We need to do the same with respect to Syria, which partners with Iran in some of these activities. We believe, for example, that RPG

29s that were originally sold to Syria back in 1999 eventually made their way to Lebanese Hezbollah, to Iran, and then into the hands of the Iranian-supported special groups and were used in Iraq.

So combating that trafficking is also very important.

Ultimately, it will take unified action. Ideally, you would like to do it, as Senator Webb rightly is encouraging, with a variety of different engagements and so forth, if that is possible.

And as I said, I would agree right now with the Secretary of Defense when he said that it's an open question as to the value of negotiations in the current circumstances. But that's not to say that you can't try to change those current circumstances, try to develop some additional leverage -- and it's about leverage. And with the community of nations -- many of whom share concerns about the issues of nuclear proliferation and the possibility of a regional arms race with respect to Iran -- that, again, you can galvanize action that could encourage Iran, again, to be a more responsible partner of the nations in the region and cease some of this activity that has been so damaging and destabilizing in various countries in the region.

SEN. MARTINEZ: I believe you mentioned that you also had incredible finds of caches in the Sadr City area, as the Iraqi forces as well as ours have moved through that area. And did I hear you say earlier that --

GEN. PETRAEUS: If I could clarify, Senator --

SEN. MARTINEZ: Okay.

GEN. PETRAEUS: There are significant finds. They are not yet of the scale of Basra, but of course, they've only been going at it for a couple of days. Now, there have also been significant caches in other areas in which militia elements were located, in and around Baghdad and in other southern provinces as well.

SEN. MARTINEZ: Did I hear you mention earlier that one of these caches had been found in Sadr City in a hospital?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Yeah, it was, Senator. That was used as a location where quite a substantial amount of weaponry, explosives and other devices was stored by the militia.

SEN. MARTINEZ: General Odierno, one last question. My time is about to expire. I know that -- General Petraeus testified before the committee. In answer to one of my questions, he indicated that 107-millimeter rockets that the Sadrists and Shi'a special groups were firing into the international zone. And now I'm told that prior to this most recent cease-fire, these have been as large now as 240 millimeters. I wonder what your plan as you take over this command is in terms of protecting the border with Iran better, to enable the

Iraqi forces as well as ours to impede the flow of weaponry from Iran directly.

GEN. ODIERNO: Senator, I would just say we've been working very diligently over the last several months to improve the ports of entry along the Iranian border by adding a significant amount of transition teams and our individuals to help train and provide oversight to the Iraqis. Now, first what we want to do is close these ports of entry, make it very difficult for anybody to get illegal weapons and other things through these ports.

And we've done that by a series of other measures: collecting biometrics and other things on individuals who come through there.

In addition, we'll work with the Iraqis in order then to also secure the areas, in between these ports of entry, and assist them with intelligence capacity and allow them then to help to shut down hopefully these networks that are long-standing networks and very complex and very difficult.

Many of these networks have been established for many years and have used to transit other goods besides weapons. And so it will take a lot of hard work for us to get inside of those. But we are working with the Iraqis on that. And I believe that is one of our major tasks as we continue to move forward.

General Petraeus mentioned earlier that there has been a significant amount of work done along the Syrian border here, in the last month or so, going after the ratlines there. And we've learned some good lessons there that, I think, we'll be able to also utilize on the Iranian border as well, sir.

(Cross talk.)

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Martinez. I'm afraid we're going to have to end it to give Senator Pryor a chance to have his turn.

And then Senator Pryor, would you recess us until my return, which will be sometime between this vote and the second vote? Thank you.

SEN. MARK PRYOR (D-AR): I'll be glad to. Thank you.

Thank you both for being here and thank you for your service and all the things that you give. It's good to see both of you again.

General Petraeus, let me start with you if I may. I have some questions not about Iraq but about Afghanistan. And not to get into all the background, all the details, because we do have a vote, so I'll try to keep my questions short.

But Admiral Fallon said that we have a need for 2,000 additional

soldiers and Marines to conduct training and security missions inside Afghanistan. I know that General Conway has stated that he has enough to go in and clear but not enough to hold certain areas in Afghanistan.

And my first question to you is, do you think we need 2,000 additional troops inside Afghanistan?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I do and I think that General McNeill may assess the requirement even larger.

However I would point out that actually there are over 2,000 additional forces that have been provided, I believe, since Admiral Fallon made that statement. And they're on the ground, the Marines. In fact, the withdrawal of the MEU from Iraq helped reduce some of the pressure and allowed that.

SEN. PRYOR: Just to clarify that, I know that at one point, there were 3,400 additional that were sent.

GEN. PETRAEUS: That's actually the number that's on the ground right now. It's a good bit larger than just the 2,000.

SEN. PRYOR: Okay. My understanding is, the requests or the statements were in the context of 2,000 additional on top of that 3,400. Do you know?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I do not know that for a fact. I mean, I would agree however that there is a requirement for additional forces; that NATO is providing some additional forces; and that we likely will have to come to grips with how and if and when additional U.S. forces are provided as well.

SEN. PRYOR: Do we have those forces available today to do that?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Depends on the level of risk that we would assign. It would be an enormous challenge for our services. They would have to come out of cycle in most cases. Because as the service chiefs and vice chief of the Army have forthrightly reported, there is little strategic flexibility until this recocking process, if you will, following the drawdown of the surge, is complete.

SEN. PRYOR: And right now I know that there are, I think, scheduled -- there's 3,500 Marines -- I think we just maybe mentioned them -- that went over in March into Afghanistan.

And they're, I think, going to be there for seven months, if I'm not mistaken. You would know more about the details than I do. So that would put him in October of '08. Do we have the forces to replace those 3,500 and then do the addition on top of that?

GEN. PETRAEUS: First of all, I -- again, I've got to get a good bit better into the details of those kinds of specific deployments,

but in general, the campaign season starts to end around that time. As you know, as the snow sets in, the tactical activity in the winter is dramatically reduced. And I think that there would be a degree of comfort with not replacing them at that time, although there clearly would be -- need to be a replacement when the spring comes, either by NATO or U.S. or a combination of both.

SEN. PRYOR: You understand the concern, though, that if we don't have adequate forces there, maybe, for example, we can go in and clear but not hold --

GEN. PETRAEUS: Absolutely.

GEN. ODIERNO: Certainly.

SEN. PRYOR: Yeah. That's a big concern that the -- I know the Senate will have.

GEN. PETRAEUS: And it's also why they're trying to build the Afghan national security forces as well, as you know.

SEN. PRYOR: Right. Let me change gears here a little bit. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY '09 had a provision in there, we call it Section 1206, that has to do with our ability to help foreign military forces conduct counterterrorism operations and support the growth of those capabilities for other militaries.

However, there was a GAO report that said that the DOD and the multinational force in Iraq cannot fully account for the Iraqi force's receipt of U.S. funded equipment. And do you have any comments on that? Do you know anything about that?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, we've had the GAO and have also had invited, in fact, the DOD IG in to look at the specific case of accountability of weapons, especially those that were issued to the forces during some pretty tough days during the 2004, early 2005 time frame. Over time, actually, the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, which has worked hard over the past year to do this, has actually reestablished accountability, if you will, for a substantial portion of the weapons that initially were reported as not being accounted for. And they continue that effort.

Beyond that, there have been substantial changes made over time that really started in the spring of 2005 as we were able to build the logistics and property accountability teams that were needed in the Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq but not available early on to enable the Iraqis to track their property, their most important property in a manner that is closer to the way that we track ours. Now we actually even use biometrics with the issue of M-16s and M-4 rifles that have been purchased -- U.S. weapons that have been purchased for them -- with their money, I might add, through FMS.

SEN. PRYOR: I think what I'm hearing you say is the

accountability is very important, to make sure that we know where the weapons are going and --

GEN. PETRAEUS: Absolutely.

And also that there have been significant changes to improve the accountability process over time during our time in Iraq.

SEN. PRYOR: Right.

Well, with that, I'm going to have to end my questioning because I need to get over for this vote. But again, I want to thank you. And I know that Senator Levin will be back here in just a few moments, but again, thank you for your service and all that you do and your testimony today.

So with that, what I'll do is I'll recess this hearing subject to the call of the chair, which I understand will be in just a few minutes.

Thank you.

(Brief recess.)

SEN. LEVIN: (Sounds gavel.) The committee will come back to order.

Senator Clinton.

SEN. HILLARY CLINTON (D-NY): Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I want to thank both General Petraeus and General Odierno for their service, which has now extended in Iraq over a number of years. When I was in Iraq in 2003, I was hosted by General Odierno, and here we are in 2008 talking about the way forward and trying to determine how best to resolve the difficulties we face.

And I congratulate both of you on the work that you've done and the incredible leadership you've provided.

I want to turn, General Petraeus, to your broader area of responsibility, should you be confirmed to head the Central Command. And I know that you've had some questions during the course of the morning about Afghanistan, but I want to just focus on that for a minute.

I have been increasingly concerned that we have lost the initiative, both militarily and diplomatically. The recent announcement by the new Pakistani government with respect to the agreement reached with the Taliban is concerning to me. Obviously, we have to have as much of a focus as we can bring to Afghanistan. And I would ask you, General Petraeus, based on your assessment at this

moment in time, do we have enough troops to achieve success, however success is defined, in Afghanistan?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Senator, I think that General McNeill has been on the record and so has Admiral Fallon about the requirement for additional forces in Afghanistan. Some have been provided, as you know, by the United States in the form of the Marines that have gone on the ground. And then there are also pledges from NATO nations as a result of the recent meetings for some additional forces. I am not sure that that will be all that are required. And one of the early efforts that I have to undertake will be, in fact, a trip to the Afghan-Pakistan region to spend some time on the ground.

I've recently, actually, met with our U.S. commanders who are in Afghanistan, also the ambassador and others. I think that in the areas of the U.S. forces that we have -- generally have the initiative, but it's in some of the other areas, particularly in the southern part of the country, where, in fact, we might need to regain that initiative. And that may, indeed, take additional forces. And that's something that I've got to look very hard at.

Also, you alluded to Pakistan and the situation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Northwestern Frontier Province. Clearly, concerns there, as well. That is, of course, where al Qaeda senior leadership is resident. Their ability and the ability of the Taliban to send fighters from those areas into Afghanistan is very

destabilizing. And clearly, there has to be a good deal of provision of assistance to the Pakistani government by the United States and other coalition partners from throughout the world to help this new government as it solidifies its coalition and comes to grips with how to deal with those problems in the FATA and in Northwestern Frontier Province.

SEN. CLINTON: Well, I certainly urge a much greater amount of attention because I agree with CIA Director Hayden that if the U.S. is going to suffer another attack on our own soil it will most certainly originate from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region. And in your advance policy question responses, you talked about al Qaeda and associated groups being the greatest terrorist threats we face, and clearly that's not confined to Afghanistan or Pakistan but also Yemen, the Horn of Africa and other places that will now be in your area of responsibility.

If we accept that, which I do, that there is a greater threat coming from there than anywhere else, what are you going to do to help elevate the attention that is paid? I mean, it has been the forgotten front lines in the war against terrorism. And we have allowed what was an initial success to, if not deteriorate, certainly stagnate. And I'm, you know, concerned that we need to engage the country again in this effort against al Qaeda.

How large a priority do you believe tracking down Osama bin Laden

should be?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Well, it should be a very high priority. And having met with Director Hayden actually recently, about two weeks ago in Qatar, together with the U.S. ambassadors to Pakistan and Afghanistan, the JSOC commander, or Special Operations Force commander, and the current Central Command commander, Lieutenant General Marty Dempsey, it is very clear that there is a very considerable focus on that.

Again, having said that, I think there clearly is more that can and should be done in helping the new government in Pakistan, because it is -- this is a Pakistani problem that has both repercussions and is in -- does create enormous violence inside Pakistan but, as you point out, has global implications as well.

You mentioned the other areas in the region. I am actually fairly well acquainted, because of the location of Lieutenant General McChrystal in -- out my AOR, current AOR, of a number of the activities that are ongoing in these other areas that you mentioned, all of which are indeed concerning.

I would also, though, point out that al Qaeda has been quite open about the fact that it sees its main effort to be in Iraq and that it of course is appropriate, again, to do everything that we can there to pursue al Qaeda-Iraq. And that is in fact what is ongoing. There has

been, as you know, substantial progress against al Qaeda in Iraq, and that is an effort that we also do want to continue very much and in fact has benefitted considerably from the recent offensive directed by Prime Minister Maliki in Mosul and in the greater province of Nineveh.

SEN. CLINTON: Well, I know that we may not agree about what the principal emphasis should be with respect to our efforts against al Qaeda, because certainly the ongoing threat to the United States on our soil emanates out -- from outside of Iraq, in my opinion. And I think that we've got to raise the visibility of our efforts with respect to al Qaeda's presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, particularly along the border; its efforts to set up subsidiaries in Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere; because, from the perspective as a senator from New York now six and a half years after 9/11, it is deeply troubling that we have not captured or killed or essentially decapitated the capacity of al Qaeda under the leadership it had in 2001, which is still the leadership it has today.

I just wanted to ask one question, if I could, of General Odierno. Because obviously, the cycle of repeated and extended deployments are ones that we hear a lot about. The use of National Guard, the Reserves -- last time I was there with Senator Bayh, we saw a lot of people who were born at approximately at the same time I was who had been called back up in the Individual Readiness Reserve pool. How many troops, General Odierno, do you plan to have in Iraq for the provincial elections in October? Will you request a temporary

increase in troops?

GEN. ODIERNO: Senator, I will never say never, but my assessment now is with the progress we're making, the progress we're seeing in the Iraqi security forces and what I'm seeing is the security environment on the ground, I -- currently, I do not believe we will need an increase. I think we'll be able to do it with the forces that are on the ground there now or what we'll get to as of -- in July. I feel fairly comfortable with that. Obviously, the environment and the enemy has a vote, but currently, I believe, we should not need an increase.

SEN. CLINTON: And finally, General, if there were a decision by the president, in your professional estimation, how long would a responsible withdrawal from Iraq take?

GEN. ODIERNO: Senator, it's a very difficult question. And the reason is because there's a number of assumptions and factors that I would have to understand first based on, you know, how do we want to leave -- the environmental issues within Iraq, what would be the final end state, what is the effect on the ground, what is the security mission on the ground. So I don't think I can give you an answer now, but I certainly, at the time, if asked, we would do a -- and we do planning. We do a significant amount of planning to make sure than an appropriate answer is given, and we would lay out a timeline in order to do that.

SEN. CLINTON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thanks to the witnesses and their families.

SEN. LEVIN: Thank you, Senator Clinton.

Let me thank our witnesses. Just one quick question of General Petraeus. You were asked about the security contractors, and I would ask that -- these are complicated provisions that are very carefully laid out in terms of discretionary action that could affect the international relations of the United States. And I'm wondering whether you've read all those particular provisions?

GEN. PETRAEUS: Sir, I have not. All I was responding to is the question as I understood it here today.

SEN. LEVIN: All right. Well, I'm wondering if you could take a look at them -- it takes up two pages of our bill -- and then give us your comment for the record, because I think you would find these to be very carefully set forth. Would that be okay?

GEN. PETRAEUS: I'll do that, Senator.

SEN. LEVIN: And also, we have been in touch with you about the situation of the Christian communities in Iraq. We thank you for your

awareness of that problem. There are security issues, and we would ask you particularly, I guess, General Odierno, to pick up that sensitivity and keep that concern very much in your mind.

GEN. ODIERNO: Yes, Senator, I understand.

SEN. LEVIN: We thank you. And we will now stand adjourned. We thank you both. And this -- we hope that we'll bring your nominations to the floor as promptly as possible.

GEN. PETRAEUS: Thank you, Chairman.

SEN. LEVIN: (Strikes gavel.)

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