

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

“An Oversight Hearing on the Planning and Conduct of the War in Iraq”

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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members, it is an honor and a privilege to participate in the discussion of what may be the most important security matter of this generation. I will not discuss the mistakes that brought us to this point in Iraq, but rather focus on what we must do if we wish to achieve success. Any discussion of what I perceive to be mistakes will be only to provide context for the subsequent recommendations.

Our removal of the Saddam Regime introduced major instability not just in Iraq, but in the greater Middle East. For generations, historians will argue why. For our purposes, we simply have to accept it as a fact. We are where we are and cannot go back. We must bring a stable, friendly government to Iraq. Failure will be a strategic defeat with a loss of power in the Middle East of such magnitude that our children will be struggling to recover from it. Thus we have to answer one fundamental question: how do we accomplish the goal of a stable, united, friendly Iraq? Frankly, neither the Administration’s approach of staying the course nor the various proposals for an announced, time-phased withdrawal will accomplish that goal.

On the positive side, our strategy for Iraq, as expressed by Ambassador Khalizad and General Casey, is solid. “Clear-Hold-Build” is a sound approach for counterinsurgency. While the character of insurgency has changed significantly in the last 30 years, the fact remains that it can only be defeated by good governance. The first step, security for the people, is the fundamental responsibility of any government. If we fail to provide that security, nothing else matters. Only when people are secure in their daily lives do they have the freedom to support their government. The “Clear” and “Hold” steps of our strategy address that issue. The “Build” phase addresses the other basic requirement of good governance – providing the people with hope for a better future. However, it must be their view of a better future, not ours.

Given this well thought-out strategy, it is particularly distressing that the Administration has failed to resource any part of it. The Administration has repeatedly stated that war in Iraq is critical to security of the United States, yet it has asked nothing of the majority of U.S. citizens. While asking major sacrifices, to include the ultimate

sacrifice, from those Americans who are serving in Iraq, we are not even asking our fellow citizens to pay for the war – instead we are charging it to our children and grandchildren. In short, the burden has fallen on the less than one percent of Americans who have served in Iraq. And we have not even provided them with sufficient personnel, equipment or resources to accomplish their mission. The disconnect between our rhetoric and our actions is astonishing.

To move forward in Iraq, we have to achieve three things:

1. Create unity of effort across all U.S. agencies and contractors.
2. Put the U.S. Government on a wartime footing.
3. Truly make supporting the Iraqi government and security forces our priority effort.

The first requirement in fighting an insurgency is unity of effort. To date, the Administration has refused to empower one individual to cut through the bureaucratic infighting and focus our effort in Iraq. As a result, the U.S. civil, military and contractor efforts are poorly coordinated and at times seem to be working at cross purposes. The lack of unity on our part makes it even more difficult to unify the fractious efforts of the new Iraqi government. Given the stove-piped nature of our bureaucracy and the diverse range of contractors we have chosen to employ in Iraq, achieving this unity will be difficult. Historically, successful unity of effort comes from placing a single individual in charge of the effort in-country. In the U.S. system, this must be the ambassador. That individual is given guidance by the President and is genuinely his personal representative. Based on the President's guidance, the ambassador sets the policy, strategy and approach for all U.S. forces in-country. There can not be separate chains of command that the various elements of the U.S. effort can use to bypass the in-country authority. It must be made clear to all U.S. personnel that bypassing the ambassador is cause for immediate relief.

Once the ambassador has the authority, he needs the right people. We need legislation now that does for the entire U.S. Government what Goldwater-Nichols did for the services. While it took a decade or more for the legislation to have its desired effect, Goldwater-Nichols forced us to learn to operate as a team. Since we know that insurgencies are measured in decades, not years, legislation passed now can provide critical assistance to the ambassador in coordinating U.S. efforts. Such legislation must go beyond what Goldwater-Nichols did for the services. It must provide the career, monetary and disciplinary incentives that will allow our federal agencies to encourage and, if necessary, order the right personnel to serve overseas. Insurgencies cannot be defeated by military action. They require all elements of government. To date, we have failed to provide civilian personnel in sufficient numbers with the right expertise and maturity to advise the new Iraqi government.

Once unity of effort is established and personnel provided, we can then effectively focus resources on our Clear-Hold-Build strategy. The Administration has rightly stated that our number one priority is building the Iraqi security services. Yet it has failed to provide sufficient advisors or equipment for the Iraqi forces essential to the “Clear” and “Hold” efforts. More importantly, it has consistently failed to provide sufficient civilian expertise and presence for the essential “Build” element of the strategy.

It is clear that while the armed forces are at war, the nation as a whole, the U.S. Government and even the Pentagon itself are not. The U.S. Government, and the Pentagon in particular, have continued with business as usual. While some parts of the Pentagon are working exceptionally hard to support our forces in Iraq, the rest of the organization has continued its peacetime routine. I must note here that I have never served in the Pentagon so my observations are those of an outsider, unfamiliar with the internal operations of the Department of Defense and service staffs.

However, to an outsider, this failure to mobilize seems to be rooted in the Pentagon’s continuing belief that this war will be short, and therefore we must not disturb the normal operations of the institution for what is perceived as a short-term commitment. Here is a prime example of paying lip service to the concept of a “long war” but not taking the actions that indicate we believe our own rhetoric. Our enemies and allies recognize this lack of seriousness. The simple act of making the war a genuine priority will greatly discourage our enemies and encourage our allies. But our actions must match our deeds.

Simply put, the leadership has failed to acknowledge we are in a war and failed to act in a wide range of areas. Two of the most important are personnel policies and procurement policies.

The current U.S. Government personnel systems are actively hostile to a successful counterinsurgency effort. The current systems grew out of the personnel reforms of 1900 that were implemented by Secretary of War Elihu Root. These systems worked well for our forces in World War I and World War II, but were failing by the time of Korea and broke down badly in Vietnam. Insurgencies are long struggles by nature. The Chinese fought for twenty-seven years. The Vietnamese for thirty years. The Palestinians have been at it for almost forty years with no end in sight. Yet our military and civilian personnel policies still emphasize short tours with rapid rotation of key personnel. The cliché is that our military did not have ten years of experience in Vietnam, but one year of experience, ten times. Almost all thoughtful studies point to the enormous problems caused by the one-year tours. Unfortunately, those personnel policies have only gotten worse. Today a large number of our forces spend only three to seven months in country. And, of course, we still have no system to provide the language and cultural training essential to working effectively with the Iraqis.

The armed services have all the necessary authority to change our personnel policies. It is a failure of leadership and imagination that has prevented it. As in Vietnam, the military personnel system has simply refused to adjust to the reality on the

ground. I have heard cynics say we would rather lose the war than change our personnel system.

As stated above, we need legislation now that provides the incentives to insure we have the right mix of civilian personnel necessary to provide effective advisors to the Iraqi civilian ministries. If incentives prove insufficient, we must grant all our federal departments the authority they need to order their personnel overseas. While this sounds harsh, it is necessary. Where this authority already exists, it must be used.

The Administration has stated repeatedly, and correctly, that only the Iraqis can win this war. Yet its actions again do not match its rhetoric. We still provide insufficient numbers of advisors, and too often advisors are treated as the second team in both the civilian and military worlds.

While we still have a long way to go, we have made significant improvements to the advisory system at the tactical level. Unfortunately, we have not done so well at levels above battalion. The key areas that need improvement are the size and the resources provided to the advisory teams. Currently we assign only ten men to a team. This is simply an insufficient number to provide the close contact the Iraqi Army needs to achieve full capability. Advisory teams should be 50-60 men per Iraqi battalion, with proportionate increases at every level above that. Further, we need to get serious about training for these personnel. The Army and Marine Corps currently provide short courses prior to deployment. In Vietnam, these courses lasted from six months to a year, to insure the advisors had at least a working knowledge of the language and a true understanding of the role of an advisor. Advising a unit is much more difficult than commanding one. A successful advisory tour should be an essential step on the path to promotion. Only our very best officers and non-commissioned officers should be selected, trained and deployed in these critical billets. In short, our military leadership must match its actions to its rhetoric.

On the civilian side, we have failed to provide both the numbers and experience necessary to assist the Iraqis in establishing functioning departments that provide the essential civil element of any counterinsurgency. In addition to effective legislation, it will require a major mental shift in the civilian agencies of the U.S. Government to emphasize providing these key personnel for our effort in Iraq.

Another critical problem area is procurement. Everyone is painfully aware of how long it took us to provide armored HMMWVs for our troops in Iraq. It took even longer to provide armored trucks. This is despite the fact that improvised explosive devices (IEDs) were, and continue to be, the largest casualty producers in the conflict. Finally, three years after we encountered the first IEDs, we are nearing the point where we will have some form of armor for our forces. We are just beginning to provide the same for Iraqi forces. The Pentagon considers this a major achievement.

I find this amazing. Since the first IEDs exploded in the summer of 2003, we have known that there are better, safer vehicles available than the armored HMMWV.

Yet we have made very little effort to provide them to our troops. The Pentagon has purchased M1117 Armored Security Vehicles, a vastly superior vehicle to the HMMWV. Yet over three years into the fight, we have procured only about 1,000 of these vehicles. While Katrina had a devastating impact on the one facility that produces these vehicles, I find it remarkable that a nation that could go from producing a few hundred planes per year to over 50,000 a year in three years at the beginning of WWII is still limited to 48 M1117's per month. In fact, U.S. industry can produce more and faster. The Administration has simply refused to dedicate the resources necessary to make it happen.

The M1117 Armored Security Vehicle is just one of a number of vehicles vastly superior to the armored HMMWV for the missions in Iraq. AM General, in partnership with the Turkish firm Otokar, produces the Cobra using the HMMWV drive train and frame but with armored, boat-shaped hull that provides greatly improved protection from blast. Further, it can be equipped with a fully protected weapons turret. It can provide the smaller vehicle necessary to operate in many of the restricted urban areas in Iraq. In addition to purchasing these vehicles for U.S. forces, we should buy large numbers for the Iraqi Army. While we provide armored HMMWVs for most U.S. troops, we still expect our Iraqi allies to travel in open-backed trucks.

These two examples are symptoms of a much greater problem — the Pentagon's refusal to act as if we are at war. Since World War II, America has prided itself on providing whatever its servicemen and women needed to get the job done. In this war, we have not. Our procurement has not only been slow, we have failed to buy the best available. Further, the Administration has categorically failed to maintain or replace the equipment necessary for the units in the U.S. to be ready for other potential operations. The Chief of Staff of the Army and Commandant of the Marine Corps have highlighted the fact their services need almost \$30 billion just to reset the force, never mind procuring the better, more effective equipment currently available.

The American people have not refused to provide what our service people need, the Administration has refused to ask. It is essential that we fund both the backlogs and the new procurement on a wartime basis. We did not ask our soldiers to invade France in 1944 with the same armor they trained on in 1941. Why are we asking our soldiers and marines to use the same armor we found was insufficient in 2003? The failure to provide the best equipment is a serious moral failure on the part of our leadership. This brings me to my final point.

The critical issue is leadership. All of the suggestions I have made will not be carried out unless the leadership believes it needs to be done. Given the fact that the Secretary of Defense has not acknowledged the numerous, serious mistakes made to date, I do not believe it is possible for him to provide the leadership necessary to succeed in Iraq. It is time for him to provide the nation the last in a long series of services, and step down.

In conclusion, we have lost three critical years in the essential task of rebuilding Iraq. We need to take action now to make our effort match our strategy. If we are unwilling to do so, then we will fail.