

**HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON THE
SITUATION IN IRAQ AND PROGRESS MADE
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN MEET-
ING THE BENCHMARKS AND ACHIEVING
RECONCILIATION**

Wednesday, April 9, 2008

U.S. SENATE
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:33 a.m. in Room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, Hon. Carl Levin, chairman of the committee, presiding.

Committee Members Present: Senators Levin [presiding], Kennedy, Lieberman, Reed, Ben Nelson, Webb, McCain, Warner, Sessions, Collins, Chambliss, Graham, and Thune.

Committee staff members present: Richard D. DeBobes, Staff Director, and Leah C. Brewer, Nominations and Hearings Clerk.

Majority staff members present: Daniel J. Cox, Jr., Professional Staff Member, Michael J. Noblet, Professional Staff Member, and William K. Sutey, Professional Staff Member.

Minority staff members present: Michael V. Kostiw, Republican Staff Director, William M. Caniano, Professional Staff Member, Paul C. Hutton IV, Research assistant, David M. Morriss, Minority Counsel, Lynn F. Rusten, Professional Staff Member, and Dana W. White, Professional Staff Member.

Staff assistants present: Fletcher L. Cork, Kevin A. Cronin, and Brian F. Sebold.

Committee members' assistants present: Bethany Bassett, assistant to Senator Kennedy, Sharon L. Waxman, assistant to Senator Kennedy, Colleen J. Shogan, assistant to Senator Lieberman, Elizabeth King, assistant to Senator Reed, Andrew R. Vanlandingham, assistant to Senator Ben Nelson, Jon Davey, assistant to Senator Bayh, Gordon I. Peterson, assistant to Senator Webb, Richard H. Fontaine, Jr., assistant to Senator McCain, Sandra Luff, assistant to Senator Warner, Todd Stiefler, assistant to Senator Sessions, Meghan Simonds, assistant to Senator Collins, Mark J. Winter, assistant to Senator Collins, Clyde A. Taylor IV, assistant to Senator Chambliss, Andrew King, assistant to Senator Graham, Lindsey Neas, assistant to Senator Dole, and Jason Van Beek, assistant to Senator Thune.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CARL LEVIN, U.S. SENATOR
FROM MICHIGAN**

Chairman LEVIN. Good morning, everybody.

Let us first welcome our panel of witnesses to continue this committee's series of hearings this week on the situation in Iraq.

Yesterday, we heard from General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker, and tomorrow afternoon we will hear from Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Today, we're going to hear from three distinguished witnesses:

Dr. Andrew Bacevich, professor of international relations and history at Boston University, has written extensively on U.S. national and military strategies and on the situation in Iraq. He is a retired Army officer and a Vietnam vet.

General Jack Keane is a former Vice Chief of Staff of the Army who has visited Iraq several times. He has testified before the committee previously on this very subject, and is surely an expert on the subject.

Dr. Robert Malley has also written on the situation in Iraq from his position as Middle East and North Africa program director at the International Crisis Group. And he is a former member of the staff of the National Security Council.

It's clear from General Petraeus's testimony yesterday that the administration's open-ended commitment in Iraq is going to continue, now reinforced by an open-ended pause. General Petraeus has recommended to his chain of command that there be a 45-day period of consolidation and evaluation, in his words, which will then be followed by a, quote, "process of assessment," which will determine, over time, when he can make recommendations for further reductions.

General Petraeus was unwilling to estimate how long this period of assessment would last, would not even agree that it could be concluded in 3 or 4 months and then redeployment would recommence. This is a far cry from what Secretary Gates described in February as a projected, quote, "brief pause." Moreover, General Petraeus was unwilling to venture an estimate of U.S. troop strength in Iraq at the end of the year, even if all goes well.

It was also clear from General Petraeus's testimony that Prime Minister Maliki's action in Basrah once again demonstrated Prime Minister Maliki incompetence. I asked General Petraeus about an April 3rd article in the New York Times which said that, before the Iraqi government's assault on the Mahdi army in Basrah, that he, General Petraeus, had counseled Prime Minister Maliki, saying, quote, "We made a lot of gains in the past 6 to 9 months that you'll be putting at risk." I also asked General Petraeus about that same article's statement that he advised Prime Minister Maliki not to rush into a fight without carefully sizing up the situation and making adequate preparations. General Petraeus acknowledged that Prime Minister Maliki did not follow his advice, that the operation was not adequately planned or prepared. In effect, U.S. troops—with no control over an Iraqi operation in a province which had already been turned over to Iraqi control, our troops were drawn into the fight when that operation went bad.

It is also clear from Ambassador Crocker's testimony that, after 5 years of training and equipping the Iraqi security forces, and after 5 years of reconstruction, it is still the American taxpayer who is shouldering the greatest economic burden in Iraq, while tens of billions of dollars in Iraqi money sit in bank accounts around the world.

There is a vast agreement—I believe there is a consensus—that there is no military solution to the situation in Iraq, no matter how dedicated our troops may be, and no matter how much military success they achieve. To maximize success in Iraq, the Iraqi government must take control—politically, economically, and militarily. The Iraqis must make the political compromises to bring all factions into the political system and effect political reconciliation. They must spend their own oil revenues to improve the lives of all Iraqi citizens. They must take the military initiative, using the training and equipment that we've provided them, to subdue the politically irreconcilable and criminal elements in Iraqi society. We cannot do for the Iraqis; they must do for themselves. The open-ended commitment that the administration maintains, now reinforced by a suspension of further U.S. troop reductions beginning in July, works against getting the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own country.

We look forward to hearing our witnesses' assessment of the security situation in Iraq, the political progress in Iraq, and any recommendations that they may have with respect to a future U.S. military, political, diplomatic, and economic strategy for Iraq and the larger region.

Senator McCain?

STATEMENT OF HON. JOHN McCAIN, U.S. SENATOR FROM ARIZONA

Senator McCAIN. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I join you in welcoming our distinguished panel this morning, and I want to thank them for their presence here and their willingness to share their views about U.S. policy and strategy in Iraq.

Yesterday, we heard from Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus on progress in Iraq and their views of the way forward. We still have difficulties, as demonstrated by the recent fighting in Basrah and Baghdad. Yet, the gains outlined yesterday, in security, political, and economic terms, are real.

Tomorrow, the President will address the Nation to provide further information on his decisions about the way ahead in Iraq, to be followed soon thereafter by the testimony before this committee by the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

With all of these inputs into our policymaking process, the Congress will face, again, the choice it confronted last year. We can build on the progress we have seen, acknowledging that there will be setbacks and new difficulties, and give our men and women in uniform the time and support necessary to carry out their mission, or we can choose to set a timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, leading to our failure there, and presenting us with the terrible consequences that I believe will ensue.

As our witnesses no doubt recall, last year many observers predicted that the surge would fail. And yet, since the middle of last year, sectarian and ethnic violence, civilian deaths, and deaths of coalition forces have all fallen dramatically. This improved security environment has led to a new opportunity, one in which average Iraqis can, in the future, approach a more normal political and economic life. Reconciliation has moved forward, and, over the weekend, Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish leaders backed the Prime Minister in a statement supporting his operation in Basrah and urging the disarmament of all militias. Much, much more needs to be done, and Iraq's leaders need to know that we expect them to show the necessary leadership to rebuild their country, for only they can. But, today it is possible to talk with real hope and optimism about the future of Iraq and the outcome of our efforts there.

Success—the establishment of a peaceful, stable, prosperous, democratic state that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of the terrorists—I believe this success is within reach. And with success, Iraqi forces can take responsibility for enforcing security in their country, and American troops can return home with the honor of having secured their country's interests, at great personal cost, and of helping another people achieve peace and self-determination.

I hope our witnesses this morning will address the ways in which America can best achieve success in Iraq, and articulate, as well, the likely costs of our failure there.

My view has been clear. Should the United States choose to withdraw from Iraq before adequate security is established, we will exchange for victory a defeat that is terrible and long-lasting. Al Qaeda in Iraq would proclaim victory and increase its efforts to provoke sectarian tensions, pushing for a full-scale civil war that would descend into genocide and destabilize the Middle East. Iraq would become a failed state that could become a haven for terrorists to train and plan their operations. Iranian influence would increase substantially in Iraq and encourage other countries to seek accommodation with Tehran at the expense of our interests. An American failure would almost certainly require us to return to Iraq or draw us into a wider and far costlier war.

If, on the other hand, we and the Iraqis are able to build on the opportunity provided by recent successes, we have the chance to leave in Iraq a force for stability and freedom, not conflict and chaos. In doing so, we will ensure that the terrible price we have paid in the war, the price that has made all of us sick at heart, has not been paid in vain. Our troops can leave behind a successful mission. Our Nation can leave behind a country that contributes to the security of America and the world.

I know the witnesses this morning will have a great deal of insight to impart on these vitally important issues, and I look forward to their testimony.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, Senator McCain.

And, again, let us thank our witnesses for being here, for their work on this and so many other issues, for their long histories of good advice, important advice to this Nation in many, many different fora.

First, we'll call on Dr. Bacevich. I think it would be good if you could limit your testimony to 10 minutes or less so that there'll be plenty of time for questions. I'm referring to all three witnesses, not just you, Dr. Bacevich.

Thank you for being here. Dr. Bacevich?

STATEMENT OF ANDREW J. BACEVICH, PROFESSOR OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND HISTORY, BOSTON UNIVERSITY

Dr. Bacevich: Thank you for the opportunity to present my views to this committee.

I'll focus my remarks on two issues: first, near-term prospects in Iraq; and then, second, the war's larger strategic implications.

The bottom-line assessment to which I will return is this: The United States today finds itself with too much war and too few warriors. We face a large and growing gap between our military commitments and our military capabilities, and something has to give.

Let me begin with the current situation in Iraq. Although violence there has decreased over the past year, attacks on coalition and Iraqi security forces continue to occur at an average rate of 500 per week. This is clearly unacceptable. The likelihood that further U.S. efforts will reduce the violence to an acceptable level, however might—one might define that term, appears remote.

Meanwhile, our military capacity, especially our ability to keep substantial numbers of boots on the ground, is eroding. If the surge is working, as some claim, then why not sustain it? Indeed, why not reinforce that success by sending another 30- or 60- or 90,000 reinforcements? The answer to that question is self-evident: because the necessary troops don't exist, the cupboard is bare.

Furthermore, recent improvements in security are highly contingent. The Shi'ite militias, Sunni insurgents, and tribal leaders who have agreed to refrain from violence in return for arms, money, and other concessions, have by no means bought into the American vision for the future of Iraq; their interests do not coincide with our own, and we should not delude ourselves by pretending otherwise.

It is as if, in an effort to bring harmony to a fractious, dysfunctional family, we have forged marriages of convenience with as many of that family's members as possible. Our disparate partners will abide by their vows only so long as they find it convenience to do so.

Unfortunately, partial success in reducing the level of violence has not translated into any substantial political gains. Recall that the purpose of the surge was not to win the war, in a military sense. General Petraeus never promised victory. He and any number of other senior military officers have assessed the war as militarily unwinnable.

On this point, the architects of the surge were quite clear: the object of the exercise was not to impose our will on the enemy, but to facilitate political reconciliation among Iraqis.

A year later, signs of genuine reconciliation are few. In an interview with the Washington Post less than a month ago, General Petraeus said that, quote, "No one in the U.S. Government feels that there has been sufficient progress by any means in the area of national reconciliation," end of quote.

While it may be nice that the Kurds have begun to display the Iraqi flag alongside their own, to depict such grudging concessions as evidence of an emerging national identity is surely to grasp at straws.

So, although the violence has subsided somewhat, the war remains essentially stalemated. Iraq today qualifies only nominally as a sovereign nation-state. In reality, it has become a dependency of the United States, unable to manage its own affairs or to provide for the well-being of its own people.

The cost of the United—to the United States of sustaining this dependency are difficult to calculate with precision, but figures such as \$3 billion per week and 30 to 40 American lives per month provide a good approximation.

What can we expect to gain in return for this investment? The Bush administration was counting on the Iraq war to demonstrate the viability of its freedom agenda and to affirm the efficacy of the Bush doctrine of preventive war. Measured in those terms, the war has long since failed. Rather than showcasing our ability to transform the greater Middle East, Operation Iraqi Freedom has demonstrated just the opposite. Using military power as an instrument for imprinting liberal values in this part of the world has produced a failed state while fostering widespread antipathy towards the United States. Rather than demonstrating our ability to eliminate emerging threats swiftly, decisively, and economically, the Iraq war has revealed the limits of American power and called into question American competence. The Bush doctrine hasn't worked. Saddam is long gone, but we're stuck. Rather than delivering decisive victory, preventive war has landed us in a quagmire.

The abject failure of the freedom agenda and the Bush doctrine has robbed the Iraq war of any strategic rationale. The war continues, in large part because of our refusal to acknowledge and confront this loss of strategic purpose.

Now, there are members of this committee who have written of their admiration for Reinhold Niebuhr. I happen to share in that admiration. Perhaps not surprisingly, Niebuhr has much to say of relevance on this issue. He once observed that, quote, "Even the wisest statecraft cannot create social tissue. It can cut, sew, and redesign social fabric to a limited degree, but the social fabric upon which it works must be given," end of quote.

In Iraq, to the extent that any meaningful social fabric has ever existed, events have now shredded it beyond repair. Persisting in our efforts to stitch Iraq back together will exhaust our Army, divert attention from other urgent problems at home and abroad, and squander untold billions, most of which we are borrowing from foreign countries.

Therefore, the best way to close the gap between too much war and too few warriors is to reduce our commitments. That means ending the U.S. combat role in Iraq. It means exerting ourselves primarily through diplomatic means to limit the adverse consequences caused by our ill-advised crusade in Iraq. It means devising a new strategy to address the threat posed by Islamic—violent Islamic radicalism to replace the failed strategy of the freedom agenda and the Bush doctrine.

Now, there are people of goodwill, I know, who will disagree with this assessment. They will insist that we have no choice but to persevere in Iraq. They will further insist that restoring the social fabric of Iraq remains an imperative. To the extent that this counsel carries the day, then the predictable result will be to exacerbate even further the problem of having too much war for too few warriors.

Now, war is the realm of uncertainty. There's always the chance of catching some lucky break. Perhaps next year the Iraqis will get their act together and settle their internal differences. Such developments are always possible. They are also highly unlikely.

When it comes to Iraq, a far more likely prospect is the following. If the United States insists on continuing its war there, the United States will get what it wants: the war will continue indefinitely. According to General Petraeus, a counterinsurgency is typically a 10- to 12-year proposition. Given that assessment, and with the surge now giving way to a pause, U.S. combat operations in Iraq could easily drag on for another 5 to 10 years. In that event, the conflict that already ranks as the second longest in our history will claim the title of longest. Already our second most expensive war, it will become, in financial terms, the costliest of all. On one point, at least, Donald Rumsfeld will be able to claim vindication: Iraq will, indeed, have become a long slog.

Now, for the United States to pursue this course would, in my judgment, qualify as a misjudgment of epic proportions. Yet, if our political leaders insist on the necessity of fighting this open-ended war, then they owe it to those who have already borne 5 years of combat to provide some relief. Bluntly, if those in Washington are unable or unwilling to reduce the number of wars in which U.S. forces are engaged, then surely they ought to increase the number of warriors available to fight them.

Today, in a nation that, according to President Bush, is "at war," approximately one-half of 1 percent of the population is in uniform. Double that figure, and the problem of too much war for too few warriors goes away. The United States will then have the troops necessary to sustain Iraq and also Afghanistan for years to come.

Now, I do not want to minimize the challenges, political as well as economic, inherent in any such effort to expand our military, because they would be large. But, I will insist that continuing on our present course, in which soldiers head back to Iraq for their third and fourth combat tours while the rest of the country heads to the mall, will break the Army before it produces policy success. Worse, our present course, in which a few give their all while most give nothing, is morally indefensible.

If the Iraq war is as important as some claim, then sustaining the war merits a commitment on the part of the American people both to fight the war and to pay for it. If neither the American people nor their political leaders are willing to make such a commitment, then the war clearly does not qualify as genuinely important, and our loudly proclaimed determination to support the troops rings hollow. The choice is one that we can no longer afford to dodge. It's either less war or more warriors.

I urge the members of this committee to give this matter the attention it deserves. And I thank you. [The prepared statement of Dr. Bacevich follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. We thank you, Dr. Bacevich, for your statement.

General Keane?

**STATEMENT OF GENERAL JOHN M. KEANE, USA (RET.) SENIOR
MANAGING DIRECTOR, KEANE ADVISORS, LLC**

General Keane: Senator Levin, Senator McCain, and members of the committee, thank you for permitting to provide some thoughts today on our situation in Iraq.

I just returned from Iraq at the end of March, and visited three times during 2007. Let me say that the character of my visits is to spend considerable time with the Iraqi people, their sheikh and tribal leaders, as well as time with our U.S. and Iraqi military and civilian leaders, and, of course, our troops.

It is not my purpose today to repeat the assessment provided by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker provided during their lengthy testimony yesterday. However, I would like to emphasize some points of my own assessment, albeit similar to theirs, and draw several conclusions and implications.

First and foremost, we have the most talented and capable leadership team in Iraq, represented by General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. Nothing in my 40-plus years in national security compares to this extraordinary team, who provide the very best of leadership to their marvelous teammates and troops.

Let me begin by saying that our strategy in Iraq is working. And, frankly, it is doing so beyond our initial expectations. The security turnaround in Iraq from the hell of 2006 and 3 years of failed strategy is one of the most stunning achievements in the annals of counterinsurgency practice. It was achieved in a matter of months, versus the years it normally takes to turn around one of the most formidable insurgencies the West has ever faced.

Fundamental to that success was the use of proven counterinsurgency practice to protect the people with sufficient amount of Iraq and U.S. troops. This was a catalyst for the widespread Sunni Awakening Movement, which is truly underappreciated here in the United States. What really happened is, the sheikhs and tribal leaders decided they could not achieve their political objectives with the al Qaeda in fighting the United States and the Government of Iraq. As such, the overwhelming majority of Sunni insurgent leaders made four strategic decisions: (1) to stop the violence; (2) to leverage the U.S. leaders to influence the Government of Iraq; (3) to reconcile with the Government of Iraq; and (4) provide their, quote, "sons," unquote, to work with us as the—to work with us and the Iraqis to help defeat the al Qaeda and protect their own people.

These results are the very best one could expect in fighting an insurgency. Your opponent not only surrenders, but comes to your side to assist.

The entire Arab Muslim world are aware of the Sunni rejection of al Qaeda, the first major occurrence ever where the people have rejected the al Qaeda and their barbaric hold on them.

Additionally, in a recent poll, over 90 percent of Sunnis are expected to participate in the political process in the 2008 provincial election and in the general election in 2009. What does that tell us about reconciliation? Clearly, the Sunnis are politically reconciling with the Government of Iraq, and the Government of Iraq is providing some assistance.

The implication of this is that the central region of Iraq is relatively secure, and now the United States and Iraqi forces are focusing their efforts on the remaining presence of al Qaeda in the north. In my view, the al Qaeda are already operationally defeated, and the final campaign against al Qaeda is underway as we speak. We will complete that defeat of the al Qaeda in the months ahead in 2008.

Make no mistake, this is genuine progress, and it has led to a significant conclusion. We cannot lose militarily in Iraq, as we were on the verge of doing in 2006. The al Qaeda and remaining hardliner Sunni insurgents cannot mount an offensive that they could sustain which would threaten the regime.

Are we finished? No. But, we and the Iraqis have the momentum, we are on the offense, and we can finally see that winning in Iraq is now a likely outcome.

The remaining major security challenge in Iraq is in the south, where we must counter the significant Iranian influence. The Iranians have a comprehensive political, economic, diplomatic, and military strategy to accomplish two objectives: (1) to cause the United States to fail in Iraq and withdraw prematurely, and (2) to support a stable, but weak, Government of Iraq which is aligned with Iran as a result of their foothold and leverage in the south of Iraq. As such, the Iranians have been working their strategy since 2003, and have made some progress these last 2 years because of our understandable preoccupation with the al Qaeda, to rescue ourselves from the jaws of defeat in 2007, as well as the British pull-back, which gave the Iranians and their militias a free hand.

Admittedly, Maliki has taken a much needed first step to address this problem. As impulsive as he was, and while the planning and coordination was inadequate, this is the right course of action. We should not be quick to judge the success of a campaign by the first few days of action, when we know this is the beginning of a campaign which will last for months. My view is, the campaign in the south will not be as difficult as the fight against the al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents. Indeed, Maliki's political position has been considerably enhanced, because all the major political parties are supporting Maliki against the Sadrists, who are now isolated. In fact, this weekend Maliki announced that you cannot participate in the upcoming elections if your political party has a militia. This has thrown the Sadrists into disarray.

All that said, it is critical to succeed. It is in the United States national interests to defeat Iran in Iraq. To do so, we need a U.S. national and regional strategy. General Petraeus, Ambassador Crocker, and Mr. Maliki cannot do this by themselves. The strategy should have a political, diplomatic, economic, and military component.

In Iraq, there is much potential as we squeeze the military—as we squeeze the militias militarily and politically. And, as I said, I

believe it'll be much easier than the al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents. We can do much to influence the sheikhs and the tribal leaders to turn around, as the Sunnis did in the central region. In fact, Sheikh Muhazem, a leader of the Tamimi tribe in the south, which is one of the largest tribes in Iraq, stretching from Basrah to Diyala, is, as we gather here, turning against the Iranian influence and taking on the Jaish al-Mahdi. Maliki is encouraging Muhazem, and is providing financial and military support. This is significant, because we have the potential to reduce the fighting much more rapidly, as happened in the central region with the Sunnis.

In any event, the Iraqis and the U.S. forces will bring the south under security control prior to the provincial elections in the fall, in my view.

The surge or counteroffensive was always intended to buy time so that the Iraqis could make political and economic progress. This is happening. And, while there is much to be done, the progress is definable. How can anyone conclude there is no political progress, when, (1) the Sunnis are reconciling with a Shi'a-dominated government, they stopped the violence, and are providing 91,000 of their, quote, "sons" to assist us? This, after all, was the intent of the much discussed national legislative benchmarks; (2) as to the benchmarks, we, the United States Government, browbeated the Government of Iraq into submitting to a legislative agenda. After we have achieved some basic security, the Government of Iraq has made impressive political progress, passing 12 of the 18 benchmarks and making progress on five others. Significantly, four of the six legislative benchmarks, to include de-Ba'athification, amnesty, semi-autonomous regions, and provincial powers, are passed. Why is it so difficult to acknowledge that both these points—Sunni reconciliation and major national legislation—represent significant political progress?

Much of the discussion and debate surrounds, How fast should we reduce our forces? The fact is, we are reducing our combat forces some 25 percent in 2008. I believe there will be further reductions in 2009. We should prepare ourselves that we may not reduce our forces further in 2008, because of the major operations in north and south, and we do not want to squander the gains in central Iraq.

Our leaders in Iraq want to reduce our forces, as we all do. But, they simply want it to be measured. Two realities drive them: the fact that in the past we overestimated Iraqi capabilities to take over, and the fact that we underestimated enemy capabilities. They do not want to make those mistakes again. Erring on the side of caution makes sense, particularly in view of our hard-earned success.

It is a myth to suggest: by withdrawing rapidly, somehow that will force the Iraqis to make progress they would not make by our presence. Anyone who truly knows the situation in Iraq and the Iraqi leaders realizes it is the American presence that has aided the Iraqis to make the progress they have made and will continue to make. Our encouragement, tough-mindedness, and genuine assistance are major factors in that success.

To leave and abandon them forces them into isolation, not reconciliation. It brings out their worst fears, driven by their paranoia

about the past, that the Shi'as are on their own and all their enemies are around them. What is needed is our continued, but not open-ended, presence to further our mutual objectives.

One final point about our ground forces. And I welcome the comments of Dr. Bacevich, that we need to expand them. They are not only magnificent, but are performing to a standard not seen in any previous conflict. They are not a broken force, or near broken. Their discipline, morale, competence, behavior, and courage is extraordinary, and it is so with the knowledge that many of the Americans do not support the war, but do support them.

Are they stressed, and their loved ones, as well, by the repeated deployments? Of course they are. This is a proud, resilient force that has no "quit" in it. They have a dogged determination to succeed. We are fighting two wars that are in our National interests, and I have known, since 9/11, that our force, which I was a part of, was committed to protect the American people by staying on the offense against our enemies. They want to win. And they will. They do not want to be a party to choosing defeat or to be a part of an Army or Marine Corps that suffers a humiliating defeat.

That stark reality will break the force. Fighting protracted wars in our history has always stressed our forces. Doing what we can to reduce the impact is critical. But, choosing victory is, hands down, the best answer.

I said, earlier, we cannot lose militarily, and that should be clear; but we can lose politically because we lose our will here at home, we lose our determination to work through difficulty and uncertainty. I ask you to find the will and, yes, the courage our soldiers display routinely to persevere and to not give in to understandable frustration and to support the judgments of our gifted commander and ambassador.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions. [The prepared statement of General Keane follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you very much, General Keane.
Dr. Malley?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT MALLEY, MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA PROGRAM DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Dr. Malley: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee.

This hearing comes at yet another important time in our debate over the future of our strategy in Iraq. Some arguing that the surge has been a success, and therefore, we should perpetuate our stay. Others argue that it's been a failure, and therefore, we need to leave promptly.

In my view, it's the wrong question, addressed in the way, and it inevitably will lead to wrong answers. The question of troop level and the pace of our withdrawal should be the dependent variable, not the independent variable.

And the real question is how and to what extent out troop presence is serving coherent, articulable, policy objectives.

I was a surge skeptic. And I admit, and I am happy to admit, that the surge has exceeded, by far, my expectations, in terms of what it could achieve. Part of it is because of the planning that was

done, partly for reasons that were serendipitous, and partly coincidental. But, at the core I believe it reflects a conceptual revolution at the heart of the military—our military commanders in Iraq who displayed, for the first time, real and sophisticated understanding of the dynamics in Iraq, which gave them the ability to carry out new policies and take advantage of new dynamics. And, as a result, as General Keane just described, the violence is down, areas have been pacified, and the sectarian war that was unfolding in 2005–2006 has virtually come to a halt. And the end result is that the prospect of a single, devastating civil war has been replaced by the reality of smaller, more manageable ones.

But, if I'm no longer a surge skeptic, I remain very much a skeptic of the policy it's purported to serve.

Yesterday, we heard testimony from General Petraeus and my friend Ambassador Crocker, and the key questions that they were asked were, What's the objective of our policy? To what end are we pursuing our military enterprise? And until when? I was left—and I don't think I'm alone—profoundly frustrated and dissatisfied by the answers we got.

And therefore, my sense today is that, after 4 years, where the U.S. administration pursued a lofty strategy about building a democratic Iraq and transforming the region, but had no—obviously, no realistic tactics to achieve that goal, today, for the first time, we have smart, intelligent, subtle tactics, only to find ourselves bereft of a strategy that they're supposed to serve.

The starting point, for me, needs to be two fundamental realities, and from there we need to devise a clear policy:

Reality number one is that a U.S. withdrawal at this time under these conditions—a failed state, a fragmented polity, with interference from foreign countries, with the fragility of Iraq and the rise of jihadism—a withdrawal under these conditions would be a huge setback to U.S. interests, and I think we cannot deny that fact. It would leave Iraq as a failing state. It would probably lead to escalating internecine and sometimes perhaps horrific violence. And it would lead to regional involvement in Iraq at a time of great tension in the Middle East. Ultimately, it would weaken our posture in the Middle East. That's reality number one.

But, there is reality number two, which is that our continued presence every day that we remain in Iraq also comes with a very heavy price tag. There's a human toll I don't need to evoke any further. The drain on our resources, our military is overstretched, our readiness is being undercut, our room for maneuver in other critical issues, such as dealing with Iran, is automatically limited when we are so taken by our—by the combat in Iraq, and our standing, our prestige, our credibility throughout the region is being eroded.

Both realities are true, and we have to take both of them into account. And that leads me to say that our objective, our policy objective should be to create a local environment in Iraq and a regional environment in the region that would minimize the damage to our interests, to the Iraqis' well-being, and to the regional environment, as a whole, of the inevitable departure of our troops. That's the task that U.S. policymakers should be pursuing. How do we minimize the damage to ourselves, to the Iraqis, and to the re-

gion of a departure that's going to have to take place probably sooner rather than later?

If that's the objective, two things, in my view, need to be at the core of U.S. policy:

Number one, we need to press the Iraqi government, our Iraqi allies, to take the steps they have not taken up until now. They're the ones who could change the Iraqi local environment, not us.

Second of all, we need to devise a more coherent regional strategy in order to lessen the tensions and make sure that when we leave Iraq, Iraq doesn't become a magnet for foreign interference and doesn't become a source of further instability throughout the region.

Is the U.S. policy currently doing—pursuing either one of those objectives? I see no evidence that it is. And for me, two facts, two startling facts, put this in stark relief:

The first fact is that our best allies in the surge, our best Iraqi allies in the surge, those who have allowed the progress that's been made, have not been the people we brought to power, the people we've provided with military and financial resources, the people who we protect. The people who have been our best allies are the former insurgents, our former enemies. In fact, the ones who we brought to power, protect, and promote are obstacles and are threatening the success of the surge, because they are dithering in putting in place the kind of policies that the surge was supposed to lead to.

So, what our U.S. troops have been able to achieve through their military actions, the Iraqi government is threatening to undo because of its political dithering. That's a stunning indictment, to think that those who have helped us are—those who have helped us are those who we used to be fighting, and those who are standing in the way are those who could not survive, who could not be in power without our support.

So, we have done our part with the surge. Our allies have not. And our allies are threatening, every day by their actions, the sustainability of the surge. By not bringing together a political compact, they risk alienating the Sons of Iraq, The Awakening Councils, and the concerned local citizens who may see, in the end, that they don't have a possible partner in this government. If they don't create state institutions—neutral, nonpartisan state institutions, then you'll find the tribes will simply become another force in a multilayered conflict. If they take action, as they did in Basrah—and I'll come back to that later—they risk undoing the benefits of Muqtada al Sadr's unilateral cease-fire. Time and again, we're seeing, through their actions, that they are threatening the gains that we achieved.

Now, the second fact that I think brings into stark relief the problems that our policy faces is that our allies in Iraq, those same allies I just was describing, are also the allies of our arch enemy, Iran. Iran, who we claim is trying to destabilize Iraq, and Iran who we claim is our number-one enemy in the region. So, we're fighting Iran while our Iraqi partners are partnering with Tehran. And we're siding in this Iraqi intra-civil war with Iran's allies.

These two fundamental contradictions, inconsistencies—the incoherence at the heart of our policy tells me, as starkly as it could,

that we do not have a coherent policy, that our troops are performing admirably, but not in pursuit of a policy that anyone could articulate. And therefore, what it means is that they are being forced to carry a disproportionate burden—in many ways, the exclusive burden—in pursuit of unreachable goals, inconsistent objectives, and an inordinate and rising cost.

There is an alternative policy, I believe, and it has to be articulated around three fundamental pillars. The first is to put more pressure on Maliki's government, real pressure. The second is to engage in real regional diplomacy, including and especially with Iran and Syria. And the third is to transition towards a longer-term nonmilitary commitment investing in Iran's resources.

As to the first, as I said, the key is to put pressure on our allies to do what they have been asked to do, time and again, and have not done. Despite all the benchmarks that we could recite, they have not—they have not created a national compact, they have not reached out in the way they need to, they have not created a non-sectarian, impartial state. They're not even on the way towards doing it.

But, to be credible—to be credible, if we do want to put pressure on this government, we, the United States, have to be comfortable with the prospect of withdrawing from Iraq, even under less than auspicious circumstances. Unless and until we are convinced that we are prepared to take that step, there's no reason for the Maliki government to believe it, and there's no reason for the—for Maliki and his people to take any risk. Why should they—for what reason should they alienate their own constituency, threaten their fragile coalition, when they know that we're there to stay, we know that we won't ask them any questions, we know there's no consequences for their inaction, and we know they will continue to back them up.

This is not a matter of benchmarks or artificial deadlines. It's not what I'm saying. I'm saying that we have to be blunt with the Maliki government, that if they don't do what we've asked them now to do for several years, we cannot stay. It's not necessarily our first choice, but it will be the inevitable one. We can't tie our success to Maliki's survival. We can't be hostage to what he does or doesn't do. And given the gap between what U.S. troops can do and what needs to be done in Iraq, it, in fact, is paradoxically the greatest leverage our troops have is the threat that they might withdraw and take away the support that they're giving to the government of Maliki. And there are other ways in which we need to be—to turn from unconditional support to conditional support. We should stop all assistance to units of the army, to commanders in the field—Iraqi commanders in the field who we know to be partisan, sectarian, and pursuing partisan and sectarian agendas. We should condition our assistance to any equip- and-train mission to proper vetting of the security forces.

The second pillar is regional diplomacy. We can't try both to stabilize Iraq and destabilize Iran. Those two policies are at war with one another. We have to choose. If we want to stabilize Iraq, we're going to have to come to terms with Iran, with Iran's role in Iraq, which is deep and which will become even deeper. And they have cultural, historical, military, religious tools that we simply lack. And they are there, and they'll be there for a very long time. So,

we're going to need to enter—if we really—if our priority is Iraq, we need to enter into tough bargaining with Iran. Iraq will be one of the issues on the table, but not the only one.

Chairman LEVIN. Dr. Malley, if you could possibly bring it to a close, because we want to ask questions.

Dr. Malley: Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

Chairman LEVIN. No, it's okay. It's very interesting testimony. I don't want to—I hate to—

Dr. Malley: I—

Chairman LEVIN.—limit you this way.

Dr. Malley: I will be as quick as I can.

The third, as I said, and it's—there's more in my testimony—is a long-term commitment to Iraq's depleted human resources.

What happened in Basrah, for me, is a microcosm of everything that's gone astray, everything that went astray. It was initiated by the Iraqi government without our agreement, and it was ended by the Iranian regime without our involvement. It was an episode of an intra-Shi'ite civil war in which we were dragged in as if we had no influence, no leverage, and no say. To me at least, it was dumbfounding.

So, the question—to conclude, the question is, Are our troops, is our mission on the path to minimizing the cost to our strategic interests, to the Iraqi people's well-being, and to regional stability of a withdrawal that, sooner or later, must occur, or are we simply postponing the most likely scenario: Iraq's collapse into a failed state, protracted violence, and foreign meddling? We should be clear, either there's a national compact and reconciliation and steps towards a nonsectarian, nonpartisan state and state institutions, in which case we will negotiate the terms of our departure and the pace of our departure, or those steps are not taken and we have no business continuing with this war.

Thank you very much. [The prepared statement of Dr. Malley follows:]

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you so much, Dr. Malley.

Let's try 8 minutes, in terms of the number of people we have here, for our first round.

I want to do something a little bit unusual, for me at least, and that's to spend my time asking our witnesses to react to each other's testimony. This is very powerful testimony, all three of you. It's very different.

And I want to start with you, Dr. Bacevich. If you would just take a couple of minutes, if you feel free, to comment on General Keane and any comment that you have on Dr. Malley. I'd like to just, sort of, spend a couple of minutes each—I'm going to ask each of you to spend a couple of minutes commenting on the other testimony.

Dr. Bacevich: I understand, Senator.

I guess my response to Senator—or to General Keane would want to raise two issues.

And the first issue is time. We've already been in Iraq, engaged in a war for over 5 years. Even to the extent that the surge has achieved some amount of improvement in the security situation, we have a long, long, long road ahead of us. And the question of how long that road is—and I just mean in terms of approximations; no-

body can say that this—it's going to be 18 months or it's going to be 24 months—but, to some degree, the wisdom of continuing to go down this path has to be related to how long that road is, because the farther we go, the more it costs monetarily, the more it costs, in terms of American lives. And it seems to me that there's a tendency not to want to really address that issue directly. How long is it going to take?

And the second thing is that there's a real need, I think, to try to place the Iraq war back in some kind of a larger strategic context. What I was trying to suggest in my remarks is that the Iraq war came out of a particular vision of U.S. strategy that was devised by the Bush administration in the 6 to 12 months following 9/11, probably best expressed in the National security strategy of 2002, and that Operation Iraqi Freedom was intended to demonstrate the viability of that approach to dealing with the larger threat of violent Islamic radicalism.

In that context, it seems to me, this war has failed. This war does not provide us a paradigm or a model that somehow we are going to employ elsewhere in order to deal with that larger strategic threat, in order to make sure that another 9/11 on a worst scale doesn't happen.

And so, it sort of raises the question, What is U.S. grand strategy? My own sense is that the perpetuation of the Iraq war doesn't lead to a strategy, doesn't produce a set of principles to help us understand how we're going to deal with the threat posed by Islamism. In many respects, the perpetuation of the Iraq war actually provides an excuse not to address that overarching question of, What are our guiding strategic principles?

That would be my response to General Keane.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Dr. Bacevich.

General Keane?

General Keane: Yes. Thank you.

Well, I totally agree that we do not have a national strategy dealing with the war against radical Islam, given the fact that we will probably spend most of this century on that issue. And I look back at the cold war, where we did have a national strategy, one of containment, which transcended Presidents and different persuasions from political parties, but, in a general sense, different administrations supported that national strategy, that, you know, led to successful prosecution of the cold war. We are lacking that. There's no mistake about it.

In terms of Iraq itself, I disassociate my comments with Dr. Bacevich that what we need to do is simply begin de-escalation and withdrawal from Iraq. I would agree with that if it was measured based on the realities and the situation on the ground.

And in terms of the Army at large, I totally agree that the Army is too small. We have probably known that since the late 1990s, if we're totally honest with ourselves about this. We took too deep a cut as a result of the peace dividend from the end of the cold war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in '91. And then we made another major mistake, post-9/11, that we did not grow our ground forces.

Now, in fairness to all of you, nobody was putting in front of you a proposal to grow our ground forces post-9/11, either. And that's

the reality of it. And even the service that I am associated with was not fighting to grow the ground forces inside the Department of Defense post-9/11, either. I just want to put those facts out there.

But, the reality is, we are too small to counter the threats that are in front of us. And the fact that the form of warfare by many of our opponents has changed—they know they cannot contest us directly with military arms and organizations, and they want to expose our vulnerabilities, which lead, by definition, to more protracted wars.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank—

General Keane: Okay.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. Malley: Just three quick comments on testimony by General Keane.

I—as I said, I think the surge has produced more than I would have expected, but we shouldn't fool ourselves, the reconciliation has been with us, not with the Iraqi government. That's what this is about, and that's why it's not sustainable unless there is real reconciliation with the government.

Second point. Yes, a number of benchmarks have been met, and some legislation has passed, but that really is not the measure of whether there is actually building a state that's legitimate and functional and recognized by all. These are pieces of paper that are being signed. Nothing has yet to be implemented. Most of the time, whatever is signed then gives rise to postponement of implementation or argument over implementation, which is simply another way to argue over the underlying legislation itself.

And finally, on the operation in Basrah, which I continue to think was a very ill-thought-out enterprise. This was not a broadbased enterprise against militias. Some militias were participating in it. ISCI, the Supreme Council, which is allied with Maliki, was participating on the other side of the battle. And nor was it narrowly focused on the so-called "special groups," it was—let's call it what it was, it was another step in an internal Shi'ite civil war. The target was Muqtada al Sadr. And I think that has real—could have real consequences for us.

Chairman LEVIN. Some months ago, according to the Department of Defense document, the State Department, interviewing senior military commanders, said the following, that "senior military commanders now portray the intransigence of Iraq's Shi'ite-dominated government as the key threat facing the U.S. effort in Iraq, rather than al Qaeda terrorists, Sunni insurgents, or Iranian-backed militias."

Do you agree with that, Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. Bacevich: I probably basically subscribe to that proposition, but would want to, I guess, expand on it a little bit. And in the sense of suggesting that—I'm not sure that there's any major group in Iraq that actually signs up to our vision of what Iraq is supposed to look like, whether you're talking Sunnis, whether you're talking Shi'ites, whether you're talking Kurds, whether you're talking tribes. And one of the likely fallacies of our efforts, at this point, is to assume that those who say they side with us, those who sup-

port us, those who take our money in return for setting down their arms, the fallacy of assuming that they do that because they share our long-term purposes. In many respects—and, I think, here I agree with Dr. Malley—what the surge has done, in some respects, is to encourage a revival of tribalism to endorse the existence of groups that possess arms and probably have very little intention of surrendering those arms, and therefore, allowing the central state to ever exercise a monopoly of violence.

So, I think my bottom-line point here is that we may be deluding ourselves in thinking that any amount of cajoling or encouragement or bribery can actually persuade different groups to buy into our vision of a legitimate, coherent Iraqi nation-state.

Chairman LEVIN. Do either of you have any comment on that? My time is up. If you could make it brief.

General Keane: Yes. In reference to the Maliki government, look, it's a challenge, to be sure. They've been growing in this position. They're certainly frustrating to work with. Maliki has probably got about a year and a half left in office. The Sunnis will be enfranchised in the next government. There'll be considerably more participation in it from that community. The coalition will change rather dramatically.

But, the fact of the matter is, at our urging and our assistance, Maliki has made some progress here. Pensions are now being paid as amnesty for those who were fighting the government. He's permitting them to come back into the government through the de-Ba'athification program and to participate in the social fabric of life. That is the beginning of a government connecting with those who were disenfranchised.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Dr. Malley, do you just want to—

Dr. Malley: Well, I would, of course, echo that view and say, not only because of its intransigence, it's what's—part of what's preventing—

Chairman LEVIN. Oh, the view that I quoted?

Dr. Malley: Yes, absolutely. But, also because the Iraqi government's intransigence is what is threatening to undo the gains that have been made with Sunnis against al Qaeda and with the ceasefire with the Mahdi army.

Chairman LEVIN. I've arranged with Senator Reed to take the gavel for about 45 minutes, and then—

First, Senator McCain.

Senator MCCAIN. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here.

General Keane, was Maliki's—Prime Minister Maliki's move into Basrah ill-advised or ill-timed?

General Keane: That's a great question. I think, from our perspective, we probably would have waited until the spring to conduct that operation. But, at the end of the day, it—this is Maliki's country. He's impulsive. He got a lot of information just prior to that. And I think he finally came to grips with the scale of the Iranian influence and the fact that it is threatening his regime, and how Sadr is tied into that influence. And that resulted in the precipitation of that operation.

Our commanders were working on a campaign for the south for some time, and had discussions with him, and I think it's through those discussions that illuminated the scale of the problem.

So, yes, it would have been better if he waited a little bit further so we could have set the conditions, but the fact is, we had to get after this anyway. Now we're after it. It didn't start out right, but I'm convinced it will finish right.

Senator MCCAIN. And in order to understand the adversaries, this is basically Shi'ite militias, a lot of which have been influenced by the Iranian training and supply and equipment. Is that correct?

General Keane: That's absolutely true. The—they're not the only militias there, but the Iranians are interesting—influencing both sides. They do it through training, they do it through laundering money, they do it through diplomatic influence. They take some of the sheikh and tribal leaders, and bring them over to Iran to show them that Iran is a stable country, friendly to them. Their—

Senator MCCAIN. And the—

General Keane:—malign influence is—has been growing for some time in the south.

Senator MCCAIN. And the—and in Mosul, where we have another battle raging, and my understanding is it's going to go on for a couple or 3 months, it is al Qaeda—Sunni extremists, primarily—is what we're trying to—what we're struggling against there.

General Keane: Yeah, there's two security operations that are in front of us. One is in Mosul, where—which are the remnants of the al Qaeda. This is not the al Qaeda that we were fighting in Anbar Province or the al Qaeda that was in Baghdad or certainly the al Qaeda that was in Baqubah. This is remnants of—and we will finish that campaign, in my judgment, in a few months. And I think then the command itself will be able to admit that they're—the al Qaeda in Iraq are operationally defeated. I believe they already are, but that campaign'll finish it and remove any doubt about it.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich, do you have a differing view on that tactical situation on the ground?

Dr. Bacevich: No, sir.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Malley?

Dr. Malley: Just, again, to come back to the question of Basrah. I think there are—there are two questions. It appears to be ill-timed, and your questioning, yesterday, I think, of General Petraeus brought out, we would, have done it differently and at a different time.

I think it goes deeper. It's not just ill-timed, it was ill-conceived. This was not—this was not an operation, as I said, against militias. ISCI, Supreme Council, has a Badr Corps. It was formed by the Iranians, it's funded by the Iranians. We were not going after—they were not going after militias, they were going after a particular group. They didn't go after Fadhila, which also has a militia which has been flouting the law in Basrah for a long time.

We should—Maliki should not have been involved in it. We should not have been involved in it and dragged into it with our air support, special forces, which may cost us in other ways.

Dr. Bacevich: Senator?

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich—yes, but could I just say, before you comment on that—I want to express all of our sympathy for

the loss of your—tragic loss of your son, and thank you for his service to our Nation.

I would like for you to comment on that. But, also would you comment on your testimony, where you said we should have vigorous diplomatic efforts. How would you envision that? And would that also include face-to-face talks with the Iranians?

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir. Could I go back to the previous issue—

Senator MCCAIN. Sure.

Dr. Bacevich:—just for—

Senator MCCAIN. Sure.

Dr. Bacevich:—just for a second?

When I was reading the news reports—I hate to make one of these horrible Vietnam comparisons, but when I was reading the news reports about the Basrah operation, I have to admit the thing that came to mind was Lam Son 719, which, remember, well into the Vietnamization project, this was supposed to be the unveiling of the new ARVN—

Senator MCCAIN. Incursion into Laos.

Dr. Bacevich: Right. And it turned out—it didn't go well. And it does seem to me that there's some, at least, echos of that. I mean, we've been trying hard for 5 years to build up the Iraqi security forces, and—all I know is what I read in the newspapers, but it's hard to see that their performance was especially distinguished, which again brings us back to the time issue that—it would appear to me that we have a long, long time before we're going to have that force built up to the level it's going to be able to handle the security requirements.

Yes, sir, I did refer, in my comments, to diplomatic effort. I do subscribe, I think, in general terms, to the proposal made by the Iraq Study Group, now, what, almost a year and a half ago, which I take to be based on the assumption—an assumption that would have to be tested, but an assumption that there is a common interest in the region—

Senator MCCAIN. How do you test it?

Dr. Bacevich:—well, you test it by beginning discussions with other regions in the Nation—a common assumption that we have a common interest in stability. We share a common interest in avoiding having Iraq or the disintegration of Iraq end up promoting a larger chaos in the region. And yes, sir, I believe that one would necessarily have to include Iran in that conversation.

Senator MCCAIN. Just to clarify, again, that the insurgent in Mosul is al Qaeda. Are there other Sunni—there are other Sunni extremists, as well, aren't there, that they're battling against in Mosul?

General Keane: Yes, they are aligned with some Sunni hardliners that are still fighting us. So, they're—they do have some Sunni support structure, as they had in other provinces, as well.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Malley, I'd be interested in your comment about direct talks with the Iranians, and also any comment about the situation in Mosul, as well.

Dr. Malley: Well, on the Iranians, I mean, obviously, we have talks with them already. They're limited in Iraq.

Senator MCCAIN. Yeah, but I think you would agree there's a difference between the kind of encounters that Ambassador Crocker has had, as opposed to a full-blown—

Dr. Malley: No, that—

Senator MCCAIN.—face-to-face—

Dr. Malley: Absolutely.

Senator MCCAIN.—discussion.

Dr. Malley: And my view is, it is a fallacy that we tend to view engagement as a prize that we withhold or as a punishment—or nonengagement as a punishment that we inflict. I think we should be negotiating, with tough, tough positions, and not sacrificing our principles with Iran, with Syria.

In the case of Iran, I don't—as I said earlier, I don't see how we could stabilize Iraq at the same time as we're trying to destabilize Iran. Iran is closer, has more ties, has influence in the government, in the opposition, in the tribes, in the militias. We can't simply pretend that's not the case.

And I think we're going to have to talk to them, we're going to have to negotiate with them on the full range of issues, whether it's the nuclear issue, whether it's Iraq, whether it's the support for militant violent groups in the region. That's going to have to be done, because, so far, the alternative, which has been not to talk to them, certainly has not served their interests.

Senator MCCAIN. Dr. Bacevich, finally, I—you made reference to the Vietnam war, and I think we are all in agreement about how overstressed the military is, and how tough it's been, and the unwise reductions in the size of the military that took place in the 1990s, the so-called peace dividend. Would you argue that a defeated military also has some devastating effects that take a long time to cure?

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir. But, I would—I'd agree with General Keane that there's no way we can possibly be defeated, and a strategy of deliberate, phased withdrawal, to my mind, does not constitute defeat.

Senator MCCAIN. Thank you.

My time is up.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator Reed [presiding]: Thank you, Senator.

Senator Kennedy?

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you.

And thank all of you.

I'd like to come back to get your views on this, Iran in Iraq. We've heard a great deal about it during the time of General Petraeus. We've heard a great deal about the radiant support of various kinds of units that are out there threatening the security of American forces. We have allies who are over there, who are welcoming the Iranians in celebration of their leadership. We have Iranian diplomatic leadership that evidently played a role, in terms of establishing a cease-fire, which we've welcomed. And it seems like any—that we, as a country, never anticipated, in the involvement of the war that we've got in Iraq, about the role of Iran. Maybe we did, but maybe we didn't. Either we ignored it or we didn't anticipate it.

And I'd just like you to try—Dr. Malley was talking briefly about this in response to the other question. But, it does seem to me that we ought to have a better kind of understanding about whose side are they on and what we—how we ought to be dealing with this—the process, because it does seem to me that they are convenient targets. Maybe they should be. What should we be thinking, and how should we be dealing with it?

I'll start with Dr. Malley, and then if each of you would take a—that's really the—my question, and I'd like to—each take a minute or two, a couple of minutes on it. I appreciate it.

Dr. Malley: Several comments. First, it's true that throughout this war we've tended to look to outside causes for the failures that we've faced. One day it's Iran, one day it's Syria, then we find another. And I think there is that tendency, whereas so many other problems are homegrown.

That being said, there's little doubt that Iran is pursuing what can be described as a policy of managed, and sometimes less managed, chaos in Iraq. They see us tied down. They don't want us to turn our attention to them. They think that it is—we are bleeding, strategically and militarily. So, it is—it's perfectly logical for them to be pursuing a policy of investing in as many actors as they can in Iraq. And, as I say, they've been proficient at this for a long time, much more proficient than we could ever be working with the Kurds, working with the Shi'ites, working with militias inside and outside of government, including militias that are fighting each other. And they used to do that in Lebanon, as well. They're very good at it, and they'll continue to do it.

The question is, What do we do? What is our approach? The approach we've pursued so far, if—and I always judge a policy by whether it succeeds or fails. Iran is continuing its meddling in Iraq; and it's harmful meddling in Iraq, in terms of our interests. It's continuing to enrich uranium; it just announced that it's going to expand it. It's continuing to support Hamas and Hezbollah. None of the—none of the criteria that we would judge to see whether our approach of containment and isolating and not talking, whether it's succeeded, points to success. On every single criteria, things are getting—are the same or getting worse. At a minimum, that argues for reassessment, and I would say it argues for the kind of tough, clear-eyed negotiations, bargaining with the Iranians, to see whether, in fact, we can reach agreement on an end state for Iraq which is not either one of our ideal situation, but with which we both could live, perhaps even the—the ways in which Iranians and us have similar interests in Iraq. Neither one of us wants to see it descend into chaos and spill over into Iran.

So, I think we need to have that discussion. It hasn't taken place. There's so many reasons, from the nuclear proliferation to stability in the Middle East, and, most of all, the security of our troops in Iraq, why that discussion needs to begin.

Senator KENNEDY. General Keane?

General Keane: Yes, Senator. As I indicated before, one of the problems we had, certainly, with the change in strategy in Iraq, we were completely preoccupied with the al Qaeda and the threat of the Sunni insurgents and the fact that, you know, they were winning and our policy was failing and Baghdad was a bloodbath. So,

that has preoccupied us for 2 years, to rid ourselves of that. And obviously that has occurred.

Meanwhile, the British were pulling back from the south, and we lost a lot of our situational awareness as that has occurred, and we turned over to the Iraqis. While they have some human intelligence, they don't have the enablers that we do. So, a lot of what was happening in the south, we did not have the kind of resolution that we should have. Nonetheless, we know that Iranians' goals are very clear: they want us to fail in Iraq, and they want a stable government in Iraq that's friendly and aligned with them; but "aligned with them" is very important, and not aligned with the United States.

I think the essential problem—I do agree with Dr. Malley, here—is that we do not have a national policy, in terms of defeating Iran in Iraq, or a regional strategy to deal with that. And we should not leave this up to General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker to work this out by themselves. They are a part of that fabric, and they have some of the tools to apply, for sure; but, we need a broader path than that to help them with that strategy. And I do think we can. And we have to, certainly, understand what are Iran's interests here. The fact that they want a stable together, and we do, is a beginning for both of us to deal with this issue.

Senator KENNEDY. Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. Bacevich: Again, I think the place to begin is trying to ask the larger strategic question. I mean, it seems to me that, to a very great extent, we tend, still, to think of Iran as this seat or source of Islamic revolution that they are intent on exporting around the world. I mean, after 9/11, when President Bush lumped Iran into the so-called "Axis of Evil," this sort of revived this image of a state that—with which we can have nothing to do, and that poses a threat to our vital interests. I think the basic image is false.

I mean, the Islamic revolution in Iran is a failure. It's not going to—they're not going to export their revolution anywhere. Iran does not pose a threat to our vital interests. Iran is a mischiefmaker. And in that sense, therefore, it seems to me that we should be more able, more willing, as I think Dr. Malley was suggesting, to try to at least understand—not necessarily empathize or agree with—at least understand how they define their security requirements and their security concerns, which are real, and then use that as a point of departure for engaging in a dialogue. And a dialogue is not simply waving the white flag. A dialogue is a serious, tough-minded negotiation that tries to determine whether or not we have some common interests that can at least alleviate the kind of hostile relationship that we've had for the last 30 or 40 years.

The Iranians are not going to go away. They're going to be the neighbor of Iraq for as long as there is Iraq. So, it's quite understandable, it seems to me, that the Iraqis are going to have a rather particular view of Iran that may well differ from our own.

Senator KENNEDY. Thank you very much.

My time is up. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Thank you, Senator Kennedy.

Senator SESSIONS?

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

Thank you, panelists, for your testimony.

Dr. Bacevich, I would think—about your statement that a strategy of deliberate, phased withdrawal does not constitute defeat, I would say that it doesn't necessarily constitute defeat, but it could precipitate a defeat. It is—a withdrawal policy, as I understand it, at least the one that's being discussed publicly around here, that's a withdrawal not tied to the conditions on the ground, and I believe it could put us in a position of defeat, which Dr. Malley says would be very detrimental to the United States and the region.

Dr.—General Petraeus, he has his Ph.D. at University—Princeton University and number one in the General Staff College class. He has been 3 years in Iraq. He was in Mosul with the 101st. He trained the Army for a year on another tour. And now, he came back and wrote the counterinsurgency manual for the United States of America. And he has testified here that, in his view, a withdrawal should be tied to the conditions on the ground.

And, General Keane, thank you for your participation in helping to draft the surge policy. I know that was a philosophy you thought would work. You did not believe our current policy was working. And General Petraeus and General Odierno and others have executed that, and it has, as Dr. Malley said, achieved more than any of us would have thought possible.

So, I've got to tell you, when faced with a choice, I'm going with General Petraeus's recommendation. If he needs a few months, he says a pause, I think he's entitled to have that. And I believe, despite all the difficulties that we've had—and, I've got to tell you, 2 years ago I was worried, I was very concerned about the status of our situation in Iraq. And I remain concerned about it. And I certainly favor the withdrawal of our troops as soon as we can possibly do so.

General Keane, you have provided an optimistic view, here. You're a four-star general, 37 years in the military, not a Pollyanna. You see progress being made, real progress being made. Senator Collins, yesterday, sort of asked a question I think Americans are asking, "Okay, the violence is down, but what is—what are we looking at, 2, 3, 4 years down the road? Are we—can we see further troops withdrawn, and can we see a stable Iraq?"

Give us your best judgment, based on your experience and the number of times you've been over there—I don't know how many, but quite a few—give us your best judgment of what we can expect to achieve and what kind of result might occur if we follow the Petraeus recommendations.

General Keane: Yes. Thank you, Senator.

And I understand some frustration. I mean, our leaders coming before this panel are reluctant to cast too much of a crystal ball, here, into the future, because they also know that previous leaders have done that, and have lost credibility in doing it, because of events that are not controllable sometimes in Iraq. And so, I understand that. And—

But, when I look at this situation, we have—we have really turned a corner here, and the strategy is working. The security situation that we all wanted to have has enabled the Maliki government to make some genuine political progress with reconciliation. I mean, that is actually happening, and I know that for a fact, be-

cause I talked to the people who are the beneficiaries of that. So that, I am convinced of.

Now, is it—there's still "a check in the mail" with some of that, to be sure, because we have more implementation of the National legislation to take place. But, the big decision has been made by the Maliki government, and that is that the Sunnis and the Sunni leadership, they know, is going to be a part of the fabric of their government and the fabric of Iraq, and they understand that, despite the fact that many of those Sunnis repressed them for 35 years. This has been a difficult psychological, emotional hurdle for them to get over. And there are still residue of paranoia and fears there as a result of it, to be sure.

But, when I look at this situation, we will finish the al Qaeda this year in the north. The situation in the south, despite the serious Iranian influence, we do have to deal with the Shi'a militias and bring the level of violence down, regardless of who those militias are. And that will happen. It's not as formidable a task as dealing with the al Qaeda and a Sunni insurgency. That will happen in 2008, as well. I think the intent is certainly to drive that so that in the fall of this year, the elections all over Iraq, but particularly in areas where there's still violence, that the elections in the south will be a free and open election and people will be able to express themselves. That, I think, is a very attainable goal.

In my own mind, I don't think we should probably reduce forces any more in 2008 than the 25 percent we're going to take, but if General Petraeus thinks that we can do more because of—the situation has improved dramatically, so be it. My judgment tells me that's not going to be the case.

However, in 2009 I do think we'll continue to reduce our forces, and I believe that probably late 2009 or 2010, the mission for our forces in Iraq—and this is important—will change. We will not be—we will not be protecting the people, which absorbs a lot of force levels. The Iraqi security forces will be doing that. And our mission will transition to one of assisting and training them, and no longer protecting the people. And that brings the force levels down rather significantly, and also the casualties are changed; if there is still violence in Iraq, it will be at a level that the Iraqi security forces can handle.

Now, I don't believe this is an open-ended commitment to Iraq. I think what should be open-ended to Iraq is our political alliance with them and the fact that we do want to have a long-term security relationship with Iraq, but certainly we don't need to have forces in Iraq at the levels that we're at now on some open-ended contract. The conditions on the ground are going to change favorably that will permit us to continue to reduce our forces.

Now, does that come close to what you were seeking, sir?

Senator SESSIONS. Well, it certainly does. And would you say, then, that with regard to withdrawal, the Department of Defense, General Petraeus, actually, certainly, Members of Congress would like to see our troops withdrawn? The debate is over what rate, perhaps, or just how fast, and, really, how much of a gap do we have between the competing visions that—politically, that we're hearing about on the question of withdrawal, in your opinion?

General Keane: Well, I agree with that. I think much of the discussion has to do with the pace and the rate of reducing our forces. It's a given we're going to reduce our forces. General Petraeus knows that, Ambassador Crocker knows that. But, they want to do it on a measured basis, they want to do it based on the Iraqis' capability to take over, and also the enemy situation on the ground. And that's reasonable, in my judgment, and particularly in view of the mistakes that we have made in the past in this area. And certainly they are influenced by those mistakes. And I think it's prudent that the command comes before you and say they want to err on the side of caution here, and they want to take a measured approach to this, and they want to take a pause, and consolidate and evaluate where we are.

Nobody in Iraq knows what the impact of the 25-percent reduction of our combat forces will be. To give you a sense of it, in Baghdad we will go from 30 U.S. battalions to 20. That's—a third of the U.S. battalions will be gone. That's happening as we speak. In Anbar Province, we will go from 15 U.S. battalions to six. Now, anybody looking at that knows that's a significant military reduction. We believe that the Iraqis will mitigate that, in terms of their own capabilities. We also believe that, because of the "Sons of Iraq" program and the Sunni insurgency, and the leaders who are helping us, that that is another mitigation. Those things should hold and permit us to make that reduction without any increase in violence; actually, with the violence going down. That's the goal. But, nobody knows for sure if that's going to happen.

So, I think it's prudent for General Petraeus to say, "Look, I want to see what's going on, here. I want to see if those assumptions we're making are holding," and make certain of that before we take what could be unacceptable risks and reduce our forces further. And I think that's what this is about. And what they're doing makes sense to me.

Senator SESSIONS. Thank you very much, all of you. And the surge was a bitter pill for us. We hated—you know, we were hoping we were on a downward trend at that point, but the success of the surge has exceeded our expectations to date. And I thank you for your projections of the future, that—I think sometimes our military are afraid—they don't want to give, because it looks like they can't be certain; they don't want to be accused of a liar if they turn out to be incorrect. Thank you for your experience and your advice.

Senator REED. Senator Ben Nelson?

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane, the transition you're talking about is very comparable to what Senator Collins and I and others have proposed with the transition from the security—providing security in Baghdad at the level we've been providing it, doing it alone, but by bringing in the al-Maliki government security forces to provide more of their own security to transition, so that we can put more combat troops into the north, and we would have had, if we had done this previously, more combat troops into the south, probably would have avoided what happened. While we commend Prime Minister al Maliki for standing up to the militias in the south, we wish that the result had been better at the beginning, and perhaps it will work out over time.

But, couldn't we be beginning that process of transitioning now? Aren't we, in effect, doing it? Why don't we admit that we are, in effect, doing that, and, at the same time, build toward the residual force, so we know what we can do? Wouldn't that be a better way of planning what the future in Iraq is? The conditions on the ground would dictate how fast you can go, and the commanders on the ground can make the decisions so that we don't arbitrarily set dates, but can't we at least begin and ask for a planning process that would start the transition as soon as possible—in my opinion, now?

General Keane: The transition has begun, Senator. I mean—

Senator BEN NELSON. Well, then why we have we had the resistance to Nelson-Collins type of legislation, which said that that's what we should be doing, and we proposed that a year ago?

General Keane: I think what the—what the command wants—the command does not want to be tied down by any timetable—

Senator BEN NELSON. We didn't have a timetable.

General Keane:—or any—be tied down for when missions have to change. They want—

Senator BEN NELSON. We didn't put that, either.

General Keane:—maximum flexibility, because they're dealing with an enemy, and the enemy has a vote on what we're doing.

But, in terms of transition, to be clear here, we have places in Iraq, a number of them, where the Iraqis are clearly in the lead now, and we are in a supporting role, and we have made those transitions. And that will be a gradual transition.

Now, listen, they're going to—they want to be measured about this, because we've made mistakes about this in the past. You know, we—it's easy to get impressed with your own plan and to start seeing results there that may not be there. And that's happened to us. So, these commanders know that, and they go through a very detailed evaluation of what the Iraqis military capability is. And they are transitioning them.

Senator BEN NELSON. And that's why—that's why we've said that the forces on the ground and circumstances on the ground, conditions on the ground, would dictate how fast this would go without a timetable. But, we've had resistance to the legislation, which is—which has absolutely surprised me, because the only—the only timetable that we put in there was that the transition should begin immediately and have goals to be achieved over some period of time, but conditions and commanders on the ground would dictate when and how and under what circumstances. But, I guess I was puzzled then, and I'm puzzled now, as to what the opposition was to our bill.

But, I'd like to go to questions, Dr. Malley, where you said—I believe you said that—no, Dr. Bacevich, you said that Iran is a mischiefmaker. And—but, in terms of Hezbollah and Hamas and what they're been able to do in the region, at what point are mischiefmakers very successful in providing terrorism, at least within the region? Are we understating their impact when we say "mischiefmakers," or do we have to say that they're full-fledged terrorists supporting state-sponsoring terrorists for the region?

Dr. Bacevich: Well, Senator, I'll stick with "mischiefmaker," but I don't mean to—you know, "mischiefmaker" implies trivial, be dismissed—

Senator BEN NELSON. Okay.

Dr. Bacevich: —be ignored; I don't mean that at all. I understand that—the importance of noting their support for terrorist organizations, but those organizations don't pose anything remotely like an existential threat to the United States of America, and it's—

Senator BEN NELSON. Well—

Dr. Bacevich: —that which ought to be—

Senator BEN NELSON. —maybe not existential, but it's certainly—in terms of the turmoil of the Middle East, does have an impact on us in many—in many respects. Maybe, perhaps, it's not existential.

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir. And I'm—again, I'm not trying to—

Senator BEN NELSON. Well—

Dr. Bacevich: —suggest ignoring that, but it does seem to me that one needs to—one needs to take a broader view of Iran than simply to say that this is a country that supports Hezbollah and Hamas. This is a country that, as I said earlier, has failed in its effort to sponsor the spread of revolution. It's a country that does have serious national security considerations. It's a country that does—you know, we cannot ignore the history—that does have reason to view the United States as something other than a friendly democracy wishing the people of Iran well. So, I would not want the fact—and it is a fact—of their support for Hezbollah and Hamas to somehow act as kind of a veto or the determinant of what U.S. policy toward Iran would be.

Senator BEN NELSON. General Keane, General Shinseki advocated that a larger force would be necessary to go into Iraq, and that advice was not followed. If that advice had been followed and a larger force had been placed in Iraq at the very beginning, and had been maintained there at higher levels, would there have been a need for the surge?

General Keane: Yes, because there was much more of a problem than just force level. Now, to be quite accurate, General Shinseki's comments about size of force had to do—actually, before this committee, as you probably—

Senator BEN NELSON. Yes, I was here.

General Keane: —know, and a result of Senator Levin's questioning of him, and it had to do with the size of the force to provide stability and support operations in—

Senator BEN NELSON. Right.

General Keane: —in what was called phase 4, after the invasion, just to be specific about it.

Senator BEN NELSON. Okay.

General Keane: You know, one of the things I think we did, as military leaders—and I was there at the time—is, I think we let down the Secretary of Defense and also the administration, in the sense that when we were dealing with the invasion plans that General Franks was putting together, none of us, and particularly the ground leaders, who have a little bit more sense of this—we did not challenge the possibility that Saddam Hussein could choose not to surrender and to continue to fight us through other means. And if

we had done that, that would have caused us to think through the assumptions of what that is, the nature of that war, and then what kind of a force would we need after the invasion if such a thing had occurred. And I think it also would have spun us up on a lot of what we had forgotten about this kind of war itself. And as—we would not have stopped Saddam from doing it. You know, we've talked to all of his leaders; we've got 'em in detention; we know that 6 months prior to the invasion they were making those plans, now. But, the fact is, is that we would have been better prepared for it when it did occur, and maybe we would not have made as many policy mistakes that first year that we made. I mean, we still suffer from those incredible sequence of major policy errors that we made in the first year, and I think possibly we could have been in better shape for all of that.

And I think we bear some responsibility, ourselves. You know, it's a shared responsibility, civilian and military leaders, certainly when it comes to war plans and execution of national policy. But, in the same respect, this is our lane, and we know a lot about it, and I don't think we did as good a job here as we could have.

Senator BEN NELSON. Mr. Chairman, if I could just follow up, just one second, on that.

I remember, in a closed session, before the invasion of Iraq, asking Secretary Feith to give us some indication of what plans were in place to keep security if, in fact, the decision has been made to go in, or it hasn't been made and it is ultimately made to go into Iraq, what is the—what is the plan for phase 2? And I received a stack of papers, like that, sometime, I think, in August, after phase 2 was obviously not succeeding because we weren't prepared to help them keep the peace, we had fired the military, and things were in shambles.

General Keane: Yes. Well, I—that doesn't surprise me.

Senator BEN NELSON. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator REED. Senator Collins?

Senator COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It seems to me that the question that we're all facing is, Will the pause in the drawdown of troops after July allow for continued progress, or does it ease the pressure on the Iraqis to continue to take over more responsibility for their own security and to continue to meet the political and economic benchmarks that everyone agrees are essential for the long-term stability of Iraq? So, I'd like to ask each of you your judgment on that question. What is the impact of the pause of not continuing to drawdown in a gradual and responsible way, but, rather, holding back? There's a lot that's going to occur during that period if it goes beyond the 45 days that General Petraeus indicated is likely, yesterday. We run into, for example, the provincial elections that are going to occur in October, if they occur as scheduled. So, I'd like to get an assessment from each of you on what you believe the consequences of the pause will be.

We'll start with you, Doctor.

Dr. Bacevich: Well, the pause is not a policy. The pause is really just a way of avoiding, I think, or deferring, fundamental policy decisions. But, I have to say, I don't—I personally don't think that

the pause will matter much, one way or the other. And I say that because I don't believe—this is, I think, one of the areas where General Keane and I would just radically disagree with one another—I don't believe that we're really in charge in Iraq. I don't really believe that the efforts that are being made by U.S. officials or U.S. commanders to promote reconciliation really are shaping the course of events. I think events are much more likely to be shaped by the Iraqis themselves, and, again, not to repeat myself, that the various groups in Iraq are responding to their own particular agendas, so that, in the larger sense, Iraq is going to follow a trajectory that's going to be determined by Iraqis, and the notion that staying a little bit longer or slightly accelerating the rate of U.S. withdrawal, or pausing the rate of withdrawal, the notion that that's going to make a major difference strikes me as simply a fundamental misreading of the situation.

If there is one thing that the Iraq war ought to have taught us, it is that American power is far more limited than we imagined back in the—you know, the salad days of the 1990s, when we were proclaiming that we were the world's only superpower, an indispensable nation. And it ought also have taught us that our capacity to understand these societies, to understand the dynamics that sort of shape the way they evolve, that our understanding simply is not all that great.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

General?

General Keane: Yes. Well, I think it certainly is a temporary situation. And in my own view, its intended purpose will be accomplished. General Petraeus will be given the opportunity to assess whether the Iraqis security forces are able to mitigate the reduction that's taking place and, therefore, take over responsibilities that heretofore we had, and also, the so-called "Sons of Iraq" program, in terms of its, you know, viability—is that still supporting our efforts? That will take some time to understand that. I don't—I think it probably takes longer than 45 days.

And I also think, Madam Senator, that we should prepare for the likelihood that we may not resume reductions, in 2008, which, in my view, I think, may be the case. And why is that? We want to reduce, so why does that make any sense? Well, the fact of the matter is, we have three major events that are occurring in 2008 that we're very much involved in, two military and one political.

One is, we want to finish the al Qaeda off, up in Mosul. We think we will do that in a number of months, and actually we think it'll probably be completed around the fall timeframe. But, there are variables there. The enemy has a vote. We will finish them, but it may take longer. Our judgment is, it will not.

The operation in the south, which is just beginning—and let me say that—we can be so super-critical of military operations. You heard General Petraeus say that the operation in the south in many of the provinces that the Iraqis security forces performed, they performed very well; and in some of them, it—they did not, and it was uneven. So, we know enough about this Iraqi Security Force to know that their improvement has been very steady, and, overall, they're going to acquit themselves well in what they are doing, in my view. But, it will take some time. And, as I said be-

fore, I—this is not the al Qaeda, and this is not mainstream Sunni insurgents we're dealing with. We've got to shut down the level of violence and the gangs and the thugs down there, and I believe a lot of them are going to run from the force levels that we will apply. That should be completed before the fall election, which is what Maliki's motivation is, here. But, it may not.

And then we have the fall election itself. This is a watershed political event in Iraq that will change Iraq for years to come, because this Maliki government that everyone is kicking is willing to share power and decentralize some of its authority with those provinces, which means those provinces will have real budgets, money will have to be distributed, there'll be a percentage and a framework to do all of that, and there will be significant demands being placed on a central government by those provincial leaders, who are duly elected by the people in those provinces. We want that event, that watershed political event, to succeed. There will—our opponents in Iraq will want it to fail, and we cannot let that happen. We don't even want it to be delayed. We don't want it to go into 2009. That watershed experience is important to us. So, that's the third major thing that we have to do in 2008. And during this, General Petraeus and his commanders are assessing about the—what is the impact of the 25-percent combat force reduction?

So, I think, in my own mind, we should not be too optimistic that, (1) he will be able to do that assessment in a short period of time, or (2) that, as a result of his assessment, he's going to come back and say that he's going to continue to reduce forces in 2008. I think the plate is very full for us in 2008, and we are taking a fair amount of risk with the 25-percent reduction that's already ongoing.

And that's the most frank answer I can give you. Does that answer your question, Senator?

Senator COLLINS. It does. Thank you.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. Malley: Senator, as I said in my testimony, I believe in pressure. I believe we have to pressure the Maliki government, and I also believe that probably the most potent form of pressure we have is the question of our troops.

That said, I'm not a big believer in subtle signals; I much prefer blunt language. And I'm not sure that whether we pause or don't pause, as has been said earlier, is really going to convey the message we want to convey. We don't know how Maliki would read the pause or a further withdrawal. We don't know how he would react or how other Iraqis might react. Would they see it as a signal that we're actually serious about withdrawing, and therefore, try, perhaps, to find other allies elsewhere? Would, on the contrary, they see this as a reason to take more responsibility?

As I said, a signal such as this, I think, is going to get lost in translation. I think there needs to be blunt language, a clear message to Maliki, not that we're withdrawing 25 percent or more, but, "We cannot stay if you don't take certain steps," and we should be clear about what those steps are: implementing certain—passing and then implementing certain legislation, cleaning up some of the security sector that has been infiltrated by sectarian groups, reaching out to some of the Sunnis who are looking for jobs; those are

the concerned citizens. These are the things—we should have clear tests for him—reaching a broad national compact. If he doesn't do them, then we should say—and we should be clear about it—“Then our troops cannot stay, because then you're asking us to stay for an enterprise that has no end and that has no purpose.” But, I'm not a big believer in subtle signals, at this point.

Senator COLLINS. Thank you.

Senator REED. Thank you very much, Senator Collins.

In 5 years of effort and extraordinary sacrifice by our servicemen and -women, there are some, I think, strategic consequences that are becoming more palpable. One, ironically, is that we replaced a despicable government in Baghdad, but an implacable foe of the Iranians, with a government that is very friendly to the Iranians—personally, politically, culturally, religiously. And so, General Keane, if our National need is to define a strategy to defeat Iran in Iraq, how do we do it with the present government of Maliki, which is extremely sympathetic and personally connected to the Iranian government? And do we replace them with a Sunni government? Do we replace them at all? What do we do?

General Keane: Well, I think it's a good question, and a reasonable one.

First of all, this government will be replaced through a general election, in any event, in less than 2 years. I'm talking about the Maliki coalition.

Second, it's been, I think, very fascinating to watch Maliki, you know, since, you know, he took office, and the weakness of his coalition and the growth of him in that office. And, listen, it's been frustrating for our people who deal with it. Much of it's two steps forward and one back, and then one forward and two back, to be sure.

But, Maliki is a—is a realist, like the other national leaders are, that, you know, Iran is a neighbor, you know, they're always going to be there. And the fact is, the United States is not always going to be there. That is probably a harsh reality.

The point is also, though, that they are—and this sometimes is lost—they are Iraqi nationalists, and they feel very strongly about that. They do not want to be in bed with the Iranians. They do not want the Iranians to have undue influence in their country. They do—they do not want the Iranians using leverage and the—and the assault that they've made on the south—politically, diplomatically, and economically—to have that kind of influence on the central government.

Now, they also have relations with Iran, and that's to be sure, and they have ties to it. Some of them lived in Iran during the terrible periods of Saddam Hussein. But, at the end of the day, my view is, they are nationalists, they clearly want to be aligned with the United States of America, they clearly want a long-term security relationship with the United States of America. They believe their future is with us in that region. At the same time, they want to have good relationships with their neighbors, and Iran is one of them.

Senator REED. Dr. Malley, your comments? You seem to suggest that that might be incompatible or—in some degree.

Dr. Malley: Well, I mean, I would certainly agree with your comments. I think we do have, today, a policy that's at war with itself. I don't understand how we could be saying, on the one hand, that Iran is the major threat to Iraq—which it may be; I'm not going to argue that point, one way or another—but that our allies in Iraq view themselves as very closely tied to Iran. And you described it very well, that there are so many ways in which—in particular, Mr. Hakim and his party were born, bred, and flourished in Iran. And so, the notion that we now have a part of the Shi'ites are turning against the Iranians by turning against Muqtada al Sadr, I think, is just wrong. You have both sides that are supported by Iran.

Again, if you look at the case of Lebanon, that's not unique. Both Hezbollah and Amal were supported by Iran, and at some point they were at war with one another, and Iran played one against the other, sometimes mediated.

But, the notion, again, that this is what's happening now, that the Maliki government is disentangling itself from Iran, I think, is wrong. Again, I think that's why, ultimately, we're going to have to find some accommodation with Iran, or at least we're going to have to try. I don't want to sound Pollyannaish. It may be that our interests are too incompatible. But, we're going to have to go to the source, we're going to have to try, because right now we have a government in Iraq in which we are investing huge sums and military personnel that is allied with the party we say is threatening our interests in the region and our interests in Iraq more than anyone else.

Senator REED. I want to ask Dr. Bacevich the same question, but I want to follow up quickly with a—just a question. If the Maliki government is successful in suppressing the Sadr militias, which they view as their threat—they're a militia threat from—I don't know Iraqi politics, but from the Shi'a side—would they turn their attention to Sunni militias, would they turn their attention to try to reduce these CLCs that we're sponsoring, either directly or overtly? Or would the CLCs see themselves as being under undo pressure now that a militia group has been successfully eliminated from the scene?

Dr. Malley: Well, first, I actually don't believe in the suppression of the Sadr militia. I think it's a social phenomenon as much as a military one, and it has far deeper roots, incidentally, than either Maliki or Hakim has. And I think we're seeing that, just in the reaction to the events in Basrah.

Senator REED. Which means, if there was a free and open election, they'd do pretty well?

Dr. Malley: Which—and this brings me to a very important point about the elections. Part of what's happening now may well be an effort by Maliki and Hakim to make sure that those elections either don't take place, because there's too much chaos, or are postponed, or someone, because you disenfranchise the Sadrists, the Sadrists can't compete. There's—I don't know any expert who doesn't believe that the Sadrists are going to do much better in this election than ISCI will.

Senator REED. But, the question about going out to the Sunni community—

Dr. Malley: It's a good question. I don't know the answer to that. I think what may well happen is, the Sunni community, if it doesn't see, among—in the government and Maliki and his allies, steps that it believes are necessary to reach a compact, they may turn—right now, they've decided the greater enemy is al Qaeda, and they could postpone the fight against the government. That—once al Qaeda's out of sight, or once they believe that the U.S. is not putting enough pressure on the Maliki government or on Iran, they may turn their sights to the government and to the Shi'ite militias.

Senator REED. Dr. Bacevich, the same vein. You made the point, which I must confess I agree with, that the template for this operation was the transformation of Iraq as a beacon of freedom and free-market economics that would essentially propagate almost automatically throughout the region. I think, at this juncture, that's not the case. But, what seems to be emerging is a much more powerful Iran with a long-term, not only interest, but staying power. In fact, I think comments, even of General Keane, is that their staying power is probably as strong or stronger than ours, because of their proximity and their self-interests. And why don't you comment on that line of questioning.

Dr. Bacevich: Well, I think General Keane's made the key point, wherein he was referring to the "long run." And I think we should, in trying to understand the way the Iraqi/Iranian evolution—relationship is likely to evolve, we should look to the long run. And the long run is that an Arab nation is not going to want to be a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Persians.

It seems to me that, at least on the fringes, one of the justifications for—offered by those who want to continue the war is that for us to change course at this point would give a big win to the Iranians. I think there's no question that the Iranians have done well as a consequence of our blunders. But, if you look at the long run, I would expect that Iraq is going to serve as some kind of a counterweight to Iran, and that's going to be in the interests of the stability of the region, and probably will be in the interests of the United States, as well.

Senator REED. Thank you very much. My time's expired.

Chairman Levin [presiding]: Senator Warner?

Senator WARNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome this distinguished panel. And very much have profited by your, I think, very sage and wise comments this morning.

I want to start off with our good friend General Keane. I have before me a transcript of the hearings before the Senate Armed Services Committee subcommittee, and General Cody, who was your successor as the Vice Chief, said as follows, and I'm quoting him, "The current demand for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds our sustainable supply of soldiers," comma, "of units and equipment," comma, "and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies." Do you agree with that?

General Keane: Well, I don't want to get into a contest with Dick Cody, who I have—

Senator WARNER. No, that's—

General Keane: —tremendous regard for.

Senator WARNER. —the purpose you're here, to get into these—

General Keane: No, you know me, I'm always going to give you a straight answer, Senator.

Senator WARNER. All right. Well, let's have it.

General Keane: I'm just sort of warming up to it a little bit, all right? [Laughter.]

Senator WARNER. Well, I'm—

General Keane: I am talking about—

Senator WARNER. —I'm cold steel, and I want to get the answers.

General Keane: I mean, I'm talking about friend, as well as a colleague.

But, the—yes, there's an element of truth in that statement, certainly—but, here's my view of it. The United States Army is certainly stressed by this war. We're fighting two wars, and it's understandable that it would be, as we have always been in wars of consequence that take time. That's number one.

Number two is, the Chief of Staff of the Army is on record saying that he can sustain, you know, 13 combat brigades almost indefinitely. And I agree with that. Now, at what price would that be would remain to be seen. I have a—I believe this force is tough and resilient, and they're going to continue to make the commitment to volunteer and be a part of it.

In terms of other missions, here's where I come out on that. I mean, first of all, the Air Force and the Navy are largely not involved. The Army and the Marine Corps are very much involved. If we had an emergency someplace else, that would require all non-engaged Army and Marine Corps to respond, regardless of deployments, because it is an emergency. And that would depend, for the Army, on the availability of equipment as much as it is the availability of people. But, nonetheless, I am convinced they would be able to respond.

And then, you get to this other question that's always been troubling to me, is—the implication of that is that we should do something about our involvement in Iraq or in Afghanistan, and particularly Iraq, because that's really the issue, the contentious issue. What we should do is, out of consideration for what General Cody is speaking about—and I'm not suggesting he suggested this—but the implication is that what we need to do is pull our troops out of Iraq so we'll be ready, in the event something else happens. And that makes no sense to me.

Senator WARNER. I think we're getting astray, here. It's a fairly straightforward, clear pronouncement of a man who is in a position to make those judgments. And I draw to your attention—and I'll ask unanimous consent to place it in the record, here—

Chairman LEVIN. It will be placed in the record.

Senator WARNER. —a statement by the current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mullen, who—perhaps you're aware of that statement, took the same basic conceptual thought. He is concerned about other contingencies around the globe, which, at this time, in his professional judgment, require deployment of U.S.—additional U.S. forces. [The information previously referred to follows:] [COMMITTEE INSERT]

Senator WARNER. So, we're going to—in another session—we'll have the Secretary of Defense and Admiral Mullen tomorrow, but I just wanted to get your views on that.

Dr. Bacevich, I listened to you, and it—I agree 100 percent, we're not in control in Iraq. When I look back at World War II, my recollection is, we went into these areas that we conquered—Germany and so forth—we declared martial law and took charge and ran it until such time as they manifested the capability to go out and establish their governments. And the transition was fairly smooth.

Here, we roared in under the concept of democracy, and planted the democracy tree, and elections were held, and the rest is history. And I think the Maliki government does pretty much as it pleases, in my judgment; and that's regrettable. I don't suggest that our Department of State and the Department of Defense aren't trying to do everything possible to leverage that government to accelerate political reconciliation.

I happen to have personal thesis. If suddenly the Iraqi people and this government awaken to the fact that if we stopped our internecine fighting, went down and began to produce the natural resources in this country, and take the funds from those natural resources and rebuild our cities, you could create an Iraq which would be the envy of the whole Middle East, in terms of structure and education and medicine and care for its people. But, we're in this deadlock of these centuries-old animosities and hatred between these people, riddled with corruption, and it's difficult.

I commend our forces, the men and women of the Armed Forces and their families. They have taken a tremendous sacrifice to give the Iraqi people this chance. And we haven't given up on trying to make it come through.

General Keane, I was interested—you just referred to the south, and you called the groups down there a bunch of thugs and so forth. I agree with you. This is what troubles me about the way we conduct these hearings and the terms that we use. And we've got to remember, they go out of here, and the media, in large measure, accurately translates—transmits what's said.

And I grew up in a generation which—I knew what, basically, an "army" was. And an army is composed of a divisional headquarters, a series of, in the old days, regiments, now you've got your combat teams and whatever it is, battalions, and on down. And we keep calling this the "Mahdi army." General Keane, it's not an army, by any means of the interpretation and the use that term has been used for through decades. Am I correct?

General Keane: Which army, Senator?

Senator WARNER. The—we call Sadr's outfit the "Mahdi army." It's not an army, it's a disparate bunch of people that he's cobbled together, and, through spiritual inspirations, whatever—and they're fighting. It's not an army. They don't have a divisional headquarters, they don't have regiments, they don't have training areas. I mean, what is it that we're fighting over there?

General Keane: Well, I mean, that's one of the factions in the south, certainly, is the Jaish al Mahdi—

Senator WARNER. Right.

General Keane: —is the—

Senator WARNER. We call it the army.

General Keane: —which is the military side of his OMS. I don't think we—I've never referred to it as an army. It—and there's good

and bad parts to it. I mean, there's real thugs and killers in that, and—

Senator WARNER. Right

General Keane: —and some of them have been directly fighting U.S. forces present in Iraq, and there's others that are defensive militia, who are there to protect the people—

Senator WARNER. But—

General Keane: —on the streets.

Senator WARNER. But, here's my difficulty. We have spent 5 years training the Iraqi army, and this committee has put untold authorizations out for whatever was needed to do it. And we've now got a couple of hundred thousand. There they are. They have training camps, practice ranges, armaments, everything. And they're fighting this group, call it what you want, the Mahdi army and these other militias, which don't have any of that infrastructure. Yet—but, what they seem to have is a will to fight and die. And therein is their secret weapon and the thing that's making it an effective—as we're struggling, our forces, the coalition forces, and so forth, against those people.

Now, how do you describe that will to fight?

General Keane: Well, I think that's true in some of the people that we've been fighting. Certainly, al Qaeda has reflected that will, some of the Sunni mainstream insurgents had that kind of determination, and certain members of the Shi'a extremists have it, particularly those in the special groups that have been trained in Iran and are further committed. Yeah, they have a low-tech system, certainly, that's being used against the most powerful military in the world, and this is classic insurgency business, here. And the fact of the matter is, is that they use the people to shield them and to protect them, and that is why the change in strategy that we brought to Iraq recently has worked so well. And that's how you defeat them, Senator. You don't defeat 'em just by killing them, you defeat them by isolating them from the people, so the people themselves reject them.

Senator WARNER. Then I think we should stop calling them the "Mahdi army."

Dr. Bacevich: May I comment, Senator?

Senator WARNER. Yes, I'd like to make—

Dr. Bacevich: I mean, rather than call them—I think a more accurate term would be "militia," which is also—

Senator WARNER. That's correct. "Militia."

Dr. Bacevich: —frequently used. And the term is apt. A militia really is "the people armed." And—

Senator WARNER. That's the concept of this company—country itself. In the 1700s, we had militias.

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir. And when you think of our history, and the fact that, in many respects, the forces that collected around Boston in 1775—

Senator WARNER. Sure.

Dr. Bacevich: —in the aftermath of Lexington and Concord, were "the people armed," were a militia. That gives—

Senator WARNER. And they coalesced into "George Washington's army."

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir, but it's the "militia men" that it seems to me our—a militia is very extinguish. And, to some degree, you can—one can imagine that, through the use of conventional military power, you have defeated a militia, when, in fact, all you've done is disperse it until it gathers to fight another day. I personally fear that, to some degree, what we see to be the recent success in Iraq is simply that we have—that the militias has gone to ground or, for its own reasons—

Senator WARNER. Right

Dr. Bacevich: —has chosen to stop fighting for now, and they'll be back tomorrow.

Senator WARNER. But, they do have an unusual will to fight, fight with less armaments, less protection, equipment. But they fight, and that's what we're experiencing down there.

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir.

Senator WARNER. And that—and, I mean, it's just tragic, when we had 1,000 Iraqi soldiers—that's what was reported—defected in the heat of battle down in this Basrah situation the other day. I'm just wondering, does anybody know about what accountability any of those officers have been held to, and what Maliki's doing about it?

General Keane: May I just comment on that, Senator?

Senator WARNER. Yes.

General Keane: I mean, there were 15,000 troops involved in that operation.

Senator WARNER. Right.

General Keane: Most of those defections came from the malign police force. I was down there 2 weeks ago talking to the police chief, a former army division commander by the name of Jalil. Very good soldier. I said, "What's your problem?" And he said, "My biggest problem, General, is that 80 percent of my police force is malign with some form of militia or another, and I can't trust them. And if we try to do anything down here that requires police support," he said, "they're going to roll on me. They will align themselves with their militia."

Now, that is part of those 1,000 that took place there, and there was also some problems with some of the forces that—the army forces that went into Basrah. But, the overwhelming majority of the forces did not defect—

Senator WARNER. Performed quite well.

General Keane: —did not defect. And some of their performance was uneven. And this is pretty typical of the Iraqi army. Now, when they're with us and partnering with us, they do very well. And a number of them have been able to perform independent operations, and there's been a lot of progress there.

So, don't take that little headline and make it something worse than what it really is—

Senator WARNER. No, I—

General Keane: —because it's not.

Senator WARNER. —fully recognize it was a relatively small thing. But, it is significant.

One last point, and I'll give up my time, here.

I grew out of a generation of World War II. I claim no personal glory myself, but I saw that. Sixteen million men and women were

trained to fight in that 5-year period. We've now crossed that with Iraq. And those units, they were—those units were trained, and they were ready to go into battle in 6 or 7 months. We've been training these Iraqis for 5 years. And I just cannot understand how we can continue to accept, "Oh, well, they've just begun, and they're just doing this"—5 years of investment, giving them, as far as I know, every possible economic support that they needed to do that.

Dr. Malley: May I comment—

Senator WARNER. Yes.

Dr. Malley: —on that?

Senator WARNER. Yes.

Dr. Malley: Because I think it brings me back to the —your former question. I think what the Mahdi militia has, which the army doesn't have, or many parts of the army don't have, is loyalty to a cause, and which is why they're prepared to die for it, what the army doesn't have, to a large extent, which is why—it's not a matter of military training, it's a political question. Do they have something they're loyal to? Are they loyal to their sect? Are they loyal to their confession? Or are they loyal to a central state that's viewed as legitimate? Until you reach that threshold, I think you're going to find the same frustration that you've found, and you're going to compare them unfavorably to those members of a militia that have a real cause and a real will to fight for it.

General Keane: You know, I disagree with some of that. The Iraqi security forces, and particularly the army, has made significant progress. And they are extraordinary in battle. They display tremendous courage. We have not had a refusal of a major unit in Iraq in some time. The only problem we've had is just recently in Basrah, and a lot of that had to do with police, as opposed to army forces.

They—there's tremendous will to fight in that force, and all of our leaders—in my last visit to Iraq, I did not find a single battalion or brigade commander who did not point out to me an Iraqi unit that they were proud of and thought they could fight on their own. That was different than visits in 2007. This may—this slope may not be fast enough for any of us, but the slope is an improving slope, for sure.

I'm convinced that we're going to be able to transition to the Iraqis and bring our combat forces out of there, because they will have the capability to do that. But, we need a little bit more time to do it.

Senator WARNER. Well, everybody says, "We need a little bit more time." Can you definitize "need a little bit more time"?

General Keane: Well, as I said before, I think we'll make further reductions in 2009, below where we are right now.

Senator WARNER. Of U.S. forces?

General Keane: In our forces. And then, I think, in —probably in 2010, we'll transition our mission, which is no longer protect-the-people counterinsurgency, and we'll start to do more of training the Iraqi security forces, to finish the training that they need, and that would mean that they begin to take over much of the responsibilities that we have. I mean, this cannot be done overnight, but the progress is there. And if we take the measured course, I think, that

General Petraeus has laid out for us, I think it is very likely we're going to have a favorable outcome in Iraq.

Senator WARNER. My time is up.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Warner.

Senator Lieberman?

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks, to the witnesses.

I want to ask a few questions, General Keane, through the perspective—this perspective, which you alluded to, which is, in the midst of all the controversy about the war, there's no one that really wants to stay there in a conflict forever. This is really, ultimately, a question of, According to what pace do we withdraw our forces, and based on what standards, and, implicitly, what kind of condition do we leave behind?

So, with that context, I do want to ask you about a few of the arguments that we hear in this debate for essentially not following General Petraeus's counsel yesterday, leaving it to conditions on the ground, in his judgment, during this period of consolidation and evaluation, but pressing harder for an earlier withdrawal.

One is what Senator Warner was asking you about—I want to ask you to go back to it—which is stress on the Army. You've got 37 years, yourself, of experience in the U.S. Army leadership, and you've kept very close to what's happening in Iraq. So, I want to invite you to go back to what you were saying, because there are people who say, because of the stress on the Army, we should be withdrawing more rapidly, almost regardless of conditions on the ground. And I—matter of fact, I think people would say “regardless of conditions on the ground.” I want you to work that through. How would you balance the stress on the Army against the mission we have in Iraq?

General Keane: Well, certainly that premise, that because of the stress on the Army, which one would expect to have, and which we did have in all the major wars we have fought of consequence, and particularly those that involved lengthy—in some of those wars, we actually broke the Army, because the purpose of that event was justified by that expenditure. And that's the harsh reality of it.

In this case, national interests at stake, the security of the American people, I believe, are directly related to these two wars that we are fighting. So, it has purpose and meaning to us, regardless of what the motivation was to go in initially. And our Army is stressed by that, primarily because it is not large enough to be able to endure—

Senator LIEBERMAN. Right.

General Keane: —both of these conflicts.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Agreed.

General Keane: And we should realize that is the elephant in the room here with us, and never let go of that, and help these two institutions grow.

That said, that I don't believe, for a minute, that what we should do is take risk in Iraq with our force-reduction program to relieve the stress on the Army or the Marine Corps. I don't know how risking a humiliating defeat in Iraq would ever help those two institutions maintain the viability that they need if they, in fact, have suffered a humiliating defeat. I was part of something like that, as

a platoon leader and company commander coming out of the Vietnam war, and then as a major, watching us lose that war, and the psychological and emotional impact on the officers and NCOs, the professional corps of the military, was very significant. We lost our way for a while, to be—

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yeah.

General Keane: —frank about it. And you know that.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Yup.

General Keane: Nobody wants to be a part of a force like that.

The other thing is, is that—this vague notion that we need the forces to do something else. What are we really talking about, here? Are we talking about Pakistan, with ground forces? I think not. Are we talking about the Pacific Rim, with ground forces? I think not. Are we talking about more forces for Afghanistan? Yes. Do we need more forces in Afghanistan? We do. That's true. I think those forces will be available for deployment in Pakistan eventually, but not right now from the United States. And Afghanistan, let's be frank about it, is a secondary effort compared to Iraq.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Well, I want to—

General Keane: Iraq has a higher priority.

Senator LIEBERMAN. —I want to come to that with you in a minute. I agree with everything you've said. It seems to me that to risk a defeat based on the counsel—best counsel of our commanders on the ground, by accelerating the withdrawal of our forces from Iraq sooner than they advise because we need to have forces available for some possible potential speculative conflict somewhere else doesn't make any sense.

I want to go to the second—and the second point is the one that Senator McCain, I think, was making in his earlier question, which is, yes, the force—the Army is under stress, but—you're worried about breaking a force; you can break a force, and probably more likely will break a force, by letting that force be defeated. The morale of our troops in Iraq today is very high. This—there is tremendous pride in what is being accomplished. And we simply don't—and if you want to break it, pull out the rug from under them.

And my time—I want to ask you to go to Afghanistan, because here is a second argument made for a congressionally mandated accelerated withdrawal from Iraq, and it is—and I'll try to state the argument fairly—that we are essentially fighting the wrong fight, that we are engaged more deeply in the less consequential of the battlefields in the global war on terrorism in Iraq, and, as a result, we have taken our eye off the ball, we have lost our focus on the key battlefield, which is Afghanistan.

I know that you have spent some time focused recently —and visited Afghanistan and Pakistan. So, I want you to give me your response to the argument that we'd be better off taking troops out, regardless of conditions on the ground—I may be overstating the case—but regardless of the advice of commanders on the ground, to put 'em into Afghanistan as soon as possible, because that's the main event, regardless of what happens in Iraq.

General Keane: Yes. You know, Afghanistan certainly is important to us, and I would never want to diminish, you know, what our—we're trying to achieve there. We have problems in Afghanistan, but we are not fighting—the al Qaeda is not the central

enemy in Afghanistan. What has taken place there is, the Taliban have resurged, and they're trying to come back, and they've made some inroads in the south, and the government is very weak in the south. This is not of the crisis stage in Afghanistan that we were dealing with in Iraq in 2006, when the al Qaeda and the Sunni insurgents created the bloodbath in Iraq and were threatening regime survival. That is the important distinction.

There is no threat to regime survival in Afghanistan. There is a problem in Afghanistan in the south. It is aided and abetted by the Pakistanis because there is a Taliban safe haven in Pakistan that we're all familiar with.

Two things can be done in Pakistan—I mean, excuse me, in Afghanistan. One is, eliminate that sanctuary. And two is, provide some additional forces in the south. I think that was the basis for the President's discussion at NATO, the week before last, to get more forces to do that, and also for the additional marine forces.

Here's the other point I want to make. If we are talking about pressuring General Petraeus so that he provides another brigade or two for 2008, that would not be decisive in Afghanistan, but it could be very decisive in Iraq, in terms of what the consequences of that reduction could be.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Let me ask you a final question, just on that. My time's up, so I'm going to ask you to be as brief as you can. Take the argument on the other side of this to what I think is its logical conclusion. If we started to forcibly withdraw, or mandate a withdrawal of our troops from Iraq, risking defeat there, and, in fact, are defeated, and we do it because we want to focus on Afghanistan, what would the effect on the war in Afghanistan be if, essentially, chaos developed in Iraq?

General Keane: Well, I mean, certainly suffering a humiliating defeat is not going to help you prosecute another war with a similar adversary, nor does it help you with the relationship of our allies, who count on the United States to be there when they say they're going to be there. And it certainly encourages our adversaries and the radical Islamists, and the al Qaeda, in particular. But, also, other people in the world just look at the United States and—I think one of the enduring qualities that we have about us is our reliability and our commitment, and we stick with them, even though there's a degree of difficulty, uncertainty, and sacrifice that's associated with it. There's no country in the world that has ever made the degree of sacrifices that we have made to help other beleaguered nations in the world. The record's extraordinary. And to back away so that we could help another friend a number of miles away makes no sense to me, in terms of taking that kind of risk. It endangers the United States and puts us further at risk in the world.

Senator LIEBERMAN. Thanks, General.

Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Lieberman.

Senator Graham?

Senator GRAHAM. Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing. Number one, I thought you did an excellent job yesterday, as chairman. That was one of the best hearings I've attended. And it was—

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you.

Senator GRAHAM. —thoughtful and, you know, difficult issues.

And I really, in the next 7 minutes, enjoy our discussion here, because, you know, people in decisionmaking capacities have to have some framework from which to work off of. And I think one of the fundamental questions that I have to address, as a Senator, and where I want to go with this, Is Iraq part of a global struggle now, or a more isolated event? And for us to come to grips with where to go, I think we have to come to grips with our failures.

General Keane, is it fair to say that the surge is corrective action being taken because of the past strategy failing?

General Keane: Yes. Absolutely. We made a decision to transition to the Iraqi security forces, so they, in fact, could defeat the insurgency.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General Keane: We never made the decision to defeat it ourselves.

Senator GRAHAM. The—

General Keane: And that turned out to be—

Senator GRAHAM. Do the other two witnesses generally agree with that, that our first 4 years here were pretty—going backwards, not forward?

Dr. Malley: Yes.

Senator GRAHAM. Is that—

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir, I agree. But, beyond that, I think that the initial decision to invade Iraq was a—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

Dr. Bacevich: —mistake.

Senator GRAHAM. Well noted. But, I've got to make a decision. I can't go back in time. If I could go back in time, there are a lot of things I would do differently. The first thing I would do is, when the Soviets left Afghanistan, I would have done things differently, because vacuums are going to be filled. That's the one thing I've learned, Dr. Malley, is that in this ideological struggle—and that's what it is; it's not a capital to conquer or a navy to sink or an air force to shoot down, it's an ideological struggle. We paid a heavy price, I think, that, once Afghanistan was—the Soviets left, people filled in that vacuum. And my biggest fear now—how do you say your last name, sir? Dr.—

Dr. Bacevich: Bacevich, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. —Bacevich. My biggest fear is that, whatever mistake we've made in the past, the first job I have is not to compound that mistake. So, my premise is that we can have an honest disagreement about what we should have done, and I would argue a bit that leaving Saddam Hussein in power after ignoring 17 U.N. resolutions, given his history, is not a status quo event, that you can't go back in time and say, "We shouldn't have invaded," without some consequence, in terms of this regime that we replaced living off the Oil-for-Food Programme. I don't think it was a static situation. I think very much that the United Nations would become a lesser body than it is today if you allow dictators like Saddam Hussein to constantly ignore them. But, that's a legitimate debate, and that debate's behind us.

Now, what to do now. The new strategy is a result from failure. The new strategy bought into the idea, as I understand it, General Keane, that the missing ingredient in Iraq was not a lethargic Iraqi people, indifferent to their fate, that was relying upon us to do everything, but an Iraqi people under siege that could not develop military capacity as you're being attacked and fight at the recruiting station, and Iraqi government that was under siege, where sectarian violence knocked politicians down. And the way to break through, in terms of military capacity and political progress, was to provide better security. Is that the underpinning theory of the surge?

General Keane: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, the general election was held in December of 2005, constitutional referendum in November—October-November. Maliki was forming his government from January through the end of March in 2006, when the Samarra Mosque bombing occurred, in February, with the single purpose and the intent to provoke the Shi'a militias into an over-reaction, as a result of that mosque bombing, to undermine the government. So, our problem that we had—

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General Keane: —was a security situation, and the compromise that we had made in the past, of not putting security first as a necessary precondition to political and economic progress, had failed. And we had to put security first.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, let's look forward. There are two points in time, from the fall of Baghdad to January of 2007. I think any objective observer would say that strategy failed to produce results. And "reconciliation" is a word. And if you look at other conflicts in history—you name the civil strife, whether it be religious-based, ethnically-based—there has to be a level of looking forward, versus backward.

Now, what's happened from January 2007 to the present day? I would argue—and I would like to hear your thoughts on this—that the amnesty law, that's yet to be implemented, but about to be implemented, is a giant step forward, in this regard. It's the Shi'as and the Kurds saying to the Sunnis that are in jail, that took up arms against the new Iraq, against the Iraq where Shi'as and Kurds would have a bigger say—17,000 people have had their applications for amnesty approved, out of 24,000 who have applied. Is that not an act of sectarian forgiveness that is a precondition to reconciliation? Isn't that something that is a positive trend?

General Keane: In my mind, that and other programs like it that the Iraqis are implementing is all about reconciliation. I don't believe we're going to have this national compact, as Dr. Malley is suggesting, of some kind of Kumbaya event.

Senator GRAHAM. Right.

General Keane: That's not the way this is going to take place. This is a tribal society, and it's not going to work that way. Those—

Senator GRAHAM. It's—

General Keane: This is significant, in what you are suggesting, and so is de-Ba'athification.

Senator GRAHAM. Now, I'm from South Carolina, so we know about civil war. It started in my State. So, we can't rewrite our his-

tory. All those struggles they're having in Iraq have been known to other people.

Now, let's talk about the provincial election law. If it becomes a reality, to me—and I don't want to keep us here any longer, Mr. Chairman—but, the point that gives me optimism now, versus before the surge, is that there has been some actions taken in Baghdad that are positive, in my opinion. The provincial election law was agreed to by all the major parties, and it's a chance to vote in October 2008. And from what I can understand, based on my visits to Anbar, that the Sunnis are going to take this opportunity to, this time around, participate in elections. And, to me, that is a statement by the Sunnis to the Shi'as and the Kurds that there is a better way to relate to each other, "We're going to use the ballot box to send elected representatives to the provinces, and eventually to Baghdad." Isn't that a major step forward, a sea change in Sunni relationship to the central government and to the people at large?

General Keane: It absolutely is. I had, in my statement, that a poll has been taken among the Sunnis, and they indicate that 90 percent of them will vote in the provincial elections, and a similar amount in the general election in 2009. So, what is that saying? That is saying that the Sunni people themselves are reconciling with the Government of Iraq. They want to participate in the political process. They know this is a Shi'a-dominated government, but they want to enter that process. And, overwhelmingly, the majority of the Sunni insurgent leaders are part of that process now.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, and let's take the budget. Now, the one thing that Senator Levin and I have in common is that, you know, we understand the value of money in politics, that Senator Levin is a very good representative for the State of Michigan, because Michigan gets their fair share, and I try to do the same for South Carolina. But, the \$48-billion budget that was recently passed, to me, is a major move forward, simply because money, in politics, is power.

And you're having the Sunnis and the Shi'as and the Kurds agreeing to divide up the resources of the Nation. And, to me, that is a statement by each group that, you know, "I am entitled to some of this money, but so are you." And that, to me, is something that is encouraging. We're a long way from having this thing resolved the way we would like, but, I would argue, General Keane, because of you and others, that we've turned it around, and that we're moving in the right direction.

And from a political point of view, I can tell you, as a politician, when you share money with other people, you see value in their—the role they play.

So, I would just like to end this, Mr. Chairman, with the idea that better security has led to economic, political, and military progress, but, for me to say that the war has been won and over would be a gross misstatement. I do believe we're going to leave, as you say, General Keane, but—here's what drives my train, gentlemen. I know, from a historical point of view, Dr. Malley, that I will not be judged by the date the troops came home. But, the people who follow behind me will judge me and others during this time in history by what we left behind in Iraq. And I am confident that

the only way we're going to win the war as a whole against radical Islam is defeat it where you find it. And al Qaeda was not in Iraq before we invaded, you're right, but they're there now. And I do believe that one of the success stories of the last year and a half is that they have been punished. And the Muslims in Iraq took up arms against al Qaeda. And anytime that happens, America and the world is safer. Does anyone disagree with that?

Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. Bacevich: Well, sir, I—I hope this is one of these things where we can have an honest disagreement. I just—

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely.

Dr. Bacevich: I just don't—

Senator GRAHAM. Absolutely, we can.

Dr. Bacevich: I just don't share the optimism about reconciliation. What I would say is, if, indeed, everybody in Iraq is keen on reconciling, then let's get out of the way, let's let 'em reconcile and be able, therefore, to achieve the success.

Senator GRAHAM. Do you think we're—

Dr. Bacevich: My—

Senator GRAHAM. —standing in the way of them reconciling?

Dr. Bacevich: I do think that, to some degree, our presence becomes a—an excuse, a crutch, something that different groups can use to—

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

Dr. Bacevich: —play with.

Senator GRAHAM. I gotcha.

Dr. Bacevich: And, to my mind, the insistence that we hear from General Petraeus about taking the pause, the counsel from General Keane about not being too hasty now and putting at risk anything that we've gained, all is suggestive of, perhaps, some doubts on their part that this reconciliation express train is moving quite that rapidly. That would be my concern.

Senator GRAHAM. Well, I think they have honest doubts. I don't know the eventual outcome. I see progress. But, my point was about the Anbar environment changing, where Iraqi Muslims rejected al Qaeda, apparently, and aligned with us. To me, that is a positive step—Do you agree?—in the overall war on terror.

Dr. Bacevich: Yes, sir.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay.

General Keane? How significant is that?

General Keane: Excuse me, sir?

Senator GRAHAM. How significant is what happened in Anbar—

General Keane: Oh, I think it's—

Senator GRAHAM. —vis-a-vis al Qaeda?

General Keane: —a stunning achievement, and very well appreciated in the Arab world, when you talk to people in other countries. It is the first time that a majority of people have rejected the al Qaeda at the expense of their own lives. And, essentially, that message is carried around that Arab Muslim world. When you pick up the traffic of the al Qaeda themselves, they talk about it in terms of a defeat, themselves, by the Sunnis—“We've been defeated by the Sunnis in Iraq.” They're reluctant to admit, “The Americans are killing us,” but, “We've been defeated by the Sunnis in Iraq.”

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

General Keane: And it's a major—

Senator GRAHAM. You've been more than generous with your time. Thank you very much.

Thank you, gentlemen, it's been a great discussion. You're helping our country. Thank you for coming.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Senator Graham.

By the way, Dr. Malley, did you want to add anything to—

Dr. Malley: Just on this process of reconciliation, I'd make two points.

I believe, as General Keane said, that reconciliation is not a moment, it's a process. My question—or my doubt is whether this Iraqi government can its allies are seriously, genuinely engaged in that process. There are a number of laws—I would say some may be more optimistic about whether they're going to be implemented, and whether the implementation will be nonpartisan, as opposed to politicized, which happened to de-Ba'athification or to the amnesty law. My view is, we have to keep the government—its feet to the fire, and make sure—and real pressure, which I haven't seen so far, to make sure that these steps are genuinely taken, rather than simply, "Let's sign a piece of paper, because that's what Vice President Cheney asked us to do, but the minute they turn around, we're going to do it our way."

Chairman LEVIN. Well, that's the whole issue here. It's not whether or not we want to maximize chances of success in Iraq. Everybody wants to do that. And the suggestion that the other side of the coin from the current policy is a dismal defeat in Iraq is ignoring the argument, which is made by at least two of our witnesses here today, I believe, that the way to maximize success in Iraq is to put pressure on the Iraqis to work out a political settlement.

Everybody agrees there's no military solution here. Everyone mouths the words, "There's no military solution." Some people mean it. Some people, I don't think really understand what they're saying. If there's no military solution here, then we've got to force a political solution. And then the question is, How do you do it? And that's where the big divide is—more and more troops, or keeping the troops there in the hope of creating some kind of an atmosphere where the politicians can work out a solution. That's what the supporters of the status quo and the current policy is. Those of us who feel that the only way to get a political solution is to force the politicians to reach a political solution by ending this open-ended commitment, which is clearly open-ended—there is no end that is projected for it; even this so-called "pause," which, by definition, means "a brief period"—when you look up the term "pause" in the dictionary, it means "a relatively brief period."

Yesterday, General Petraeus destroyed that idea, that the pause is going to be brief. What is it? Forty-five days, it's going to be examined, I think. That takes you to the middle of September. Then there is an indeterminate period to assess. No end in sight.

I even asked General Petraeus, yesterday, "What if things go well? Would you then say we will begin to reduce again?" He would not even say that. I said, "What if things go well by the end of the year? Can you then say we will start our reductions again then?" He would not make a commitment. It doesn't make any difference

to this policy whether things go well or things go terribly; the answer is the same, "Maintain your military presence," even though the consensus is, "There's no military solution."

Now, I think a majority of the American people do not want a precipitous withdrawal. That is also used by the supporters of the status quo, that, "The opponents of this policy want a precipitous withdrawal." No, they don't. They want a planned, careful, thought-out timetable that gives the Iraqi political leaders the opportunity to reach a political settlement. That is what has been proposed. That's what got 53 votes in the U.S. Senate. That's what's got a majority vote in the House of Representatives. Not something which is precipitous, immediate, but something which has got a plan to it, which ends this open-endedness which the Iraqi political leaders think they have a commitment to.

General, you said it's—shouldn't be open-ended. But, I don't see how the current policy is anything but open-ended. There's no—we had a statement by Secretary Gates, not too long ago, that it was his plan to continue these reductions after the surge. That's out the window. Then he said it would be a brief pause. That apparently is out the window. We had the President of the United States say that by the end of 2007 we would turn over the security of the country to the Iraqis. That's what he said would happen when he introduced the pause in early 2007. We have not turned over security in key areas. Obviously, we have, in peaceful areas. But, in the key areas, we have not.

I visited the north of Iraq, 3 weeks ago. In those four provinces up there, we were told that there were 110 combined operations in the previous 3 months. There were more Iraqi troops up there than American troops. Seventy percent, or 60 percent of the Iraqi troops were able to take the lead in a combined operation. That's the statistics which we've been given. So, there's as many Iraqi troops in those four provinces capable of taking the lead in combined operations as there are American troops. And yet, in only 10 out of 110 combined operations did the Iraqis take the lead. That's 9 percent.

Economically, they are building up these huge surpluses. These incredible surpluses being built up at \$100-a-barrel oil—2 million barrels a day are exported by Iraq. And we're still paying for most of their reconstruction?

If you want to talk about dependency, that is what is continuing, here. It is a dependency on our presence and our money. Militarily, in those four provinces at least, we're still taking the lead 90 percent of the time, despite the ability of their troops to do so. Economically, we're still spending more for their reconstruction. And politically, we can talk all about these benchmarks having been met. No, they haven't been met. The ones that—most of the ones that have been in—where the legislation has been adopted, depend on implementation. And they have not, in many cases, been implemented yet.

Senator Graham talked about this provincial elections law. Well, there is not—there's a provincial power law, but there is not yet a provincial elections law. That depends upon the Iraqi legislature—legislative body acting. They have not yet acted to put into place the machinery that will allow those October 1 elections to take place.

I think you would all agree it's important that those elections do take place. I think everybody believes it's important that they take place. But, there's a real question as to whether they will take place or not. And I'm not saying that based on just my assessment, that's based on the assessments of those who have the responsibility to make these kind of assessments.

So, all in all, what we come down to is not the question of whether or not it's important to, quote, "leave Iraq in better condition than we found it," whether or not it's important that it be a stable place. I think everybody wants that. The question is whether or not the current course that we're on, with all of our eggs in Maliki's basket—all of our eggs in the Maliki basket—and when he fights a different part of the Shi'a community, we're with him.

I mean, we are right in the middle of a sectarian conflict. It was General Odierno, the other day, that called this a intercommunal struggle. Do you agree with that, General, this is an intercommunal struggle in Basrah?

General Keane: Well, certainly. There's 42 different militia organizations in and around Basrah alone. But, you have to draw back from that and take a look at what really happened. I mean, we had no control there. The Brits pulled out of there 2 years ago, and militia groups took over and maligned the police force. So, what are we doing? We're going down there to provide security and control so that, yes, the political process can move forward. That's what it's about.

Chairman LEVIN. Yeah, but we went down there, not because they followed our advice; despite our advice. And you, I think, General Keane, acknowledge—I think you used a term, which is a very interesting term I found, back, I think, on—a few days ago, when you said that Maliki is, quote, "way in front of the military realities on the ground." That—

General Keane: The—

Chairman LEVIN. You acknowledge—and I think Petraeus acknowledged, yesterday—

General Keane: Sure. I mean—

Chairman LEVIN. —it took a couple of times to ask him—

General Keane:—Maliki moved impulsively, too fast - -

Chairman LEVIN. And we—and we're dragged in with him.

General Keane: But, Senator, what we're talking about here is probably a month or two. That's the only difference. We have a campaign, that's going to last a number of months, to gain control of the southern provinces before the provincial election. General Petraeus was working on that plan—I believe, raising in front of the Iraqi leadership all of the issues in the south, as a result of the many meetings he was having, some of which he was having while I was there, also providing—

Chairman LEVIN. He lays out—

General Keane: —a motivator—

Chairman LEVIN. —a plan which is thoughtful, which is building up pressure. And what happens to the guy we're supporting? He trashes the plan by a precipitous action. Maliki undermines the plan which Petraeus had laid out, and we just simply continue to defend Maliki.

General Keane: So, you don't want to give him any credit. We—
for 2 years—

Chairman LEVIN. For what?

General Keane: We've been beating this—

Chairman LEVIN. Maliki, for what?

General Keane: —guy—we've been beating this guy up for 2
years, saying, "You—this thing is not just about Sunnis and al
Qaeda, this is really about Shi'a extremists." So—

Chairman LEVIN. Let's go through the—

General Keane: So, now—

Chairman LEVIN. —let's get through the credits—

General Keane: —now—so, he—

Chairman LEVIN. Let's go through the credits—

General Keane: So, he steps up to the plate and starts to do
something about it. Yes, it's a little ill-conceived, and it wasn't
properly planned. In the long run—let's focus on how it ends, and
not how it began.

Chairman LEVIN. I agree with that. But, when you say "give him
a little credit," I don't give him credit for precipitously going to the
plate and swinging wildly. No, I don't. Because it raises a question
as to what his motive is and whether or not there's a political mo-
tive in his mind, in terms of the power struggle he is in, politically,
perhaps, with the Sadrists. So, it raises a big question as to his mo-
tivation. And the wisdom of putting all of the eggs in the basket
of someone who clearly is not someone who is nonsectarian, who's
got his own political ax to grind. So, that is where I have a lot of
problems.

General Keane: Well, I'm going to be—

Chairman LEVIN. It's not a matter of—

General Keane: —the last to say that he's not—

Chairman LEVIN. —whether or not we want to succeed. This isn't
a question of whether or not you want to succeed in Iraq. The ques-
tion is whether or not the Maliki course of action, which we are to-
tally locked at the hip on, is the right way to go. That's the specific
question. Or whether not we should end this open-ended commit-
ment and let Maliki and others know, "Folks, we've been there 5
years, we're spending \$12 billion a month, we've lost 4,000-plus
troops, this is longer than World War II, we've given you an oppor-
tunity"—we've heard—now we're saying, objectively, the first 3
years were wasted, now we're saying that? There were some of us
that were saying that was the wrong course, 3 years ago. But, we
were then told, "You're defeatists. You want to surrender." That's
what we heard, 4 years ago, 3 years ago, 2 years ago. No, we don't.
We want to succeed as much as anybody else. The question is, Does
this course that we're on lead to a conclusion which is a good con-
clusion, or does this lead to greater and greater intercommunal
conflict? And that's the issue.

So, it's an—it's a issue where we have different points of view,
but—and yesterday, by the way, when General Petraeus was
asked, "Could reasonable people differ on this issue?" and he would
not even concede that reasonable people could reach a different
conclusion than he did, I've got to tell you, I was struck by that.
I was so sure that General Petraeus would say, "Of course reason-
able people can differ." All three of you are reasonable people, sit-

ting at this table, and you differ with each other. Does that mean you're not reasonable people? You're all reasonable people. You have very strong opinions that differ with each other. But, not to concede that somebody who differs with his approach, which is just a continuation of an open-ended commitment that some—that those people are reasonable, it seems to me, showed the lack of a balance on his part to see the other side of this issue and to at least acknowledge the possibility—even though he disagrees with it, at least acknowledge the possibility that the best course of action here may be to force the Iraqis—to use the only leverage we've got, which is our presence and the departure of most of our troops as a way of forcing them to accept the—I believe, a consensus position, “There is no military solution, there is only a political solution.”

Now, I've talked long enough, and I haven't taken time for my colleagues, but I want to give all of you a chance to sum up. And we can start—why don't we go in the same order

Dr. Bacevich?

Dr. Bacevich: I guess I would sum up just with two points. This has been—it's a great honor for me just to come and be part of this event. My frustration stems from the fact that the subject is Iraq, and the subject ends up being narrowly Iraq, and therefore, the conversation tends not to get around to the larger strategic questions.

I'll repeat a point I made earlier, that, in my judgment at least, the continuation of this war serves to preclude a discussion over what ought to be our response to violent Islamic radicalism, given the failure of the Bush strategy, given the failure of the freedom agenda, the failure of the doctrine of preventive war. And General Keane himself acknowledged, earlier on, we don't have a strategy. And, as important as this war is, and trying to find a way to get out of it, it is the absence of a strategy, and really an absence of a clear understanding of how great or how limited the threat posed by violent Islamic radicalism—that simply has been lost.

And I guess I would recommend to you, Senator, that some part of the conversation, at some point, get to these larger strategic issues.

But, thank you very much.

Chairman LEVIN. Thank you, Dr. Bacevich.

General Keane?

General Keane: Thank you. Just briefly.

You know, I share your frustration and the frustration of other members of the committee, in terms of the time of our involvement here and the—sort of, the thought that we're—what really goes on is, we're just kicking the can down the road some more. But, the fact of the matter is, there really is a new strategy at play, it has worked to resolve a lot of the major conflict in the central region. We will finish off the al Qaeda this year. And I'm also convinced we're going to bring stability in the south. It's not as tough a problem as what we dealt with in the central region.

Maliki now, first time ever, has the backing of all the political parties behind him in what he's doing in the south, except for the Sadrist Party. That is something, in and of itself.

And, look-it, let's be honest, our government browbeat Maliki into the National legislative agenda. And then, last time Petraeus and Crocker were here, we were beating up on them because they didn't do any of it. Now they've done 12 of 18, and 4 of the 6 significant legislative ones that will have dramatic impact on the people. Now we're beating 'em up to say it hasn't been implemented.

To get to where they were took months of compromise and negotiations—and you know far better than me, in terms of getting complicated major sovereign-state issues like that passed—and they did. That deserves some recognition and some credit. And if executed—and I believe it will be—it will change Iraq, as will the provincial elections, as will amnesty and the de-Ba'athification laws.

And, yes, I am optimistic. This is not an open-ended contract, Senator. It is not. I mean, our policy is to transition to the Iraqi security forces.

Chairman LEVIN. That's been true for years.

General Keane: Your frustration is that for 3 years we had the wrong policy. That's true. We have the right policy now, and we will transition to the Iraqi security forces. But, you're not going to get Petraeus and Crocker in here and lay out a time schedule on when that's going to be. They have too many variables to cope with. But, at the same time, I can provide you a framework for that, because I'm not accountable, the way they are, and I—and I'm convinced it's pretty close. And we will transition. And I think—if you put the two schedules out on a piece of paper, I'm not sure they're all that different, except for the crowd that wants a precipitous immediate withdrawal.

Chairman LEVIN. Okay, thank you, General Keane.

Dr. Malley?

Dr. Malley: Senator, I would start where you left off, which is that this is very—this is not a military struggle in which there are parties to be defeated and parties that are going to win. This is a political struggle in which deals are going to have to be made, for the most part, putting al Qaeda aside. That's what this is about. And that's where we have to decide whether our mission makes sense or not.

And my fear, as I said earlier, is that we may have wise tactics, we don't have a strategy. We don't have a strategy to achieve achievable goals. And our achievable goals are the ones, the goals—the real onus has to be on the Maliki government, on the Iraqi government.

So, I'd say the—this mission, this military mission has a point and has a purpose only if it is set in the context of a strategy, achievable goals, where we put the onus on the Iraqi government to do what it needs to do, and where we have a regional strategy, so that whenever we leave, we do it in an environment that is less polarized and less tense. But, the—but, again, to echo what you said, I think we've done more than our part. Now it's up to them.

Chairman LEVIN. Gentlemen, you've been great. And this kind of discussion is exactly what I know our colleagues relish and welcome, regardless of their own predilections, which the American people, I think, are really into, in terms of a debate on Iraq policy again. And that's healthy.

And we will stand adjourned, with our gratitude.
[Whereupon, at 12:27 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]