

**Statement by
James A. Baker, III and Lee H. Hamilton
Co-Chairs of the Iraq Study Group
before the Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
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Chairman Biden, Ranking Member Lugar, distinguished members of the Committee on Foreign Relations, it is a distinct honor to appear before you this afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group report.

Introduction

We would like to begin by noting some common elements in the Study Group report and the President's recent speech. We agree with President Bush:

- The situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people;
- The consequences of failure would be severe;
- It is clear that we need to change our strategy in Iraq; and
- Only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people.

We support increasing the number of American advisors embedded in Iraqi Army units with the goal that the Iraq government will assume control of security in all provinces in Iraq by November 2007, as the President has stated.

We support the benchmarks President Bush outlined for Iraq, and agree that now is the time for the Iraqi government to act.

As part of our testimony, we have attached a joint statement that we released after the President's speech on January 10.

The report of the Study Group already has been analyzed at length. So, we would like to be fairly brief in our opening remarks and concentrate on a few points:

- the security mission;
- benchmark performance;

- diplomacy;
- economic assistance; and
- the Iraqi government.

The Security Mission

There are important points of similarity between the Study Group report and the President's plan for security. Both keep rapid reaction and special operations forces available to undertake force protection and strike missions against al Qaeda in Iraq, as well as for other missions considered vital by the U.S. commander in Iraq. Both increase the number of U.S. personnel embedded with Iraqi Army units. Both emphasize the mission of training Iraqi troops.

Training. The President stated: "...we will accelerate the training of Iraqi forces, which remains the essential U.S. security mission in Iraq." To accomplish that goal, the President intends to double the number of advisors embedded with Iraqi Army units

The Study Group stated: "The primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq should evolve to one of supporting the Iraqi Army, which would take over primary responsibility for combat operations." The Study Group suggested that "such a mission could involve 10,000 to 20,000 American troops."

Troop Levels. The Study Group stated that "the United States should not make an open ended commitment to keep large numbers of American troops in Iraq." We rejected an immediate withdrawal because we believe that so much is at stake.

The Study Group stated: "While these (training and supporting) efforts are building up, and as additional Iraqi brigades are being deployed, U.S. combat brigades could begin to move out of Iraq. By the first quarter of 2008, subject to unexpected developments in the security situation on the ground, all combat brigades not necessary for force protection could be out of Iraq."

The Study Group set no timetable and set no deadlines. We believe that military commanders must have the flexibility to respond to events on the ground. We believe, however, that if the important recommendations of the

Iraq Study Group are implemented, it “will enable the United States to begin to move its combat forces out of Iraq responsibly.”

The Study Group recognizes that “even after the United States has moved all combat brigades out of Iraq, we would maintain a considerable military presence in the region, with our still significant force in Iraq and with our powerful air, ground, and naval deployments in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar, as well as an increased presence in Afghanistan. These forces would be sufficiently robust to permit the United States, working with the Iraqi government, to avoid the Iraqi government’s collapse and the disintegration of the country; fight al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations in Iraq, using special operations teams; train, equip and support the Iraqi security forces; and deter even more destructive interference in Iraq by Syria and Iran.”

With regard to the military planning of the United States in Iraq and the region, the Study Group recommended, “The United States must make it clear to the Iraqi government that the United States could carry out its plans, including planned redeployments, even if Iraq does not implement its planned changes. America’s other security needs and the future of our military cannot be made hostage to the actions or inactions of the Iraqi government.”

The President’s plan does not mention the possibility of combat troops moving out of Iraq as the training mission proceeds.

Troop Surge. The President’s plan makes clear that U.S. forces will be sent to Baghdad to “help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods.” That means combat operations, including possibly door-to-door sweeps.

The Study Group made the assessment that “the security of Baghdad is crucial to security in Iraq more generally.” While we were in Baghdad at the end of the summer, Iraqi and American leaders told us that as Baghdad goes, so goes Iraq.

We state in our report that, “there is no action the American military can take that, by itself, can bring about success in Iraq.” To reduce the violence in Baghdad and in Iraq, national reconciliation is essential. To provide for the long-term security of the Iraqi people, the Iraqi government must step up and take responsibility for the security of its citizens.

The Study Group did state that it could “support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad, or to speed up the training and equipping mission, if the U.S. commander in Iraq determines that such steps would be effective.”

Our soldiers have the ability to undertake both missions. It is critically important, however, that the training mission not suffer while the U.S. military is engaged in a surge for Baghdad. The Study Group believes the training mission should be the primary mission. Otherwise, the United States risks delays in the completion of the training mission, in the handover of responsibility to the Iraqis, and thereby in the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq.

Performance on Benchmarks

No security plan can work in the absence of national reconciliation. The Study Group report stated that U.S. forces “cannot stop the violence – or even contain it – if there is no underlying political agreement among Iraqis about the future of their country.”

The Study Group, the President, and Prime Minister Maliki agree on key measures the Iraqis need to take. Those measures include: legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis; provincial elections later this year; reform of the de-Baathification laws; and a fair process for considering amendments to Iraq’s Constitution. The Study Group calls on the United States to consult closely with the Iraqi government to develop additional milestones tied to calendar dates.

The Iraqi government’s words on behalf of these measures have been good, but its performance has been weak. We commend the President’s statement:

I have made clear to the Prime Minister and Iraq’s other leaders that America’s commitment is not open-ended. If the Iraqi government does not follow through on its promises, it will lose the support of the American people and it will lose the support of the Iraqi people. Now is the time to act.

We believe the Administration must hold Iraqi leaders to those specific benchmarks and specific dates for performance. The United States needs to use its leverage to get Iraqi leaders to perform. We use conditionality with

many other recipients of U.S. assistance. We should do so with Iraq. The Study Group stated in its Recommendation 21:

If the Iraqi government does not make substantial progress toward the achievement of milestones on national reconciliation, security and governance, the United States should reduce its political, military, or economic support for the Iraqi government.

Conditionality is necessary to press the Iraqi government to perform. Conditionality is necessary to press for national reconciliation. In the absence of national reconciliation, there will be sectarian violence without end.

Diplomacy

We were encouraged by the President's statement that "We will use America's full diplomatic resources to rally support for Iraq from nations throughout the Middle East."

We believe there are additional specific steps he should take. The President did not endorse a diplomatic effort including all of Iraq's neighbors. The Study Group took the view that "the United States should engage directly with Iran and Syria in order to try to obtain their commitment to constructive policies toward Iraq and other regional issues."

We recognize that dealing with Iran and Syria is controversial. But it is clear that Iran and Syria have influence in Iraq. They are part of the problem. It is also our assessment that neither Syria nor Iran have a long-term interest in a chaotic Iraq which could negatively affect their own national security interests. Accordingly, it is the view of the Study Group that the United States should try to make them part of the solution.

Sometimes the argument is made that Iran has momentum in the region, and the United States should not negotiate until it has more leverage over Iran. We disagree. We negotiated with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. We can negotiate with Iran on behalf of stability and our interests in Iraq. The United States and Iran cooperated in Afghanistan, and they should explore replicating this model.

The Study Group also calls for a renewed and sustained commitment by the United States to an Arab-Israeli peace on all fronts. The Study Group laid out specific and detailed steps that should be undertaken in order to achieve a comprehensive peace on all fronts, including Israeli-Palestinian, Israeli-Lebanese, and Israeli-Syrian. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has been traveling in the region. Her efforts to launch informal talks between Palestinians and Israelis are a positive development, but they do not yet include the Israeli-Lebanese and Israeli-Syrian tracks of a comprehensive peace. We feel particularly strongly that the United States is missing an opportunity to promote its goals in Iraq and the broader region by not talking to Syria.

Some have asked us: What does the Arab-Israeli conflict have to do with the war in Iraq? Why make one problem harder by taking on two?

The answer is simple. It is difficult to establish regional stability in the Middle East without addressing the Arab-Israeli issue. We want other countries, especially the Sunni Arab countries, to help us. When we go to talk to them about Iraq, they will want to talk about the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The United States says it wants to empower “moderate Muslims.” Yet the only way to empower the moderates is to take away the most potent grievance of the extremists: that the United States does not care about the Palestinians.

A comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace would deal the extremists a blow in Baghdad, Beirut, the Palestinian territories and elsewhere.. It would bolster America’s prestige. And – above all – it would guarantee the long-term security of America’s ally: Israel.

All of us understand that the peace process is difficult, and that results will be measured in years, not months. But a sustained and comprehensive effort counts. A sustained effort will help us with Iraq and will win us important diplomatic leverage across the board in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Economic Assistance

The President asked for over \$1.1 billion in additional economic assistance for Iraq. That is a step in the right direction. The Study Group believes the commitment should be substantially larger – \$5 billion per year. We need to

do many things right in Iraq if we are going to succeed. We need to devote resources to job creation and capacity building.

The President has stated that Iraq will spend \$10 billion of its own money on reconstruction and infrastructure projects that will create new jobs. The Study Group agrees that job creation is necessary to give some hope and purpose to young Iraqis. Too many of them are frustrated and cannot provide for their families. Too many have turned to militias and the insurgency. Our commitment to job creation should include the Commander's Emergency Response Program, but it must be broader. We need to help Iraqis restart their many idle factories.

Capacity building is necessary because the Iraqi government is weak. It cannot deliver the basic services of government. It falls short in providing electricity and water. It falls short in providing security. The current government of Iraq can succeed only if it starts to win the confidence of those it governs. Capacity building means technical assistance and advice. It means better procedures in government agencies, including a greater delegation of authority and better internal controls.

The Secretary of State has named a reconstruction coordinator in Baghdad. That will be helpful, but that will not address another problem we described in our report. The problem of coordination is interagency. It is most acute in Washington. The new coordinator is capable, but he is the Secretary of State's appointee, not the President's appointee. He cannot make other agencies do what he tells them to do.

Conclusions

Mr. Chairman, the President has decided on a new strategy.

Much of the attention right now is on the troop surge. To some degree, that is understandable. We are all concerned when more of our young men and women are put in harm's way.

The political, diplomatic, and economic pieces of our policy are just as important as the military piece. The Study Group was explicit on the importance of a comprehensive approach. All elements of our policy should be pursued at the same time.

National reconciliation cannot wait. Make no mistake: The violence in Baghdad will not end without national reconciliation. The violence will not end unless Iraq's leaders step up and make difficult decisions about the future of their country.

The President correctly stated that only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence. We are placing all of our bets on the performance of the Iraqi government. The rhetoric of the Iraqi government has been good. Its performance has been disappointing. Too often, Iraqi leaders have acted in their sectarian interest, not the national interest.

The Study Group believes in a comprehensive military, diplomatic, economic and political approach:

- Training as the primary U.S. military mission in Iraq;
- Engaging Iraq's neighbors – and the international community – on behalf of stability in Iraq and the region;
- Building the capacity of the Iraqi government and focusing on job creation as part of a robust economic program; and
- Holding the Iraqi government to performance benchmarks, particularly on national reconciliation.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, we would be pleased to respond to your questions.

Appendix #1

Statement of the Co-Chairs of the Iraq Study Group

January 11, 2007

James A. Baker, III and Lee Hamilton

We are pleased that the President reviewed the report of the Iraq Study Group carefully and seriously. Some of our recommendations are reflected in the new approach that he outlined Wednesday, while others have not been adopted.

We agree with President Bush that, “the situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people,” the consequences of failure are severe, and “only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people.” As the President said, “the essential U.S. security mission” in Iraq is the training of Iraqi forces. We support increasing the number of American advisors embedded in Iraqi Army units with the goal that the Iraq government will assume control of security in all provinces in Iraq by November 2007. We recommended many of the benchmarks President Bush outlined for Iraq, and agree that now is the time for the Iraqi government to act.

We hope the President and his Administration will further consider other recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. The President did not suggest the possibility of a transition that could enable U.S. combat forces to begin to leave Iraq. The President did not state that political, military, or economic support for Iraq would be conditional on the Iraqi government’s ability to meet benchmarks. Within the region, the President did not announce an international support group for Iraq including all of Iraq’s neighbors, nor mention measures we suggested to reach a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement.

The Iraq Study Group indicated that it could “support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad” complemented by comprehensive political, economic, and diplomatic efforts. Questions, of course, remain about the nature of the surge. We are encouraged by the President’s statement that “America’s commitment is not open-ended” and Secretary Gates’ statement that the addition of 21,000 troops would be viewed as a temporary surge. The violence in Baghdad will not end without national reconciliation.

America’s political leaders have a responsibility to seek a bi-partisan consensus on issues of war and peace. We want to be helpful in forging that unity of effort. We welcome President Bush’s commitment to form a working group with congressional leaders that will work across party lines in pursuit of a common policy. #

