

**TESTIMONY OF  
AMBASSADOR JAMES F. JEFFREY AND GENERAL LLOYD AUSTIN  
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
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**Why Iraq is Important to the United States**

A stable Iraq will play a critical role in achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. Iraq's strategic importance is based on a number of factors. Iraq plays a central role in the Arab and Muslim worlds and hosts Shi'a Islam's holiest sites. Iraq has a diverse, multi-sectarian and multi-ethnic population. Geographically, Iraq is strategically positioned between major regional players, including Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Iraq represents the frontier between the Arab and Persian worlds. And because it is endowed with a significant portion of the world's oil reserves, Iraq will play an increasingly influential role in the global economy. We must remember that for most of its modern history, Iraq has been aligned with our adversaries, a threat to our friends and interests, and a destabilizing force in the region and world.

We now face an historic opportunity – and a critical window – to help Iraq emerge as a strategic partner and a force for stability and moderation in a troubled region. An enduring Iraqi-U.S. partnership will be critical in enabling Iraq to be that positive force. It is in our national interest to fully support that partnership. We cannot afford to let the gains we have sacrificed so much for slip away before they are cemented.

**U.S. Interests:** The United States has important national interests in the greater Middle East. These include the unity and security of Iraq as well as continued development of its democratic institutions and its reintegration into the region. U.S. national interests related to Iraq are: regional nonproliferation; counterterrorism cooperation; access to energy; and integration of the region into global markets.

**Administration Policy**

U.S. policy is set by President Obama's 2009 speech at Camp Lejeune, which reaffirmed the 2008 Security Agreement, calling for the withdrawal of U.S. forces by December 31, 2011, and the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement, which lays out a long-term strategic relationship between the U.S. and Iraq in the fields of diplomacy, economics, energy, security, and rule of law. The goal of the President's policy is to promote security and prosperity in Iraq, transition responsibility for security to the Iraqis, and cultivate an enduring strategic relationship with Iraq based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

In so doing we seek an Iraq, as described in the Camp Lejeune speech and the May 2010 National Security Strategy, that is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant; with a government that is just, representative, and accountable; that denies support and safe haven to

terrorists; is able to assume its rightful place in the community of nations; and contributes to the peace and security of the region. Consistent with this policy, President Obama announced the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom and combat operations in Iraq on August 31, 2010. Prior to the end of combat operations, the Administration withdrew nearly 100,000 troops, closed or transferred to the Iraqis hundred of bases, and moved millions of pieces of equipment out of Iraq. These actions marked a key transition as Iraqis assumed responsibility for their own security. The transitional force of less than 50,000 U.S. troops that remains has a new mission to advise, train, assist, and equip the Iraqi Security Forces, protect our personnel and property, and participate in counterterrorism operations. As the military draws down, civilians – diplomats, aid workers, and advisors – are moving into a more prominent role to support Iraq in achieving its political, economic, security, and diplomatic goals. Our success in Iraq will require continuing the strongest possible U.S. military and civilian cooperation on the ground during the drawdown.

### **Current Security Situation and a Look Towards 2012**

Despite some predictions to the contrary, security in Iraq improved during the nine month delay in government formation. Security incidents in 2010 were 25% lower than 2009 due, in large part, to the credible performance of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). They were instrumental in creating the space necessary for peaceful dialogue.

That said, there is still much work to be done. 2011 will be a critical, challenging year – one that sets the conditions for Iraq's continued progress. Security trends are good but the environment is complex. Iraq still faces dangerous and determined enemies, each with their own objectives and tactics.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) is degraded but determined. Recent attacks targeting Christians, including a horrific attack October 31 against Our Lady of Salvation Church, as well as against Shi'a pilgrims during the observation of Arba'een demonstrate AQI's capability to conduct high casualty-producing attacks. However, the window of time between AQI attacks has widened while the level of sophistication of their attacks has declined. This degradation in capability is largely due to the efforts of Iraqi and U.S. special operations forces, working together to maintain constant pressure on extremist networks. Additionally, restricting financing and command and control capability greatly limits AQI's ability to conduct signature attacks. While they remain determined, they will not achieve their aim of inciting sectarian conflict – the Iraqi people continue to stand together and reject AQI principles.

While AQI remains Iraq's most dangerous enemy, Shi'a extremist groups continue to be a serious threat. Groups such as Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib al-Haq, and the Promised Day Brigade have indicated their intention to increase violence against U.S. forces and they continue in their attempts to do just that. And while they may focus on U.S. forces now, we believe they will likely target the Government of Iraq after U.S. forces depart.

We assess Iraq's security environment will be relatively stable in January of 2012 due to a number of factors. AQI will remain capable of signature attacks but will lack public support. The Sunni insurgency will continue to present a low-level threat. Shi'a extremists will continue to be funded, trained, and equipped by Iran. Violence will be masked by criminality, illicit smuggling, and extortion – a blend of extremism and crime. The ISF will be increasingly capable of providing internal security, but will not be capable of providing for external defense. The Army will not be capable of conducting combined arms operations due to incomplete fielding of modern equipment that will still be arriving as U.S. forces depart. The Navy will have limited capability to defend territorial waters and the Air Force will lack the capability to maintain air sovereignty. Police will be unable to assume full responsibility for internal security in many regions due to lagging development of capabilities and professionalism, further hampered by poorly defined relationships between the Ministries of Defense and Interior.

### **Iraqi Security Forces Gaps**

For the United States to achieve its goals, the Government of Iraq must provide for Iraq's internal security, develop external defense capabilities, and lead and manage its institutions. As Iraq emerges from an extended government formation process, inter-ministerial conflict, ethno-sectarian tensions, and malign Iranian influence will continue to serve as barriers to progress. While U.S. operations through 2011 will address many of these issues, gaps in capabilities will remain. These gaps include:

- Counter-terrorism operations and intelligence fusion.
- Cross-ministerial and interagency intelligence fusion and information sharing.
- Sustainment and logistics.
- Combined arms (external defense)
- Air sovereignty/air defense.

### **Five “M’s” of Transition**

At the national strategic level, the transition to a civilianized post-2011 relationship under the Strategic Framework Agreement involves a number of key factors, what we call “the five M’s.” These are: new Missions, Money and other resources, coordination with Prime Minister Maliki's government, Months left to complete the job, and Management of the whole process. Let us cover each of the “M’s” in more detail.

1) The New Missions: The National Security Strategy lays out specific tasks the embassy will have to assume from United States Forces-Iraq (USF-I). These include:

Broader Diplomatic Presence: 2011 will see a huge drop in U.S. presence in Iraq as almost 50,000 troops and many tens of thousands of Defense Department contractors depart. USF-I and the sixteen diplomatic Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) we have now are carrying out extraordinary security, political outreach, training, economic, and developmental assistance programs, and giving the Embassy, USF-I headquarters, and Washington situational awareness over the breadth of Iraq. This presence has been

instrumental in aiding Iraq in achieving not only its security, but also remarkable political and economic progress. But we need a temporary civilian-led presence in these areas for a few years to further build on what our military and PRTs have done, to diffuse crises, and produce long-term solutions. To this end, civilian engagement with Iraq's provinces, currently led by PRTs, will consolidate into four strategically-located diplomatic outposts. The Department of State will soon inaugurate two consulates – in Erbil and Basra – and two embassy branch offices – in Mosul and Kirkuk – as well as utilize the Office of Security Cooperation in Iraq (OSC-I) offices and police training hubs as secure platforms for assistance throughout Iraq.

Development Assistance: Aside from general political engagement and situational awareness, U.S. government assistance through these platforms and USAID programs will emphasize strengthened provincial governance, community and civil society participation, economic reforms to expand the private sector economy, respect for the rule of law and human rights, improved delivery of key social services, preparations for future elections, and the continued return and resettlement of displaced persons. USAID development programs assist Iraqis to use their own human and natural resources more effectively and sustainably and coincide with USG and Iraqi prerogatives laid out in the Strategic Framework Agreement as well as the Iraqi Government's stated priorities in its own National Development Plan.

Modernization of Iraqi Security Forces: As noted above, the ISF are not ready to independently provide for Iraq's defense despite their impressive performance thus far. They need continued U.S. support. U.S. Embassy Baghdad will continue the efforts of USF-I to develop Iraq's Security Forces, now more than 650,000 strong, through Security and Defense Cooperation and Security Assistance activities under the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I). This mission will include advising, training, and equipping Iraqi forces, supporting professional military education, and planning joint military training exercises. It will allow for continued fulfillment of 336 cases of Foreign Military Sales (valued at \$8 billion) and ensure the delivery of M1A1 tanks, patrol boats, howitzers, armored personnel carriers, and more. The OSC-I will also enable the delivery of an additional 61 cases of Foreign Military Sales (valued at \$5 billion) already requested by the Government of Iraq. It is projected to have a full-time staff of 157 military and civilian personnel as well as hundreds of case-related specialists for Foreign Military Sales at any one time.

We believe the OSC-I is important to a successful Iraq transition. The Department of Defense and the Department of State will work with Congress on requested resources and authorities needed in order to support the OSC-I.

Police Development Program: We need to help the Iraqis to professionalize their police, an absolutely critical component to the country's long-term stability. The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad and the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs will oversee a continuing USG effort to enhance the professionalism of the Iraqi police force through advanced mentoring at the ministerial and provincial level and through specialized training. The transition to a civilian-led partnership with

the Iraqi Ministry of Interior will be a central element of the U.S. support to Iraq's Security Forces. This partnership will include 190 advisors at 28 advisory locations in ten provinces, eventually reaching approximately 55% of the roughly 287,000 police assigned to the Iraqi Police Service and focused on population centers representing more than 65% of the Iraqi population. The goal will be to facilitate a professional, competent, and self-sufficient Ministry of Interior that provides security and stability to its citizens and is able to effectively counter terrorism and organized crime within five years.

Information-Sharing: Counter-terrorism cooperation is the primary focus of our information-sharing mission. Current information exchange programs in Baghdad will continue, with limited information exchange – including tactical data – at consulates and branch offices. U.S. Embassy Baghdad will also maintain operations and information liaison at various headquarters, operation centers, and intelligence fusion cells in four major cities in Iraq.

Logistics: To support various missions and operating locations in an austere and non-permissive environment, U.S. Embassy Baghdad must take on many logistical functions that USF-I currently provides for its forces, PRTs, and the Embassy. These include securing sites outside of Baghdad and providing personal security details, administering the Department of Defense Logistics Civil Augmentation Program's life support contract for all U.S. personnel in Iraq, managing the supply lines for food, fuel and material, operating emergency medical facilities, and running in-country and regional air operations.

2) Money and Other Resources: If the Department of State is to effectively take the lead from our military colleagues, we need the support and resources to finish the job. As Vice President Biden said on November 20, 2010: *While the day will come when Iraq's vast natural wealth can fully finance its security and investment needs, and when its civilian institutions no longer require such intensive support, it has not yet arrived. Iraq has increased its own spending in these areas, and with sustained American engagement, it will emerge from generations of trauma to become a stable and self-reliant nation. That is why, even at this difficult economic time, we are asking Congress to fulfill our budget requests to support America's continued engagement, including our broader diplomatic presence, modernization plan for the Iraqi security forces and financing for a police development program.* While all U.S. government work is expensive in Iraq due to the security situation, a robust civilian presence represents a significant savings for the taxpayers from the bills they have been paying for the past eight years. Given all the U.S. has sacrificed in Iraq, now is not the time to be penny-wise and pound-foolish and risk ceding the field to Al-Qaeda and Iran. One of the hard lessons from America's past experience in Afghanistan right after the Cold War is the necessity of supporting and influencing the transition of war-torn nations from conflict to stability to peace and prosperity.

3) Months to January 2012: We have a limited time to successfully implement this transition. The Department of State will have to take over the above mentioned missions,

deploy many thousands of additional personnel, and expend significant funds to build out various sites, all within less than a year.

4) Coordination with Prime Minister Maliki's government: The cooperation of the Government of Iraq is essential to achieving the new missions above in the time allotted. Specifically, we are asking that the Government of Iraq finalize Land Use Agreements, provide security support with Iraqi Security Forces to U.S. diplomatic establishments and activities, and allow for the continuity of current security, aviation, and ground movement operations now provided by USF-I.

5) Management: The U.S. Government must execute this entire program, from budget execution through personnel deployments, site construction, and transfer of missions. The greatest asset of the operation, and of the embassy in Baghdad, has been the extraordinary support provided by USF-I, CENTCOM, and the Department of Defense. This support, and the closest possible civilian-military cooperation during and after the transition, is vital to our success.

## **Conclusion**

To quote the President in his address on the end of combat operations in Iraq on August 31, 2010: *The Americans who have served in Iraq completed every mission they were given. They defeated a regime that had terrorized its people. Together with Iraqis and coalition partners who made huge sacrifices of their own, our troops fought block by block to help Iraq seize the chance for a better future. They shifted tactics to protect the Iraqi people, trained Iraqi Security Forces, and took out terrorist leaders. Because of our troops and civilians – and because of the resilience of the Iraqi people – Iraq has the opportunity to embrace a new destiny, even though many challenges remain.*

Our over-arching goal in this transition is to build a viable partnership that will flourish into the future well after our troops have departed, and to honor the many thousands of Iraqis and Americans who have given their lives for a greater cause – a cause that embraces all of us here as we endure to leave behind an Iraq that is worthy of their sacrifice.