



**U.S. Senate Committee
on Foreign Relations**
Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Ranking Member
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Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
Committee on Foreign Relations
Iraq Transition: Obstacles and Opportunities
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OPENING STATEMENT AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing. I am pleased that the Defense Department finally acceded to your request and has sent Assistant Secretary Rodman here today. I am also pleased that Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz has agreed to testify before the Committee.

As I said yesterday, I also hope that we will soon hear from Secretary Powell and Secretary Rumsfeld.

The decisions they will make, with the President, in the days and weeks ahead will have a profound impact on our national security for years to come. With all due respect to the witnesses before us today, we need to hear from the ultimate decision makers.

Mr. Chairman, as complicated and as vexing as the situation in Iraq is, the choice before is actually quite simple.

We can continue to treat Iraq as if it is some kind of prize that we won – and that is not to be shared.

Or we can recognize Iraq as the immense problem it is, and do everything in our power to invest the Iraqi people and the rest of the world in the search for solutions.

Based upon what we've heard in two days of testimony, I am more convinced than ever that sticking with option one will lead to disaster.

If we do that, we will continue to provide the majority of the resources, nearly 90% of the troops and take nearly 90% of the non-Iraqi casualties. We will continue to be blamed for everything that goes wrong and remain a target for every malcontent in the country.

And we will make less likely the prospects for success: giving back to the Iraqi people a stable country with a representative government that can endure after we're gone.

The other option is to bring more Iraqis into the process and invest the world in a successful outcome.

We cannot want a representative government and a peaceful Iraq more than the Iraqi people. And without the major powers, we will continue to run a deficit in the troops, money, manpower and legitimacy necessary to see this mission to completion.

I know that many believe it's too late to pursue that option.

I don't share their cynicism and defeatism. And I have laid out repeatedly – including in a speech last week at CSIS – how I think we should proceed. I would ask the Chairman to place that speech in today's record.

But today is the Administration's opportunity to tell us which option it has chosen – if, in fact, a choice has been made.

We have with us representatives of two government agencies with strongly divergent opinions on how to proceed.

Please don't waste our time today by telling us that you are on the same page. You are not. And it is a disservice to this Committee and the American people to try to paper over your differences.

You are entitled to offer your best advice to the President. The problem, as I see it, is not that the President has received conflicting advice on how to go forward, but that he has yet to choose from among the options before him. Instead, what we have seen is vacillation, without a firm commitment to a strategy.

In last week's press conference, the President said he would support Mr. Brahimi's recommendations for a political plan for the June 30 political handover. I think that's the right move, because a plan coming from Brahimi, not the U.S., will have more legitimacy within and beyond Iraq.

And, yet, the President seems unwilling to take the next crucial step: to make someone other than us Iraq's main partner after June 30 to help organize elections, draft a constitution and referee political disputes.

Instead, he still seems intent on replacing Mr. Bremer and the CPA with an American ambassador hunkered down in a new super embassy. That will perpetuate the perception of an American occupation. And it will make it less likely that the Iraqi people and the world will take up the challenge of remaking Iraq.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am looking forward to hearing from our witnesses today. Maybe they will convince us that the President has chosen – and that he has made the right choice.

At a minimum, I hope we get answers to a number of basic but critical questions:

- Who will be the referee after June 30 to negotiate political disputes so that the country does not slide into civil war – will it be a “super-Ambassador” or a senior international figure representing the major powers?
- What is the strategy with respect to al-Sadr? What is the fallout of killing or capturing him and are we ready for the possible consequences?
- Who will decide how to handle future Fallujahs and al-Sadrs. The Iraqi caretaker government? The American military? A senior international figure?
- When we claim that our commanders on the ground say they have enough forces to carry out their mission, just what is that mission. Does it include more than force protection? Civil policing? Reconstruction?
- What about the private security contractors – the second largest armed group in Iraq after American forces. What is our policy toward them? How are we handling the morale problems they are likely to create for our regular soldiers, who are paid far less. Are they under effective command and control?
- How do we plan to re-establish security? What is the plan on training Iraqi police? What role will other nations play in that?
- Why has only \$3 billion of the \$18.6 billion that Congress appropriated last year at the urgent request of the President been spent?
- After June 30, who will be in charge of deciding how that money will be spent: the Pentagon or the State Department? In other words who will we hold accountable?
- What is current burn rate for military expenditures in Iraq? It was estimated at about \$4 billion a month last year. What is it now?
- What is the range of estimates for the cost of Iraq stabilization and reconstruction next fiscal year? How will we pay for it?

I hope our witnesses will address these questions in their testimony. If not, I'll come back to them.

Thank you.

