

Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Chairman Richard Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing on
Improving security in Iraq
July 18, 2005

Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee launches a series of four hearings on Iraq. Each of these hearings will focus on one aspect of Iraq policy. As the American people and policy makers debate our course in Iraq, I believe the Senate Foreign Relations Committee can contribute greatly by being a bipartisan forum for advancing ideas to improve the situation in Iraq. Our intent in these hearings will be to go beyond describing conditions in Iraq or assessing what is working and what is not. Our goal will be to examine options for making things better.

With the help of our experts, we will consider whether changes in military tactics, alliance strategy, resource allocations, or other factors should be adopted. I am hopeful that this process will inform our own policymaking role, as well as help stimulate constructive public debate on forward-looking alternatives.

Traditionally, Congress has looked to the Executive Branch for foreign policy guidance and expertise. We should always carefully consider the recommendations of the President and his team, who are charged with implementing foreign policy. But I believe our oversight role involves more than critiquing the President. Congress should also examine ideas and express its own views on critical issues.

At the end of this four-hearing series, the Foreign Relations Committee will have held 30 full committee hearings on Iraq in the last 30 months. In addition, we have held numerous other hearings that have partially touched on the subject of Iraq. We have maintained this focus because success in Iraq is critical to U.S. national security. Permanent instability in Iraq could set back American interests in the Middle East for a generation, increasing anti-Americanism, multiplying the threats from tyrants and terrorists, and reducing our credibility.

We know that the planning for postwar Iraq was inadequate. We should not pretend, however, that a few adjustments to our reconstruction strategy or an extra month of planning could have prevented all the challenges we now face in Iraq. Even in the best circumstances, political and economic reconstruction of Iraq after the overthrow of an entrenched and brutal regime was going to stretch our capabilities, resources, and patience to the limit.

We are engaged in a difficult mission in Iraq, and the President and Congress must be clear with the American people about the stakes involved and the difficulties yet to come. Almost 1,800 heroic Americans have died in Iraq during the past two years. During the insurgency, thousands of Iraqi Muslims have been killed by other Muslims, including, most recently, a group of small children deliberately targeted by a suicide bomber. Like the recent terrorist attacks in London, the continuing insurgent attacks in Iraq are tragic, senseless, and indiscriminate. Each day, the Iraqi people are living with the fear caused by similar irrational, barbaric acts, but they continue to show their resilience. The Iraqi people get back on the buses and open their shops for business. They return to their jobs as police, teachers, and doctors, and they continue to hope that life will become normal and that the violence will end.

Today, we take on the responsibility of examining options for improving security in Iraq. Tomorrow we will address options for advancing Iraqi political development. On Wednesday we will turn our attention to the Iraqi economy. Finally, on a date to be determined, we will assess the regional dynamics related to the situation in Iraq, as we ask questions about the impact of Iraq on Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Syria.

We have determined that these hearings will follow a unique format. Discussion in each hearing will be organized around four policy options for improving the situation in Iraq. Accordingly, after Senator Biden and I offer opening comments, instead of hearing comprehensive statements from the witnesses, we will put the first policy option and associated questions before our expert panel. Each witness, in turn, will provide his or her views on the option being presented. Then we will put the second option before them; then the third; then the fourth. Finally, recognizing that options exist beyond our published hearing plan, we will ask our witnesses if they would like to offer any additional ideas for improving security that have not been discussed. After this sequence, Committee members will be recognized in turn to address questions on any of the policy options to any member of the panel.

My hope is that through the expertise of the witnesses and the questions of the members, we can achieve a systematic evaluation of the options presented for improving Iraqi security. After the hearings, the Committee will publish a record of all the policy options discussed.

This morning we will ask our experts whether the basic counterinsurgency strategy that we are pursuing is the right one. We will ask whether it is possible to prevent infiltration of Iraq by foreign insurgents and whether it is feasible for other nations to assume a greater share of our border security burdens. We will ask how we can improve the critical process of training Iraqi forces, so that greater numbers of Iraqis will be capable of assuming the full range of security duties. And we will examine whether changes should be made to the current U.S. force structure in Iraq.

In this endeavor, we are joined by three distinguished experts. First, we welcome Dr. Kenneth Pollack, Senior Fellow and Director of Research at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution. Dr. Pollack has provided exceptional security analysis to this Committee in the past, and we are pleased he has returned. We also welcome General Barry McCaffrey, President of BR McCaffrey Associates. General McCaffrey, who has recently returned from a trip to Iraq and Kuwait, served as a Professor at West Point after his distinguished military career, which included experience across the Middle East. Finally, we are pleased to welcome back Dr. Anthony Cordesman, the Arleigh A. Burke Chair for Strategy at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Dr. Cordesman also has recently returned from a research visit to Iraq.

We thank our witnesses for joining us, and we look forward to their insights.

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