

PREPARED TESTIMONY OF

KENNETH M. POLLACK
SENIOR FELLOW AND DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
THE SABAN CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST POLICY
AT THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

July 18, 2005

IRAQ'S SECURITY

Mr. Chairman and Senator Biden, thank you for allowing me to come before you to discuss the future of Iraq, and particularly our efforts to secure that country to make reconstruction possible. As you have both repeatedly reminded us, the reconstruction of Iraq is a vital interest of the United States, just as it is vital to the people of Iraq. As we all know, and have repeatedly had reinforced to us, security is absolutely critical to the broader reconstruction effort. Without security, reconstruction will fail. And until we have dealt with the pressing problems of security, it will be impossible for us to perceive, let alone solve, many of the other matters troubling Iraq. If we get security right, everything is possible, although nothing is guaranteed.

I have confined my remarks to the four options you have outlined. I will begin with your first option, and address each in turn.

Option 1: Should the Coalition revise its current counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq?

Mr. Chairman, I believe that after two years of trying to secure Iraq with our current strategy, it is becoming increasingly clear that we have the wrong strategy for the job. Our current approach probably was the appropriate strategy in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Baghdad, but the inadequate number of troops we brought to Iraq and a series of other mistakes rendered this approach largely infeasible. Today, our problems have metastasized, and I believe that we must fundamentally change our strategy to cope with the new challenges we face.

Our effort to secure Iraq faces two overarching and interlocking problems: a full-blown insurgency and a continuing state of semi-lawlessness. Both are equally important. Reconstruction will likely fail if either is unaddressed. I believe that current U.S. strategy in Iraq is misguided because it is not properly tailored to defeat the first problem and largely ignores the second.

Today, and since the fall of Baghdad, the United States has employed what I would call a "post-conflict stabilization" model of security operations. The key element of this strategy is providing simultaneous security for the entire country by concentrating Coalition forces on those areas of greatest unrest to try to quell the violence quickly and keep it from spreading. Had the United States brought sufficient ground forces to blanket the country immediately after the fall of Saddam's regime—as many warned—and had we not made a series of other mistakes, like failing to provide our troops with orders to maintain law and order, to impose martial law and prevent looting, I think this strategy might very well have succeeded.

However, our continued reliance on this approach is failing. To borrow a military term usually employed in a different realm of operations, today we are reinforcing failure. By continuing to concentrate our overstretched forces on the areas of greatest insurgent activity we are depriving most of Iraq's populated areas of desperately-needed security forces, and by emphasizing offensive search and sweep missions, we are making ever more enemies among Iraq's Sunni tribal population. In other words, we are failing to protect

those Iraqis who most want reconstruction to succeed and we are further antagonizing the community that is most antipathetic to our goals.

This approach runs directly contrary to the principal lessons of counterinsurgent warfare.

In 1986, Dr. Andrew F. Krepinevich, then a major in the Army, published what is widely-regarded as the seminal work on American military performance in Vietnam, titled *The Army and Vietnam*. In this book, Krepinevich demonstrated that the Army high command—for reasons entirely of its own choosing—largely refused to employ a traditional counterinsurgency strategy against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces. The Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) repeatedly shut down other efforts, by the Marines and by Army Special Forces, to employ a traditional counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. Krepinevich further demonstrated that these stillborn COIN campaigns had all proven far more successful before they were terminated than MACV's cherished offensive operations.

Mr. Chairman, I do not know why it is that the United States has not yet adopted a traditional counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq. I suspect that it is for reasons far more mundane and far better-intentioned than MACV's rationale was in that earlier war, because I know General Abizaid to be a superb soldier and a wise commander. However, whatever the rationale, it is clear that the United States has so far failed to employ a traditional counterinsurgency strategy in Iraq, just as we did in Vietnam, and as a result we are failing in Iraq just as we failed in Vietnam.

Mr. Chairman, if you were to pick up a copy of Dr. Krepinevich's book, you would find, I think a great many chilling passages. Passages where Krepinevich explains how history has demonstrated that a guerrilla campaign can be defeated, and how the United States failed to employ such a strategy in Vietnam. These passages are unsettling precisely because they so closely echo our problems and mistakes in Iraq today. We are once again failing to use a true COIN strategy in Iraq, and committing too many of the very same errors we made in Vietnam.

The crux of a traditional counterinsurgency strategy is never to reinforce failure, but always to reinforce success. As Mao Zedong once wrote, the guerrilla is like a fish who swims in the sea of the people—thus, if you can deprive the guerrilla of support from the people, he will be as helpless as a fish out of water.

The goal of a true-COIN campaign is to deprive the guerrilla of that access. The COIN force begins by securing a base of operations by denying one portion of the country to the insurgency. This portion can be as big or as small as the COIN force can handle—the bigger the COIN force available, the larger the area. Within this area, the COIN force provides the people with security, in all senses of the word. In Iraq, this would mean security from insurgent attack as well as from ordinary (and organized) crime. In so doing, the COIN force creates a secure space in which political and economic life can flourish once again. Ideally, the COIN force would pour resources into this area to make it economically dynamic and take advantage of the security the COIN campaign has provided, both to cement popular support for the COIN campaign and to make it attractive to people living outside the secure area so that they will support the COIN campaign when it shifts to their region.

The increasing attractiveness of these safe areas also solve the intelligence problem that COIN forces inevitably face. Ultimately, there is no way that a COIN force can gather enough intelligence on insurgent forces through traditional means to exterminate them. Instead, as the British learned in Northern Ireland, the only way to gather adequate information on the insurgents is to convince the local populace to volunteer such information, which they will do only if they are enthusiastic supporters of the COIN campaign and feel largely safe from retaliation by the insurgents. When these conditions are met, the counterinsurgents enjoy a massive advantage in intelligence making the further eradication of the insurgents easy, and almost an afterthought.

In addition, the COIN forces use these "safe zones" to train indigenous forces who can assist them in subsequent security operations. Once this base of operations is truly secure and can be maintained by local indigenous forces, the COIN forces then spread their control to additional parts of the country, performing the same set of steps as they did in the original area.

Dr. Krepinevich describes this set of interlocking features as follows:

After the army has driven off or killed the main guerrilla forces, its units must remain in the area while local paramilitary forces are created and the influence of the police force is reestablished. The paramilitary forces should be drawn from among the inhabitants of the area and trained in counterinsurgency operations such as small-unit patrolling, night operations, and the ambush. Resurrection of the local police force is equally important. Properly trained, the police can make an invaluable contribution to the defeat of the insurgents by weeding out the political infrastructure, thus preventing the reemergence of the insurgent movement once the army departs.

Thus, if the paramilitary forces can perform the local security mission, and if the police can extinguish the embers of the insurgent movement through suppression of its infrastructure, the people will begin to feel secure enough to provide these forces with information on the movements of local guerrilla forces and on the individuals who make up the cells of the insurgent movement. But before any of this can occur, it is necessary for the government's main-force army units to demonstrate that they will remain in the newly cleared area until such time as the people are capable of assuming the bulk of the responsibility for their own defense. Should the army depart the area before the paramilitary units and the police force are capable of effective operation, it will have accomplished nothing. The insurgent infrastructure will quickly reemerge from hiding, and the guerrillas will return to reassert their control. The temporary control reestablished by the government must be followed by the implementation of measures designed to achieve permanent control. Thus, the counterinsurgent must direct his efforts, not toward seeking combat with the insurgent's guerrilla forces, but at the insurgent political infrastructure, which is the foundation of successful insurgency warfare. Keep the guerrilla bands at arm's length from the people and destroy their eyes and ears—the infrastructure—and you can win.¹

This approach is typically referred to either as a “spreading ink spot” or a “spreading oil stain” because the COIN forces slowly spread their control over the country, depriving the guerrillas of support piece by piece until, in Krepinevich's words, “Once the security of the population and its attendant resources is accomplished, the initiative in the war will pass from the insurgent to the government. The insurgent will either have to fight to maintain control of the people or see his capabilities diminish. If the insurgents decide to fight, they will present themselves as targets for the government mobile reaction forces.”²

The key, as Krepinevich and every other expert on counterinsurgency operations observes, is to start by securing the population and providing them with material incentives, in the form of real security and a thriving economy, that will cause them to reject the insurgency and support the COIN campaign. This is why a COIN strategy is best understood as a strategy of reinforcing success; because the counterinsurgents concentrate their forces where their support is strongest, and where they therefore can do the most good.

Instead, the approach we are employing in Iraq—concentrating our forces in Iraq's western provinces where the insurgents are thickest and support for reconstruction weakest—means reinforcing failure. Such an approach has repeatedly resulted in failures in guerrilla warfare throughout history. Our efforts to “take the fight to the enemy” and mount offensive sweep operations designed to kill insurgents and eliminate their strongholds have failed to even dent the insurgency so far, and likely will continue to do so, as was the case in Vietnam and other lost guerrilla wars. Here is Dr. Krepinevich on the false promise of hunting guerrillas:

Should government forces attempt to defeat the insurgency through the destruction of guerrilla forces in quasi-conventional battles, they will play into the hands of the insurgent forces. Insurgent casualties suffered under these circumstances will rarely be debilitating for

¹ Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), pp. 13-14.

² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

the insurgents. First, the insurgents have no need to engage the government forces—they are not fighting to hold territory. Second, as long as the government forces are out seeking battle with the guerrilla units, the insurgents are not forced to maintain access to the people. Therefore, *the initiative remains with the guerrillas*—they can “set” their own level of casualties (probably just enough to keep the government forces out seeking the elusive big battles), thus rendering ineffective all efforts by the counterinsurgent to win a traditional military victory.

As a result of these circumstances, the conventional forces of the government’s army must be reoriented away from destroying enemy forces toward asserting government control over the population and winning its support. Government forces should be organized primarily around light infantry units, particularly in phases 1 and 2 of the insurgency. These forces must be *ground*-mobile in order to patrol intensively in and around populated areas, keeping guerrilla bands off guard and away from the people. The counterinsurgent must eliminate the tendency fostered by conventional doctrine, to cluster his forces in large units. Only when the insurgency moves into phase 3 will the need for substantial numbers of main-force conventional units arise.

Winning the hearts and minds of the people is as desirable for the government as it is for the insurgent. This objective can only realized, however, after control of the population is effected and their security provided for. Developing popular support often involves political participation (at least on the local level), public works (irrigation ditches, dams, wells), and social reform (land reform, religious toleration, access to schools). These actions are designed to preempt the insurgent’s cause, as, for example, land reform in the Philippines during the Huk rebellion Nevertheless, even though the attempts to co-opt the insurgents may prove successful in winning the hearts of the people, they will be for naught unless the government provides the security necessary to free the people from the fear of insurgent retribution should they openly support the government.³

Against a full-blown insurgency, such as we are facing in Iraq, offensive operations cannot succeed and are ultimately counterproductive. The guerrilla does not need to stand and fight but can run or melt back into the population and so avoid crippling losses. If the COIN forces do not remain and pacify the area for the long term, the guerrillas will be back within weeks, months, or maybe years, but they will be back nonetheless. Meanwhile, the concentration of forces on these sweep operations means a major diversion of effort away from securing the population. In Iraq, this has left the vast bulk of the population largely unprotected both against insurgent attacks and normal crime—organized and unorganized.

Moreover, the tactics of our offensive operations have contributed to the alienation of the Sunni tribal community, driving many otherwise agnostic Iraqis into the arms of the insurgents. Many American units continue to see the targets of their raids as enemies and treat them as such—invariably turning them and their neighbors into enemies regardless of their feelings beforehand. Often, the priority American formations place on force protection comes at the expense of the larger mission—the safety, psychological disposition, and dignity of Iraqis. Busting down doors, ordering families down on the floor, holding them down with the sole of a boot, searching women in the presence of men, waving around weapons, ransacking rooms or whole houses, and confiscating weapons all come with a price. Because too much of the intelligence that the United States is relying on is poor, it is not a rare occurrence that houses raided turn out to be innocuous. In some cases, the wanted personnel may have been there at some point and fled, but in others no one in the house was guilty at all. Indeed, too often, U.S. forces are directed to raid a house or arrest a person by someone else who simply has a grudge against them and turns them in to the Americans as an insurgent to settle a personal score.

³ Ibid, pp. 11-12. [Emphasis in original].

An example of both the potential of true counterinsurgency operations and the danger of refusing to employ them can be found in the experience of the Iraqi town of Fallujah. Until the fall of 2004, Fallujah was a major insurgent stronghold. The town was then taken by U.S. forces in a full-scale conventional assault in which, American commanders touted as major victories both the number of insurgents killed and the psychological gains of taking this stronghold from the enemy. However, within just a few months, the insurgents had reemerged with no noticeable impact on their operations or lethality. On the other hand, unlike many other towns in the Sunni triangle, a fair number of American and Iraqi forces remained in Fallujah after the assault, providing it with greater security than in most neighboring towns, but not as much as was the case immediately after the assault when large numbers of American ground troops were present. Likewise, the U.S. and the Iraqis did begin to pump resources into the city, and reached out to local shaykhs to try to form a new political process, and to give local residents an incentive to participate in the national political process. As a result, Fallujah has been a modest success story. However, because promised funds have not been forthcoming, because the Marines in Fallujah are spread thinly and the Iraqi forces are not indigenous (and are often Shi'ah), the insurgency has begun to make a come back in Fallujah.

Thus Fallujah demonstrates what a successful approach might look like, but only if it is handled properly. And unfortunately, Fallujah is more the exception than the rule. Elsewhere in Iraq, U.S. forces clear the areas without staying in force, without leaving behind indigenous security forces willing and able to secure the area, and so without leaving the kind of security environment that would make it possible to try to revive either the local economy or the local political process.

Southern Iraq and the persistent popularity of Muqtada as-Sadr (and other, similar figures) is another example of the problems created by our current security strategy. The predominantly Shi'i southeast of Iraq is overwhelmingly supportive of reconstruction, yet we find growing frustration with reconstruction, the United States, and the transitional Iraqi government throughout that community. Why? Because the people are still plagued by organized and random crime, which makes their economic life difficult, keeps unemployment high and incomes low, contributes to frequent power outages and gasoline shortages, and prevents the restoration of clean water and sanitation, among other problems. This frustration, allowed to fester over time, is driving Iraqis into the arms of the Muqtada as-Sadr's of Iraq, whose message is a simple one: the Americans are either unwilling or unable to provide you with the basic necessities of life, but we can. They employ the model that Hizballah and Hamas have used to such success, providing tangible, material benefits in return for support. This is exactly what Muqtada as-Sadr provides the residents of Sadr City and what other shaykhs, alims, and other would-be potentates provide other Iraqis in different parts of the country.

This is a disastrous course that could push Iraq into fragmentation and civil war. It is already convincing any number of groups (and not just the Kurds), that they should pursue autonomy from the central government, which is increasingly seen as out of touch, corrupt, and wholly focused on its own (irrelevant) squabbles over power.

Mr. Chairman, this analysis leads me to the conclusion that the United States must dramatically reorient our strategy for securing Iraq. We must adopt a true counterinsurgency strategy, of the traditional "spreading oil stain" variety. We must simultaneously recognize that even if we do so, securing Iraq is going to take a very long time. In this respect, I was heartened to hear Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld acknowledge that success in Iraq would likely require over a decade. He is surely right, but he is only likely to be right if the United States adopts the right strategy to do so.

Painted in broad brush strokes, a true counterinsurgency strategy for Iraq would focus on securing enclaves (Kurdistan, much of southeastern Iraq, Baghdad, and a number of other major urban centers, along with the oilfields and some other vital economic facilities) while, initially, leaving much of the countryside to the insurgents. The Coalition would consolidate its security forces within those enclaves, thereby greatly improving the ratio of security personnel to civilians, and allowing a major effort to secure these enclaves to allow local economic and political development at a micro-level. The Coalition would likewise redirect its political efforts and economic resources solely into the secured enclaves—both to ensure that they prosper and because those would be the only areas where it would be worth investing in the short run. Such a

strategy might therefore mean foregoing such things as national elections or rebuilding the entire power grid, because they might be impossible in a situation where the Coalition forces had abdicated control over large areas of the country.

The concentrated security focus should allow local economic and political developments to make meaningful progress, which in turn should turn around public opinion within the enclaves (making the Iraqis living in the enclaves more willing to support the reconstruction effort and, hopefully, making those Iraqis outside the enclaves more desirous of experiencing the same benefits).

Once these enclaves were secured, and as additional Iraqi security forces were trained or foreign forces brought in, they would be slowly expanded to include additional communities—hence the metaphor of the spreading oil stain. In every case, the Coalition would focus the same security, political, and economic resources on each new community brought into the pacified zone. If implemented properly, a true counterinsurgency approach can succeed in winning back the entire country. However, it means ceding control over swathes of it at first and taking some time before Iraq will be seen as a stable, unified, pluralist state. Nevertheless it may be the only option open to us if, as is the case at present, the U.S.-led coalition cannot control large parts of the country and cannot keep the peace in those areas where it does operate.

At a more tactical level, a true COIN campaign in Iraq would make securing the Iraqi people its highest priority. American forces in Iraq, unfortunately remain preoccupied with force protection and with tracking down the insurgents who are attacking them, and as a result they are providing little security to the Iraqi people. U.S. forces generally remain penned up in formidable cantonments. They are cut off from the populace and have little interaction with them. In the field, they come out to attend to logistical needs and to conduct raids against suspected insurgents. In the cities, they generally come out only to make infrequent patrols—which are virtually always conducted mounted in Bradley fighting vehicles or HMMWVs (the ubiquitous “Humvees” or “Hummers”) at speeds of 30-50 kms per hour. Indeed, prior to the January elections, American forces did (temporarily) engage in foot patrols in cities like Mosul and the result was an immediate, but equally temporary, increase in morale and support for the U.S. presence.

It is a constant (and fully justified) complaint of Iraqis that the Americans have no presence and make no effort to stop street crime or the attacks on them by the insurgents. Many British officers (and some Americans too) argue that the United States should instead be employing the kind of foot patrols backed by helicopters and/or vehicles that the British Army learned to use in Northern Ireland, and that all NATO forces eventually employed in the Balkans. This is the only way that American forces can get out, reassure the Iraqi civilians, find out from them where the troublemakers are, and respond to their problems.

Adopting a true counterinsurgency strategy, coupled with its attendant tactics such as guarding population centers and key infrastructure, foot patrols, presence, and the eradication of crime and attacks on Iraqis would doubtless expose U.S. personnel to greater risks. However, they are absolutely necessary if reconstruction is to succeed in Iraq. There is no question that force protection must always be an issue of concern to any American commander, but it cannot be the determining principle of U.S. operations. American military forces are in Iraq because the reconstruction of that country is critical to the stability of the Persian Gulf and a vital interest of the United States. In their current mode of operations, our troops are neither safe nor are they accomplishing their most important mission. Consequently, executing that mission must become the highest concern of U.S. military commanders, and their current strategy—focusing on force protection and offensive operations against the insurgents—is misguided. If it does not change, the reconstruction may fail outright and all of the sacrifices of the American people and our service men and women will have been for nothing.

Option 2: Could the United States successfully press its allies to increase aid and provide manpower to protect Iraq’s borders and prevent foreign infiltration?

Mr. Chairman, at some level the answer to this second question is undoubtedly, “yes,” but I do not see it as an “option” that would solve our problems in Iraq. At best, it might help ameliorate our current problems, but no more.

Given how little Iraq's neighbors seem to be doing to arrest the steady flow of Salafi Jihadists, Sunni tribesmen, and others into the country, it is unexceptionable to suggest that they could not be doing more than they currently are.

Syria is the country that we have focused our attention on, although it is hardly the case that they are the only problem, or probably even the major source of the problem. Many U.S. and foreign intelligence analysts believe that far more foreign fighters are infiltrating into Iraq through Saudi Arabia. I have little faith in technical fixes to the problem of infiltration across the long Syrian border, simply because it is so long and long borders are notoriously difficult to seal—our own problems with Mexico being an obvious case in point. Many Sunni tribes span the Iraq-Syria border and there is considerable trade.

Certainly, a political solution might persuade the Syrians to do more to police the border, but our expectations should remain modest here as well. Should we wish to try, I see only a policy of real carrots and real sticks as having any real likelihood of success. The Syrians need to have positive incentives to cooperate and see real threats if they do not. However, we must keep our hopes for such a policy in check. Syria's handling of its border is part of the larger issue of Syrian relations with the United States that remains very much undecided in Syria right now. Indeed, it may be necessary to craft a much broader set of carrots and sticks with Syria designed to get at the whole range of U.S.-Syrian differences if we are to have any real prospect of success. The Syrian regime is deeply divided over its course, particularly with regard to its relations with the United States. Until Damascus decides what kind of country it wants to rule, and what its relationship to the region and the world should be, it is unlikely to make major changes on any piece of its foreign policy, especially as one as tightly bound to that broader set of issues as its relationship with Iraq.

Consequently, tackling infiltration across the Syrian border may require a new American policy to Syria, and the Syrians revamping their own broad foreign policy goals. Neither seems likely in the short term.

With regard to infiltration across the Iranian border, the news is both worse and better. Worse because all of the problems related to Syria—a long border, intermingled populations spanning it, a government divided over its relations with Iraq and the United States, and an inability to isolate its Iraq policy from the overarching question of what kind of country it wants to be—all go double for Iran. The situation is better, however, because Iran is not the problem when it comes to the Iraqi insurgency. The insurgency is overwhelmingly Sunni and while not everything that Iran is doing in Iraq is helpful to us, they are not providing any significant degree of assistance to the Salafi Jihadists, Sunni tribesmen, former regime officials, and various other groups who comprise the bulk of the insurgency.

Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Turkey are all staunch U.S. allies and it is likely that more could be accomplished with them, but also not without a price. All four of these countries is wary of American intentions in Iraq, and fearful that whatever our intentions may be, we are not making the kind of effort that will result in a stable Iraq. All four are Sunni Muslim nations with differing degrees of skittishness about the emergence of a Shi'i-led Iraq. On top of this, the Turks have their own longstanding concerns about Kurdish separatism. All four—but particularly the Saudis—have been ambivalent at best about slowing the flow of goods and supplies across their border to Iraq. And it is complicated by the fact that there is a portion of Saudi society that actively favors the Sunni "jihad" against the United States and the Shi'ah in Iraq.

The governments of all of these countries have not been bashful about their own concerns in Iraq, and their price for greater cooperation is likely to be a straightforward one: a greater say in the reconstruction of Iraq. This is a tricky proposition, but not an unworkable one. Indeed, the solution is probably overdue.

The United States and the new Iraqi transitional government should convene a Contact Group consisting of all of Iraq's neighbors (including Iran and Syria). This group would meet frequently and regularly to receive information about reconstruction issues important to them, and to provide advice both to the Iraqis and to the United States regarding developments inside Iraq. The function of the Contact Group should be purely advisory—neither we nor the Iraqis should be bound by its recommendations—but that advice should not be ignored lightly either. In a great many cases, simply tempering a policy to make it more palatable to Iraq's neighbors, or merely acknowledging their concerns and providing a full explanation of why their recommendation will not be the one adopted, can make a considerable difference. In return for their expanded role, all of the neighbors should be presented with detailed, and concrete plans for stemming

illegal traffic across their borders and their membership in the Contact Group can be made conditional upon their meeting these criterion.

Unfortunately, Mr. Chairman, none of these measures is likely to have more than an indirect impact on the success or failure of reconstruction in Iraq. As noted in my response to Option 1, the insurgency is only one of our problems in Iraq, and the insurgency is NOT principally driven by external factors.

Our intelligence regarding Iraq has consistently established that foreign fighters comprise only a small percentage of the insurgents in Iraq. What's more, anecdotal reporting suggests that foreign-born Jihadists are playing a less important role in the insurgency. Early on in the conflict, the foreigners brought with them critical know-how in terrorist and guerrilla operations that the Iraqis largely lacked. However, today, more than two years after the fall of Baghdad, the Iraqis have learned what they need to know and so are much less reliant on the foreigners for training. Likewise, while it was once the case that suicide-bombings in Iraq seemed to be the exclusive purview of the foreign-born Jihadists who came to Iraq to martyr themselves, this is no longer the case. The evidence is sparse, but it does seem to be the case that a growing percentage of suicide attacks are being carried out by Iraqis themselves.

Thus, even if you could somehow hermetically seal Iraq's borders, doing so would be unlikely to extinguish the insurgency (nor would the elimination of the insurgency solve all of Iraq's problems). The best intelligence indicates that the bulk of the insurgency is drawn from Iraq's Sunni tribal population, a great many of whom were recruited for Saddam's Republican Guard and Special Republican Guard, the Fidayin, and other key security forces. They have lost their prestige and their paychecks; they have been dispossessed by a society they once ruled; and they are fearful that we intend to put the Shi'ah and the Kurds into the same position of authority their community once occupied—and that they will be oppressed in the same manner that they once oppressed the Shi'ah and the Kurds. Thus there are plenty of Iraqis fighting us out of fear and a lack of anything else to do.

As I have argued elsewhere, there are much better ways to make major dents in the insurgency. One method would be to allow the Iraqi economy to revive in a manner that it so far has not. Many of Iraq's angry young men would probably be quite a bit less angry if they had jobs, steady sources of income, and all of the benefits that come with it.

Another approach would be to effectively buy-off the Sunni shaykhs. Although our intelligence remains sketchy, it is clear that an important element of our problems with the insurgency comes from the active participation or passive acceptance by a huge range of Sunni shaykhs. In some cases, they appear to be ordering the young men under their authority to take up arms against the United States and the new regime because they feel politically and economically excluded from it (and they are well aware of the corruption of the new government, and probably exaggerate it to themselves), because they do fear a Shi'ite dictatorship, and because no one is paying them not to. In other cases, they simply make no effort to stop their tribesmen and followers from participating because they have no incentive to do so.

However, for centuries, if not millennia, the central government in Baghdad successfully paid these shaykhs to cooperate with the regime rather than fighting against it. This seems unpalatable to American ears, but it is part of Iraq's societal traditions. The tribes of the West and South were never fully under central government control and would often fight against it or simply ignore its efforts at law and order unless they were paid not to do so. But in return for such payments—which could come in the form of government contracts, infrastructure development, and other forms of aid, not just cash—the shaykhs generally were quite content to avoid attacks on the government and even to keep order in those areas effectively beyond Baghdad's control.

In the twentieth century, the shaykhs were often paid not to attack and even to police the roads, bridges, power lines, and pipelines the insurgency currently targets. At times when relations between the shaykhs and Baghdad soured, attacks on this infrastructure invariably increased.

Moreover, the shaykhs have shown a willingness to “do business” with a wide range of governments in Baghdad: the Ottomans, the British-backed monarchy, various Iraqi military dictators, and Saddam's Stalinist regime. Of course, all of these regimes were all Sunni-dominated, at least for their façade, and it does remain to be seen whether they would give such fealty to a Shi'ah-led government, but there is every

reason to expect that, coupled with an effort to increase Sunni tribal representation in the new government, the Sunni shaykhs would be willing to decrease or even end their support for the insurgency. To a great extent, it would mean giving this key segment of the Sunni community a real stake in the success of the new Iraqi government—just as we have talked about doing right from the start—and doing so in a very tangible way.

Indeed, anecdotal reporting indicates that whenever American military and political personnel have reached out to local Sunni shaykhs, and provided them with material incentives to cooperate, they have been willing to do so, at least on a selective basis. This too provides evidence that it should be possible to co-opt many, perhaps most, of the Sunni tribal shaykhs and get them to stop fighting us and instead help us.

Even if we were to successfully find ways to buy off the Sunni tribal shaykhs, we should not expect this to end the insurgency altogether. The Sunni shaykhs probably could convince a significant number of their followers to desist, either by their authority, or by the patronage they would in turn buy among their people with the resources we would be paying them. However, because the insurgency is so diverse, others would likely fight on: the foreign fighters, of course; homegrown Salafi Jihadists, of whom there is also a significant number; true regime “dead-enders” who have so much blood on their hands that they could never expect anything but a hangman’s noose from a new, democratic Iraqi government; and a number of others of diverse motives. But it is clear that this would be a greatly diminished cohort from present numbers.

Thus, if you are looking to weaken the insurgency, shutting down Iraq’s borders can’t hurt, but doing so will be much harder and less likely to have real impact than convincing Iraq’s tribal shaykhs to withdraw their support from the insurgency. The first approach assumes that the insurgency is principally a foreign-driven phenomenon, which it unquestionably is not; the latter relies on traditional Iraqi techniques to get at what is largely a homegrown problem.

Option 3: Should the United States reprioritize the training schedule of Iraqi forces and support more training in other countries?

With regard to the specifics of the actual training of various Iraqi security personnel, my understanding is rudimentary at best, but I know of nothing particularly amiss. Instead, let me offer some comments regarding the duration, goals, and location of training.

Without question, longer training schedules are better than shorter ones. Iraq’s security forces need to be taught a range of military skills. However, of equal or greater importance, they need to be given the psychological tools to handle their very difficult responsibilities. They need to be integrated into multi-ethnic formations. They need to be convinced that reconstruction is the best course for Iraq and that their own sacrifices are crucial to the success of reconstruction. They need to believe that what they are doing is of immediate benefit to their country, their people, their sect, their town, and their family. They need to be able to trust their comrades, their American and Coalition allies, and themselves. All of that takes a great deal of time.

In addition, even after their formal training is completed, Iraqi units need time to further gel. Unit cohesion needs to be formed in training, but it is inevitably tested by the first operations that a formation undertakes. So too with the confidence of Iraqi recruits. So too with the leadership skills of their officers. What’s more, the process of vetting—weeding out those unsuited for the tasks at hand, or those working for the enemy—is a lengthy one, and it is not infrequent for soldiers and officers to do well in training but fail once placed in actual combat situations, especially if the initial test is an extremely challenging one.

For all of these reasons, it is critical that Iraqi units begin their operational tours under the most permissive conditions. They need to crawl before they can walk. This has not always been the case, although Iraqi and American friends tell me that it is increasingly so. If so, this is a very positive development. However, it once again emphasizes the length of the training process and the need to do it right and do it slowly. Nothing will undermine morale across Iraq’s security forces—and undermine Iraqi confidence in reconstruction—so much as large-scale disintegration of their formations in combat, as was the case when units were rushed into combat in the spring of 2004.

As far as the goals of training are concerned, while we do need some highly-capable Iraqi units capable of conducting special forces-type missions to help assault insurgent strongholds, of far greater utility will be large numbers of competent and trustworthy Iraqi formations capable of conducting basic protection missions—patrolling, searches, ambushes, point defense, infrastructure defense, and the like. Again, these are the tasks that are critical to victory in counterinsurgent warfare, as our experiences in Vietnam and elsewhere have repeatedly demonstrated.

As far as the location of training is concerned, I don't think beggars should be choosers. Training forces out of country has positive and negative elements. Obvious positives include greater access to higher-caliber trainers and reduced likelihood of attack by insurgents. Another, less obvious benefit of such training is that taking a group out of their accustomed environment might change their perspective and encourage the formation of bonds of loyalty to one another. Negatives include the distancing of the group from mainstream society and the possibility that the training will be less realistic—or simply less tailored to the circumstances they will face. In addition, there is the possibility that the population at large will be suspicious of them and may even treat them as foreign “agents.”

On the whole, I see these various plusses and minuses as effectively canceling one another out. As a result, I see the key issue as our need to train as many Iraqis as we can, and be able to provide them with the luxury of time and proper training (not to mention the related issue of proper equipment) so that they are someday able to shoulder the burden we need them to. If there are countries willing and able to provide such training abroad—and if not sending Iraqi units or personnel abroad would limit that training—then so be it. Our need for properly trained Iraqi security forces, in all senses of the words “properly-trained,” should be decisive given the rough equivalence in the liabilities and incurred compared to the benefits to be derived.

Option 4: Should the President change the force structure of the U.S. presence in Iraq?

Mr. Chairman, I believe that it would be of tremendous benefit for the United States to significantly increase the number of high-caliber foreign troops in Iraq. Ironically, this is vital if the United States sticks with its current approach to security, which I have already described as a “post-conflict stabilization” model; but is only desirable (not necessary) if the U.S. shifts to a true counterinsurgency strategy.

We simply do not have the troops on hand—American, allied, or fully-capable Iraqi—to handle the number and extent of the tasks at hand. We do not have the forces available both to provide security in Iraq's populated areas and to suppress the insurgency in western and southern Iraq. In truth, we do not have sufficient troops for either one of those missions independently. As a result, with our current force structure, we can reduce towns in the Sunni triangle, but we cannot secure them long term. Inevitably, the forces needed to take down an insurgent stronghold must move on to the next one, allowing the last to quickly slip back into guerrilla control. This is a classic mistake of counter-guerrilla warfare and it is tragic that we are repeating it. Moreover, our focus on trying to come to grips with the insurgents and clear out their strongholds has largely denuded southern and central Iraq's cities of sizable Coalition forces, leaving them prey not only to insurgent attacks, but to crime and lawlessness more generally.

If we stick with our current strategy, I see no alternative to a major increase in Coalition forces over the next 2-3 years, probably on the order of 100,000 or more troops, if it is to have any chance of success. At some point, if our training program is allowed to mature, we will have several hundred thousand capable Iraqi security personnel able to take over responsibility for most, if not all, of the security mission. However, we are still several years away from that day, and in the interim, someone will have to make up for that deficit. Given the reluctance of our allies to provide significant numbers of ground troops, only the United States can do so, although providing so many more ground troops for several years to come may necessitate a thorough restructuring of U.S. ground forces more generally.

At the risk of being redundant, let me repeat this point for the sake of clarity: we do not presently have adequate numbers of troops in country to execute the strategy that we have set out for ourselves (setting aside the question of whether this strategy can succeed at all). As a result, we have provided too little basic security for the bulk of Iraq's population, and have inadequate forces even to suppress the insurgency in

western and southern Iraq. Only a massive increase in troop strength—which the Iraqis will be unable to provide for several years—is likely to remedy that problem.

Could we simply muddle through with the inadequate forces we have on hand? Perhaps. However, this would be a huge gamble for the United States, Iraq, the region, and perhaps the world. As I noted earlier, there are powerful centripetal forces in Iraq that are gaining influence because of our failure to deal with the various problems of the insurgency and basic insecurity. We may be able to keep them at bay until several years down the road when sufficient Iraqi forces become available to address these missions. But doing so strikes me as reckless and irresponsible.

Moreover, any objective analyst would have to recognize that the chances of this bet paying off look poor at this time. The Iraqi people are frustrated and growing more so. And it is this frustration that is our greatest threat. Because it is out of frustration with the inability (or unwillingness) of the United States and the transitional Iraqi government to deliver on basic security—and the basic services like electricity, gasoline, clean water, and jobs for which basic security is the prerequisite—that Iraqis are beginning to turn to local shaykhs, alims, and other would-be warlords to provide them what the reconstruction authorities cannot. Thus it seems at least equally likely that the current trend will produce a slide toward fragmentation and civil war, as it is that it will allow for muddling through until the Iraqis can handle the security situation by themselves.

Another advantage of adopting a true counterinsurgency strategy, however, is that while it would certainly benefit from the addition of more troops, it is not required. COIN strategies work by building popular support and using that popular support to deny support to the insurgency, as well as to generate indigenous forces capable both of fighting the insurgency and providing protection to ever greater portions of the population. When employed correctly, it is a self-generating and self-sustaining strategy, which it is why it is able to defeat the converse strategy that lies at the heart of any insurgency. The size of the initial commitment of resources principally influences only the length of time that the COIN strategy takes to work. Thus, in theory, one could begin with nothing but a platoon, although starting with such a tiny force pool means that it would take an extraordinarily long time for the COIN strategy to succeed.

In Iraq, we are fortunate to have a very large segment of the population that is at least passively supportive of the goals of reconstruction, as well as a force base of over 150,000 American, Iraqi, and Coalition troops. That is a pretty good starting point for a true COIN strategy. It looks even better when one considers that the Kurdish population is fully supportive of reconstruction (at least in the sense of desiring an end both to the insurgency and to the state of semi-lawlessness in much of the rest of the country) and already has the security forces to effectively police their own territory.

With these forces alone and employing a true COIN strategy, the Coalition could probably secure much, perhaps all, of southern Iraq with its strongly pro-reconstruction Shi'ah and urban Sunni populations. Along with Iraqi Kurdistan, this is a very good start, and suggests a reasonably rapid window of success—perhaps as little as 8-10 years, although probably more like 10-15, because it is the nature of COIN strategies to work slowly. It would be difficult, with only the forces on hand to also secure central Iraq, possibly including Baghdad and some of the key infrastructure of that area like the Bayji oil refinery, as well as roads, power lines, and oil pipelines connecting the north and the south.

An alternative initial pacification effort could include Baghdad (and given its importance to Iraq, there is a compelling logic to do so), but in this case, the forces on hand probably could then only secure a more limited number of the Shi'i cities of the south, leaving large chunks of an otherwise supportive population outside of the initial “secure” zone, and possibly driving them into the arms of the opponents of reconstruction. In other words, a true COIN campaign would have difficulty including both Baghdad and all of southeastern Iraq in its initial security zone with only the forces currently on hand.

It is for that reason that even a COIN strategy would greatly benefit from more fully-trained forces right from the start. The addition of another 30-50,000 troops might prove sufficient to make it possible to begin the COIN campaign by securing both Baghdad and key sites in central Iraq AND nearly all of southeastern Iraq (in addition to Kurdistan). This is a very preliminary assessment that would require considerable additional planning and analysis, but it does seem likely at first blush.

This would obviously be a far more desirable starting point, since it would mean including both the large Shi'ah population of southeastern Iraq as well as the vital capital within the initial "oil stain" of the COIN campaign. Under these circumstances, it might be possible to achieve success within as little as 5-8 years, although 8-10 years still seems more realistic.

Thus, under any circumstances, more first-rate forces in Iraq would be highly desirable, although if we persist with our current strategy, then they are indispensable.

There is one last element of this option that needs to be addressed, and this is the question of whether more U.S. troops will help or hurt the cause of reconstruction. I am wholly of the opinion that, on balance, they will greatly help the cause of reconstruction.

First, it is wrong-headed and perverse to suggest that more American troops in Iraq will simply stimulate more terrorist attacks, either because they will provide more targets or because they will generate more animosity. As for the insurgents, they have repeatedly demonstrated that they oppose not just the United States presence, but the entire project of reconstruction and (for the Sunnis who comprise the vast bulk of the insurgency) the ascendance of the Shi'ite majority. The insurgents have committed far more acts of violence against other Iraqis than they have against American forces. What's more, they have made clear that they believe they are already waging a civil war against the Shi'ah, whom the Salafi Jihadists regard as apostates and for whom they reserve far greater venom than for infidel Americans.

All of the evidence we have indicates that were U.S. forces to leave Iraq, the insurgents would be even less restrained and would greatly increase their attacks on the new Iraqi government, on the Shi'ah, on the Kurds, and on anyone else they don't like. If you don't believe me, ask any Iraqi Shi'ite, any Iraqi Kurd, or any Sunni Iraqi who simply wants to lead a normal life: they are terrified of the hard core of the insurgency for this very reason.

Second, it is wrong to simply postulate that Iraqis want the Americans out, and that their resentment of the American presence is a major source of the violence there. Iraqi views about the American presence are very complicated and, at times, contradictory.

As best I can glean both from public opinion polling and my own contact with Iraqis from across the ethnic and religious spectrum, most Iraqis dislike the U.S. occupation, but they regard it as more than a necessary evil. Because of the fears I have just described, and because they are realistic about the state of their country, the vast majority of Iraqis know that it is vital for American forces to remain in Iraq for the foreseeable future because the alternative is chaos and civil war. However, Iraqis are deeply frustrated by the course of reconstruction: they are frustrated that two years after the fall of Baghdad they still face electricity and gasoline shortages, that much of the country still lacks clean water and sanitation, that unemployment remains so high, and that they still do not feel safe in their own country. This frustration is compounded by their sense that American soldiers go to great lengths to protect themselves and do little to protect them. Indeed, many Iraqis say that our obsession with force protection for our own troops comes at their expense: not only do our force protection measures greatly inconvenience them, but they will argue that these measures actually decrease their own security. For instance, the long lines to get through security check points around American bases become prime targeting grounds for insurgents and criminals.

Often times, this frustration gets expressed—especially in badly-constructed public opinion polls—by the sentiment that the United States "should just leave Iraq." However, a bit more digging usually reveals the more subtle and, I have found, far more common, opinion among Iraqis that they want us to stay, but they just wish that we were doing more to help them with what really matters to them.

I think it probably likely that increasing the number of U.S. forces in Iraq and redeploying them to Iraq's populated areas (and to guard key infrastructure) would probably be resented by some Iraqis. I think a great many others, however, would feel that it was a move long overdue. Especially if additional American forces were deployed to provide security for the bulk of Iraq's population, were deployed in mixed formations with Iraqi units, were deployed on regular foot patrols and encouraged to get to know the residents of the neighborhoods in which they were stationed, all of the evidence suggests that Iraqi attitudes would range from grudging acceptance to positive relief.