

**Statement of General Joseph P. Hoar, U.S. Marine Corps
(Retired) before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on
18 January 2007.**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Lugar, Distinguished Members of the Committee

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you for the third time to discuss the war in Iraq.

This administration's handling of the war has been characterized by deceit, mismanagement and a shocking failure to understand the social and political forces that influence events in the Middle East.

In August of 2002 , I cautioned this committee about the lack of "war termination" planning. At that time, I used the metaphor, " What happens when the dog catches the car?"

During my last testimony, I indicated we were looking into the abyss. Sadly, the new strategy, a deeply flawed solution to our current situation, reflects the continuing and chronic inability of the administration to get it right. The courageous men and women of our Armed Forces have been superb. They have met all the challenges of this difficult war. Unfortunately, they have not been well served by the civilian leadership. .

I returned from the Middle East two days ago. I've also had the opportunity before the holidays to speak with several senior active duty members of our armed forces. In virtually every case, knowledgeable people; military, political and academic, state that the solution to solving this civil war in Iraq is political, not military. There is an acknowledgement in Washington that it is, after all, political. Having said that, the proposed solution is: send more troops, and it won't work .

The addition of 20,000 troops is too little too late. This is still not enough to quell the violence and without major changes in the command and control of forces within Baghdad, the current set-up of shared control is unsatisfactory.

The centerpiece of a change of direction should be to demand that the Iraqi government make significant changes in policy, to constrain Muqtada al Sadr, to disarm militias, purge the police and move rapidly on a host of other pressing issues.

If Mr. Malaki's government can show progress by stepping up to meet these political changes, then the issue of more troops would merit serious discussion.

Insurgencies are solved by attacking root causes. Today, among root causes is the presence of American forces. The Economist indicates that 61 percent of Iraqis approved of attacking coalition forces.

Recently the Secretary of State, in response to a question before this committee, indicated that there was no alternative plan to the President's current strategy. I urge this committee to insist that an alternative plan be developed and briefed to the relevant committees in the Congress. It should include diplomatic engagement with Syria and Iran. It should also include a significant role for the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, plus Egypt and Jordan. These countries reluctantly supported the invasion of Iraq. If we fail, the consequences for Iraq's neighbors are dire. President Mubarek said, "The invasion of Iraq was a catastrophe. Early departure will be a worse catastrophe." Hamad bin Jassim, the Foreign Minister of Qatar says the GCC was not consulted about the surge strategy . It's time we took our friends in the region into our confidence.

The goal of the plan should be to prevent the Middle East from falling into chaos should Iraq become a failed state.

Victory in the conventional sense is no longer possible. Our goal today in Iraq should be to achieve a paradigm shift that will enable political changes sufficient to give the people of Iraq an assured degree of stability and justice.

A final thought. T.E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, was an advisor to Winston Churchill, then the Secretary for Colonial Affairs who presided over the British debacle in Iraq. Lawrence told Lord Curzon and other members of the British Cabinet the following: "You people don't understand yet the hole you have put us all into."

In the Marines, we say, "If you're in a hole, stop digging."

I'd be happy to answer your questions.