

**Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr**  
**Opening Statement**  
**Iraq – Next Steps - Hearing**  
**September 23, 2003**

**Secretary Hamre, Dean Atwood, Ambassador Dobbins, it is a pleasure to welcome you before the Committee. Each of you has a wealth of experience and wisdom to offer as we seek to chart a course that will lead to success in Iraq.**

**Two weeks ago, President Bush made an apparent U-turn in his Iraq policy that, in my judgment, finally sets us in the right direction. It was a change in course that many of us had been advocating for months.**

**First, the President vowed to make Iraq the world's problem, not just our own, by going back to the U.N. and seeking the support of its members for troops and money.**

**Second, the President began to level with the American people about the hard road ahead to win the peace. It will take years, require billions of dollars, and call on tens of thousands of troops. He acknowledged that our mission in Iraq is far from accomplished. In fact, it has only just begun.**

**The Administration's mid course correction is belated recognition that we have not, as some Administration officials seemed to suggest, won some sort of a prize in Iraq. Far from it. Iraq is an enormous challenge with a hefty price tag.**

**But it is a challenge we must meet. If we fail, the impact on our national security would be grave. Failure is not an option.**

**Losing the peace in Iraq could condemn that country to a future as a failed state. We know from bitter experience that failed states are breeding grounds for terrorism. Equally bad, losing the peace could mean the return of the old regime, emboldened by the belief that it had defeated America.**

**Losing the peace would enhance the power and influence of hard-liners in Iran and Syria. It would put moderates and reformers in Jordan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia on the defensive. It would make reviving the Middle East peace process even more difficult. Combined with a potential failure in Afghanistan, losing the peace in Iraq would even risk Pakistan, a nuclear armed state, falling into the hands of extremists.**

**In short, losing the peace in Iraq would mark a major victory for the forces of tyranny and terrorism and a significant setback for the forces of progress and modernization. Our credibility in Iraq, the region, and across the globe would hit rock bottom. America and Americans would be far less secure.**

**We must show the wisdom and the commitment to help Iraq write a different future. If we succeed in transforming Iraq into a stable, unified country with a representative government, there will be significant benefits to our national security.**

**Success in Iraq could begin the process of altering the strategic map of the region. It could boost reformers in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and elsewhere. It would put Syria and its allies in Hezbollah on the defensive.**

**Success in Iraq would improve the prospects for Israeli-Palestinian peace. It would deal a significant setback to those who argue that the only future for Arabs and Muslims is one of religious extremism, perpetual conflict with imagined enemies, economic stagnation, and autocratic government.**

**It is critical that we inject a sense of urgency into our efforts. Time is running out. Dr. Hamre, your report of two months ago emphasized that the window of opportunity was closing fast. If Iraqis don't begin to see law and order, basic services, and the economy improve rapidly, we may well lose them. If that happens, it will make the current insecurity look mild by comparison.**

**Not only do we risk losing the Iraqi people, we may lose the American people if they believe that we are not telling them the truth or doing all we can to share the enormous burden in Iraq.**

**That is why we need a Security Council resolution that gives political cover to leaders around the world so that they can contribute funds, troops, and police. Without that assistance we will continue to provide nearly 90% of the troops, take more than 90% of the casualties, and pay for well over 90% of the costs of reconstruction.**

**Some may argue that a new Security Council resolution is not worth the effort because it will not immediately result in a large number of foreign troops or financial aid. That argument misses the point. A new resolution will increase the legitimacy of our efforts. And, over time, if the President demonstrates a sincere commitment to working with our international partners, it will yield tangible results.**

**Relations that were strained for more than two years by this Administration's "our way or the highway" approach will not be mended overnight. What is important is that we start the process of repairing them. That is what a new Security Council resolution represents and why it is so important to achieve. I urge the President to not waiver from the path he appeared to choose when he addressed the nation two weeks ago.**

**Dr. Hamre, Ambassador Dobbins and Dean Atwood, I hope you will give us your best judgment today on what we need to do over the next several weeks and months to get on track in Iraq. What are the most urgent tasks on the ground? How do we accomplish them? How do we convince more countries to share the burden? What should we be prepared to give up to get them on board.**

**And Dr. Hamre, I'd especially like to know from you whether the recommendations you made in your report two months ago are being followed.**

**I look forward to your testimony.**