

**Senate Committee on Foreign Relations**  
**Senator Richard G. Lugar**  
**Opening Statement**  
**Business Meeting**  
**January 24, 2007**

Our colleagues have offered a serious resolution on our nation's continuing involvement in Iraq. I appreciate their intense study of this issue and their convictions about improving Iraq policy.

I share many of the concerns that led to the Biden-Levin-Hagel resolution. I am not confident that President Bush's plan will succeed. Militarily, the plan may achieve initial successes. But the premise that clearing and holding high-risk areas of Baghdad will create enough space for an effective political reconciliation is dubious. The plan is likely to be encumbered by the unwillingness of the Iraqi government to confront Shia militias, the questionable loyalty of many Iraqi army and police units, the resilience of the Sunni insurgency, the meddling of Iran, the ineffectual history of our economic aid, and the political and military limits of our ability to hold indefinitely large swaths of urban landscape in hostile circumstances.

Our basic disadvantage stems from the fact that our timeline is different from that of the Iraqis. We want results in months, while various Iraqi factions can wait years if necessary to achieve their objectives. Even if the initial military operations go well, there is little reason to assume that this "breathing room" will have any impact on the Sunni's plans to continue the fight or the Shia's plans to dominate Iraq. After an intense year of bloodletting, many sub-factions are thoroughly invested in the violence. Some Shia militia may make a tactical decision to avoid challenging U.S. forces in the short run, but their long-term goals will be difficult to change.

If we undertake the tremendous investment that sending more American soldiers to Iraq represents, it should be in support of a clear strategy for achieving a negotiated reconciliation. We should not depend on theories or hopes that something good may happen if we dampen violence in Baghdad.

However, I oppose this non-binding resolution on the basis that it is the wrong tool for this stage in the Iraq debate. It is unclear to me how passing a non-binding resolution that the President has already said he will ignore will contribute to any improvement or modification of our Iraq policy. The President is deeply invested in this plan, and the deployments opposed by the resolution have already begun. The non-binding resolution before us has domestic political utility, but its passage will not benefit U.S. policy and it may actually harm the policy making process.

First, this resolution will increase the divide between the Executive and Legislative branches that is already unacceptably wide. Passage of the resolution would raise the probability that both branches will write off the other when it comes to Iraq. Congress, having passed such a resolution, would be more likely to believe that it has once and for all demonstrated that this is the President's war. The President, confirmed in his policy-making isolation and undergirded by his substantial constitutional powers as Commander in Chief, may have less incentive to consult with Congress on future Iraq decisions.

I appreciate the frustration that many members feel that their input on Iraq during the last four years has rarely penetrated the White House. Though there can only be one Commander in Chief, American foreign policy is strengthened when the Executive and Legislative branches work together. With the passage of this resolution, I believe that we would be letting our frustration get the better of us.

Second, to the extent that a vote on this resolution would not only express, but quantify the disunity within our government, it is not useful. Obviously, the policy disagreements on Iraq in this country are known to our allies and our enemies. In an open democracy, we voice our agreements and disagreements in public, and

we should not be reticent to do so. But official roll call votes carry a unique message, and foreign observers will not always understand the difference between non-binding resolutions and more consequential votes. We frequently use non-binding resolutions, but rarely are they employed to address a subject on which we are already heavily engaged and which is so contentious within our own government. Usually non-binding resolutions are designed to show unity on an issue or to highlight an issue that few members know about. In this case, we are laying open our disunity without the prospect that the vehicle will achieve meaningful changes in our policy. This vote will force nothing on the President, but it will confirm to our friends and allies that we are divided and in disarray.

Third, when we attempt to conduct policy by resolution, we risk not only division, but misinterpretation. The truth of a resolution is often in the eyes of the beholder. The Executive branch will reject the idea that they are bound by anything in this resolution, but that might not stop them from selectively citing its contents to justify future actions.

For example, the fourth resolved clause reads: “Main elements of the mission of United States forces in Iraq should transition to helping ensure the territorial integrity of Iraq, conduct counterterrorism activities, reduce regional interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, and accelerate training of Iraqi troops.” Although each of these purposes would seem salutary, any of the first three missions mentioned (territorial integrity, counterterrorism, and reducing regional interference) could be read as supporting future cross-border military operations in Syria or Iran – an outcome I believe the authors of the resolution do not intend. I am not suggesting that this clause enhances the President’s *legal* authority in this area; it does not. But non-binding resolutions offer the official view of Congress, and as such, they can create unintended consequences.

Fourth, our Committee has held hearings during the last four years and during the last few weeks that repeatedly demonstrate the complexity of our situation in Iraq. Highly prescriptive non-binding resolutions such as this do not have the space or the foresight to take account of all the possible contingencies. I know there is nothing simplistic about the authors’ understanding of Iraq. But they are limited by the form they have chosen. In the second resolved clause, the resolution states “the primary objective of United States strategy in Iraq should be to have the Iraqi political leaders make the political compromises necessary to end the violence in Iraq.” Clearly, this would be a good thing. But we have spent hours in hearings over the last two weeks discussing the complexities of this very point. Many of our witnesses don’t believe such a compromise is possible. Others believe it is only possible if an enhanced American troop presence creates security in Baghdad. Others believe it might be possible if we threatened to withdraw our troops. Within each of these camps rest caveats, exceptions, and contingencies. Yet, a non-binding resolution reduces our discussion of these complexities to the legislative equivalent of a sound bite.

Similarly, the fifth resolved clause settles on simplicity when it states “the United States should transfer, under an appropriately expedited timeline, responsibility for internal security and halting sectarian violence in Iraq to the Government of Iraq and Iraqi security forces.” But this takes no account of the capability or reliability of Iraqi security forces that have been a central topic of several of our hearings. I believe that our policy input should be more sophisticated and more detailed than a non-binding resolution allows.

Fifth, even as an expression of members’ views, the form of a non-binding resolution is lacking. Bringing such a resolution to a vote is, by its very nature, a political act. That is not a condemnation. Congress is a political body, which makes political decisions. I am simply suggesting that a short political document written to maximize its appeal and modified by compromise and amendment is unlikely to achieve the coherence of a strategy. Nor can it possibly encompass the range and depth of opinion on Iraq in Congress, where one can find advocates for the President’s plan, for troop increases larger than the President’s, for partition of Iraq, for an immediate withdrawal of American forces, for a phased withdrawal, for the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, and for other plans.

Sixth, non-binding resolutions do little to fulfill Congress' responsibility to be involved in Iraq policy. If Congress is going to provide constructive oversight, we must get into the weeds of the President's current policy in ways that do more than confirm political opposition against it. Regardless of how we vote on any given resolution, we will still be confronted with a situation in Iraq that requires our participation.

I say to my colleagues that we are selling our powers short with this resolution. I know there has been much discussion of the military and constitutional consequences of cutting off funding for the war. I share those concerns, and would not counsel going down that road without wide bipartisan agreement within the legislative branch.

But I believe we have greater opportunities to affect the President's Iraq policy than in the past. We do not need a resolution to confirm that there is broad discomfort with the President's plan within Congress. In fact, a vote on this resolution is likely to reveal far less discomfort than actually exists, since some members will vote against it because of its format.

I believe we have achieved a critical mass of opinion in Congress in favor of strict oversight of the Iraq war. Members of this Committee who have been through more than three dozen hearings on Iraq in the last four years have not been reticent to perform oversight and make their views known publicly and privately. But this inclination is now shared by the entire Senate and Congress. We have the ability to require weekly updates from our diplomats and military commanders about the status in Iraq. We should be engaging the Administration on almost a daily basis concerning the mission and the needs of our troops. We should demand of the President precise explanations of his political and diplomatic strategy. We should conduct what amounts to a continuous audit of our economic assistance to ensure that we are maximizing results. Perhaps most importantly, we must ensure that the Administration is planning for contingencies, including the failure of the Iraqi government to reach compromises and the persistence of violence despite U.S. and Iraqi government efforts. As David Broder wrote in the *Washington Post* last week, some will see this as micromanagement, but "neither the President nor our allies in Baghdad have earned the right to operate with a free hand."

I know my friends will say that intense oversight would not be precluded by the passage of a non-binding resolution. But I remain concerned that our ability to be constructive and work with the President and his team will be circumscribed by a political result that will magnify our differences.

Both branches must retain the ability to work with one another. We have major challenges before us in Iraq and the Middle East. The timeline for meeting these challenges may be compressed by the President's plan, especially if benchmarks go unmet or U.S. units take high casualties in the coming months. A consequence of the President's plan is that we are likely to know soon whether the Maliki government has the will to quell the violence sponsored by its Shia components. We may also learn quickly whether the Iraqi Army is capable of more than it has previously shown and whether additional American troops can have a discernable impact on daily violence. Consequently, we must be prepared to adjust to these accelerated revelations and put Iraq policy on a different footing.

In my judgment, this is likely to require a redeployment of troops outside the urban areas of Iraq. From such positions they would still be a source of stability in the region and a deterrent to terrorism, adventurism by Iraq's neighbors, or a broader regional war. As I have indicated previously, any strategy should be accompanied by an intense regional dialogue that aims to maximize U.S. leverage over our strategic objectives in the broader Middle East.

I thank Senator Biden for this time, and look forward to the contributions of all members.

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