

**Floor Remarks of Congressman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott
H. Con. Res. 63, Disapproving of the decision of the President announced on January 10,
2007, to deploy more than
20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq
U.S. House of Representatives
February 16, 2007**

Madame Speaker, before we respond to the President’s call for an additional 20,000 additional troops in Iraq, we must put his call in the context of the history of the war, beginning with a discussion of what the current 130,000 troops are doing in Iraq now.

The original reasons we were provided as the rationale for going to war – that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, that Iraq’s leaders were connected with the 9/11 attacks and that Iraq posed an imminent threat to the United States – all turned out not to be true. Saddam Hussein was captured and recently hanged, Al-Zarqawi is dead, and Iraq held democratic elections over one year ago, yet we are still in Iraq.

Throughout the war, the President has attempted to associate our presence in Iraq with a so-called “war on terrorism.” The truth is that our presence in Iraq has actually increased our risk to terrorism. Furthermore, the term “war on terrorism” is a rhetorical term without any relationship to reality. “Terrorism” is **not** an enemy, it is a tactic. The enemy was al-Qaeda. We attacked Afghanistan because al-Qaeda was there, not in Iraq. So what was the mission in Iraq?

The President has now said that he is laying out a new mission in Iraq - thereby clearly acknowledging that whatever the old mission was, it was not working – but there is still no clearly defined end goal and no clearly defined explanation of how failure or success could be measured.

If our mission now is to stabilize Baghdad, military experts have already said that an additional force of 20,000 troops is woefully insufficient to accomplish that goal.

The fact is that the Administration has already increased troop levels on several other occasions during this war. None of the previous surges in troop levels had any lasting effect on the war, and there is no credible reason to believe that this surge will be any different.

And how can we have confidence in predictions of success? Before our invasion into Iraq, then-Defense Secretary Rumsfeld predicted that the war in Iraq would last “six days, six weeks. I doubt six months.” [February 7, 2003 at a town hall meeting at Aviano Airbase.] And Vice President Cheney predicted that we would “be greeted as liberators.” [NBC’s Meet the Press, March 16, 2003.] On May 1, 2003, about six weeks after we invaded Iraq (almost four years ago), President Bush stood on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln under a sign that read “Mission Accomplished” and proclaimed: “Major combat operations in Iraq have ended.” A year and a half ago, Vice President Cheney said that the Iraqis were “in the last throes” of the insurgency.

[Larry King Live, June 20, 2005] And yet, here we are discussing an increase, not a decrease, in troop levels.

At the outset of this war, the Administration predicted that the cost of the war would be so minuscule that it advised the House Budget Committee not to include the cost of the war in the federal budget, and the administration official who suggested that the total cost of the war might exceed \$100 billion was fired. To date, we have appropriated nearly \$400 billion, and the President has already formally requested almost \$200 billion more – with no end in sight.

Most importantly, over 3,100 courageous Americans and countless Iraqis have already lost their lives. How many more will die, if this new strategy falls as far from the predicted result as the original length of time and cost estimates of this war?

Furthermore, Madame Speaker, as part of developing a mission and strategy, it is imperative that we ask where these additional troops are going to come from. Many will undoubtedly come from the National Guard and Reserves, but they have already been in Iraq for longer than average deployments and many have already completed multiple tours of duty. Other troops may be redeployed from other assignments, so we must also ask what moving these troops will mean for our global national security?

Last November, the American people sent a powerful message that they wanted real change in Iraq, not more of the same. And they expect an honest explanation of why we entered Iraq in the first place, what the present situation is, what goal we now expect to achieve, and what the strategy is to accomplish it. Only then can we intelligently discuss the troop levels necessary to accomplish that goal. Unfortunately, all we have gotten from this Administration is essentially, “don’t worry, be happy, success is around the corner; and if you don’t believe that then you are not patriotic and you are not supporting the troops.”

For my colleagues who say “failure is not an option,” I ask you what is to happen if the President’s so-called “New Way Forward” fails – as many experts predict it will. Are we then required to further escalate the war, and further strain our military by sending thousands more of our troops to Iraq? How many more of our young men and women must die before this Administration acknowledges what the unclassified portion of the recent National Intelligence Estimate clearly stated – that “the term ‘civil war’ accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict.”

Madame Speaker, although the resolution before us is technically non-binding, it gives the House an opportunity to call upon the President to work cooperatively with Congress to develop an effective strategy to bring our troops home. The American people and our courageous men and women on the front lines deserve a clearly articulated and sensible approach to ending the war in Iraq. This resolution puts the House on record saying that an escalation of military forces is a step in the wrong direction.

I therefore urge my colleagues to support this resolution.