



Testimony before the

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

Concerning

**“Alternative Strategies for Iraq in the
Post-Surge Environment”**

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A Statement by

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Chairman Snyder, distinguished members of the Subcommittee, I am honored to be invited to testify before the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations concerning alternatives strategies for Iraq in a post-surge environment.

I believe I was asked to testify because I was a member of the so-called Jones Commission. Just for the record, last summer the United States Congress enacted a provision in the emergency supplemental appropriations act that directed the Department of Defense to establish an independent commission to survey and evaluate the capabilities of the Iraqi police and military establishments, and their capability to undertake security operations for Iraq. The law stipulated that the Department of Defense would use an independent institution to organize the Commission and to serve as its support staff. General James Jones was the chairman of the Commission and I served as one of the commissioners. Our commission results were presented to the full House Armed Services Committee last September.

I have not had a chance to return to Iraq since that time. I continue to keep apprised of the situation in Iraq, but through secondary sources. Therefore, my testimony today, in addition to representing only my personal views, also is limited by the fact that I have not been in Iraq recently.

As a preface to my observations on the question of the hearing, let me briefly restate the primary findings of the Jones Commission. I will summarize this in a highly abstract form, only to get the key points before the Committee.

First, we found last July and August that real progress had been made. Clearly that progress is now obvious to the outside world.

Second, we found that there was no shortage of Iraqis willing to fight for their communities. We saw Army and police training activities and saw genuine progress creating these two institutions.

Third, we concluded that the Iraqi army would be able to assume greater responsibility for the internal security of their country but would not be capable of undertaking fully independent operations this year. They believe they can take over the security of the country from internal threats later this year. We felt that was a bit optimistic, because they will still require essential support from U.S. and coalition forces for some time. But they were making great progress. They knew that their ability to defend against an external threat was some years in the future, and we agreed with that assessment.

Fourth, we judged that local police units were making genuine progress, especially in communities where there was a close connection between police and local political authorities.

Fifth, we felt that the National Police force—a paramilitary element of approximately 25,000 personnel located today primarily in Baghdad—was a major problem and needed to be disbanded and reorganized.

Sixth, we judged that the Ministry of Interior was a major problem, and its pathologies were preventing the development of strong and effective policing in the country.

Seventh, we found that Iraqi units likely could do more tasks, and they should be allowed to do more, even though they would remain dependent on American logistical support for some time. We specifically concluded that “good enough is good enough”, and we should not be attempting to make the Iraqi forces into American-like elements and to judge them by that standard.

Eighth, we concluded that the progress in building a security force was not matched by progress in political reconciliation, and that was the primary problem facing Iraq.

Again, while I have not been back to Iraq since last summer, it is my impression that all of these observations remain valid. Iraqi spokesmen hotly dispute our view that the Minister of the Interior and the National Police are plagued by troubles. Informally I understand little has changed, but I do want to acknowledge that we have been criticized for our finding in this area.

Clearly the most troubling situation is the lack of progress with political reconciliation in Baghdad. America spent the first four years in Iraq trying to build a strong central government, but with positive attributes. That has not worked. During the past year we shifted our strategy and are now trying to build security from the bottom up. This appears to be working, in that it is creating a more stable and secure environment. But it is not creating momentum in Baghdad for a more effective central government.

Now to the primary question posed by the Chairman in his letter of invitation: what are the alternative strategies for Iraq in a post-surge environment?

First, let me say that I think the surge did contribute to a more stable security environment. But I think we also have to acknowledge that during this period we also saw a dramatic increase in the size of the Iraqi police and Army, as well as their substantial operational involvement in the Baghdad Security Plan. While we put 30,000 more troops on the ground, the Iraqis effectively put 100,000 more troops and police into service. The surge was not just an American surge, but an Iraqi surge. We also need to be clear that we struck a deal with the Sunni sheiks in Anbar province to recognize their militia forces as de facto police forces. This, too, put many more Iraqi security personnel on the streets. This increase in Iraqi capability hugely contributed to the improvement in the security situation, in my judgment, and is the basis for our confidence we can now begin removing American forces from Iraq at a measured pace.

Second, I think there is a good chance that we can slowly reduce the number of American forces in Iraq throughout this year as Iraqi police and army units become more numerous and more capable. I think it is quite likely we could be at or below 100,000 U.S. military personnel by the end of this calendar year.

Third, I can't offer firm predictions, but the widening circle of stability in the country should permit more economic development, to lower the crushing unemployment in the country. Our economic assistance has not been very effective, largely because of the insecure environment and the lack of a consistent economic development strategy linked to a broader political strategy. At least the physical insecurity problem is somewhat lessened now.

Fourth, the development of authentic political power is now emerging from the tribal level up to the provincial level. It is not improving at the national level. This effectively means that the country is practically being partitioned along ethnic lines. The final resolution of this is not clear, because the situation in Baghdad and in the surrounding provinces is unresolved. How can we grow authentic political legitimacy from the bottom up, to produce a coherent central government. That is the central problem we now face.

Let me conclude with an observation, Mr. Chairman. It was my personal conclusion from the multiple conversations we had in Iraq this summer that Iraqis can do more than we are letting them do, and they will not take control of the situation until they have to. If they think we will do a job for them, they will step back and wait for us to do it. If it is really important to them, they get the work done. I believe we should definitely be shifting more of the burden to Iraqis to manage their own country and take responsibility for their own security. The time for idealism in what we wish Iraq to become needs to be set aside, and an attitude of pragmatism should guide our policies. We can reduce our footprint in Iraq, and we should.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Subcommittee. I am pleased to answer your questions.