

Opening Statement
Senator Byron L. Dorgan
Chairman, Democratic Policy Committee

**An Oversight Hearing on the Planning
and Conduct of the War in Iraq**

Monday, September 25, 2006

Today the Democratic Policy Committee is holding an oversight hearing on the conduct of the war in Iraq.

The war in Iraq war has thus far claimed more than 2,600 American lives, and resulted in 20,000 combat casualties. It has cost us well over \$300 billion. The Iraqi government has yet to assume responsibility for the security of its country, and indeed, many would agree that Iraq is already in the midst of a civil war.

Against that backdrop, it is essential that Congress exercise its constitutional role of conducting oversight, and ask some serious questions about a war effort that has certainly not been without fault.

Today, we are privileged to hear the testimony of three distinguished military officers who, until their recent retirement, were deeply engaged in our effort in Iraq. We very much look forward to their perspective on the policy decisions and strategy that have characterized the war effort.

Major General John R.S. Batiste, U.S. Army (Ret.) was senior military assistant to then-Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and commander of the 1st Infantry Division, and served in Iraq in 2004 and 2005.

Major General Paul D. Eaton, U.S. Army (Ret.) was responsible for training the Iraqi military from May 2003 to March 2004, and for rebuilding the Iraqi police force from March through June 2004.

Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, USMC (Ret.) served in Iraq in 2004, and was responsible for establishing bases for the newly reconstituted Iraqi armed forces. He is currently Marine Senior Military Fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University.

Before we turn to the witnesses, I would like to say a word about this committee's role in conducting oversight hearings.

In August 1946, President Truman signed into law legislation creating policy committees for both the majority and minority parties. These committees were authorized to hold hearings, in an effort to better inform policymaking.

Our policy committee has now held ten hearings on the issue of contracting abuses in Iraq. We've uncovered a series of abuses involving a number of different contractors -- abuses that have endangered our troops and their mission, and cost American taxpayers billions of dollars.

Today's hearing is the first in a series of hearings on the general issue of the planning and conduct of the war in Iraq, which we plan to conduct through the month of January. And as I have indicated, the witnesses we will hear from today are uniquely qualified to speak to this issue.

Oversight is not a partisan game of "gotcha." As with our previous oversight hearings, we have extended an invitation to members of both parties to join us.

With that, I look forward to the testimony of the witnesses, and thank them both for their distinguished service to our country and their willingness to appear at this hearing.