

Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing

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

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September 25, 2006

My name is Paul D. Eaton and I retired from the United States Army on January 1, 2006, in the grade of Major General. From June 2003 until June 2004, I was the Commanding General of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) in Iraq, charged with rebuilding the Iraqi Army.

I will not debate the wisdom of going to war in Iraq. The President issued his broad policy guidance, electing to use force of arms, and left execution-level detail to his Secretary of Defense with serious implications for the United States and our allies. The nation went to war and the war is ongoing, prosecuted by the nation’s best and brightest in all ranks, my two sons among them. We very much need to succeed.

I will discuss at length the history of the work to stand up Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in the largely ignored year one, the competencies of those charged with the prosecution of this war, and those remedies I believe necessary to achieve success.

Setting the Stage

The most important function of government is to assure the security of the governed. Iraqis believe the same and observed to me that it is “better to live for 40 years under a dictatorship with order than 40 days of chaos.” The United States has failed to secure the peace after having artfully changed the Iraqi regime. We went in with a bad plan. We have failed to understand the strategic, operational and tactical levels of warfare in Iraq, and are responsible for the current state of affairs in a country the size of California with a population of 27 million souls. The leadership that has lead us to this point fails today to understand the strategic planning requirements to solve the Iraqi dilemma, stating essentially that their strategy is to stand up Iraqi Security Forces and to withdraw U.S. forces. Stay the course is not a strategy.

For the U.S. now, viable Iraqi Security Forces — read “Iraqi security” — is not a strategy; it is the end state, the objective. The strategy is in the “how” to get to the objective. It is basic military planning to identify the objective first, and then to develop the operational lines that will enable the achievement of the objective. The failure to

properly lay out objective and operational lines for Phase IV has led to lost time, resources and the loss of diplomatic and political capital. Most importantly, it has presented the opportunity for the insurgency to flourish with the ensuing sectarian violence, in the security vacuum Mr. Rumsfeld allowed to develop — with a very high human toll.

The Beginning

Much has been written and spoken about the insufficient troop strength to manage Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), and the lonely position taken by then Chief of Staff, General Shinseki, who called for several hundred thousand soldiers — not for the defeat of the Iraqi Army, rather for post-conflict work. Phase IV planning was amateurish at best, incompetent a better descriptor. This planning reflected the Rumsfeld dogma of using just enough troops for a precarious Phase III. Phase IV planning failed to identify the end state and the means of getting there. The critical component, the establishment of the New Iraqi Army, consisted of a two-page Powerpoint briefing developed by General Franks and approved by Mr. Rumsfeld. The key points of the briefing were that the Iraqi Army would be volunteer and representative of Iraq's population; would restrict recruiting to avoid political and criminal undesirables; and would be trained by corporate trainers, not Soldiers. The goal was to develop nine light motorized Infantry battalions the first year, eighteen more the next year.

While serving as the Commanding General of the Infantry Center at Fort Benning, I was given the order to go to Iraq to create the Army on May 9, 2003, one week after the President's speech aboard aircraft carrier Lincoln. To state the obvious, a very late order. I spent the next three weeks in meetings with my future boss, Mr. Walt Slocombe, and my team at Fort Benning to lay out the way ahead.

I reported to Baghdad on June 13, 2003, and met with Colonel Roland Tiso and four other men borrowed from the CENTCOM staff to craft the future of Iraq's Army. The Joint Manning Document (JMD), the document that would provide me a staff of 248, would not begin to be filled until October, and would never hit the 50% mark. Between June and October 2003, I relied upon a revolving door of volunteers and men and women on loan from other staffs for between two and six weeks, dependent upon their donor unit.

It was immediately clear to all of us that we were an economy-of-force operation, a very low Department of Defense priority. Efforts to establish alliances by reaching back to the United States met with indifference at all levels. As the Coalition Provisional Authority became increasingly challenged, my operation became increasingly isolated from U.S. Armed Forces. Our allies stepped into the breach — I am very grateful to Great Britain, Australia, Spain, Jordan, Poland, Italy, and Romania for their very talented soldiers and their country's assistance. Iraqis would very soon join my staff with superb results.

In the first two weeks, we identified the training location, let the contracts to build out the barracks, contracted the training to the Vinnell Corporation, found the uniforms and weapons and designed the Iraqi Army. Recruiting the Army began on July 7, 2003, and training began upon completion of a battalion set of barracks, on August 2, 2003. We were directed to avoid use of U.S. military assets at all costs, and to use Iraqi sources for all equipment possible. Our budget was \$173 million for year one, with the objective to create nine battalions.

Two weeks into training it became obvious that we had a flawed plan — we needed soldiers to train the Iraqi Army, not contracted civilians, regardless of their competence and stellar prior-military backgrounds. We set out to change Secretary Rumsfeld's plan.

I traveled to Jordan to set up a potential equipment buy, but found another opportunity. The Jordanian Army is the most professional Arab Army and was willing to assist. We set up a plan whereby the Jordanian Army would retrain officers from the old Iraqi Army for 10 weeks, exposing them to a professional Army, under the British model, with strong leader competencies. Those men in turn would receive non-commissioned officers trained by coalition forces at our training base in Kirkush, Iraq, and create the cadre that would train Iraqi recruits. Iraqi veterans training Iraqi soldiers under the oversight of ten-man Coalition Support Teams (CST) per battalion of Iraqi Soldiers. This is really the U.S. COHORT model of unit development.

I briefed this plan, essentially a second phase in my operation based upon a requirement to adapt, to Mr. Rumsfeld on September 5, 2003, and got his approval to proceed with an accelerated adapted plan that would produce an army of 27 battalions and associated command and control, from national to squad in the first year, and start the Navy and Air Force, with a budget of \$2.2 Billion. We laid out our basing plan for the Iraqi Armed Forces and the architecture for the three services. At one point the Secretary stuck his finger at me and said, "Just don't make this look like the American Army." Still don't know what he meant. He also stated that we were his last priority, behind Police, Border Troops, Iraqi National Guard or Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC), and Facilities Protection Service (FPS).

That "last priority" comment would prove interesting. We had a superb team of men and women who knew exactly how to man, train and equip an Army; a budget of \$2.2 Billion and a huge manpower pool from which to draw an Army. I would discover later that priority one — the Iraqi police — was an unfolding disaster.

We began to implement the plan aggressively with the arrival of the \$18 Billion supplemental that held our budget, sustained a serious setback with the Pentagon rejection of the equipment contract and another when Mr. Wolfowitz withheld \$253 Million destined to build out a division's set of barracks. The Deputy Secretary was reportedly unhappy with the development of the Iraqi Police and held these funds hostage. I did not yet have responsibility for the Police. These decisions would delay unit development for several months.

In February, Mr. Wolfowitz sent then-Major General Karl Eikenberry to assess ISF development. His conclusions were that the Iraqi Armed Forces were on track, but that Police and Border Troops were not. He ordered that money and personnel should be diverted from my operation to support police development. A zero-sum game.

The result became what would be my third phase of ISF development. I reconfigured my headquarters to become the Office of Security Cooperation (OSC), with two subordinate headquarters, CMATT and CPATT, or Civil Police Assistance Training Team. I gained 23 men from Steve Casteel and a new British Brigadier to head up CPATT. On March 9, 2004, I was now charged with development of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Iraqi National Guard, Iraqi Police, Border troops and Facilities Protection Service.

Our initial assessment revealed a stunning lack of progress, a failure to understand the man, train and equip functions, an unworkable command and control network, a logistics and administration system that didn't work — in short, a national police and border force that were in complete disarray, ill-equipped, and with untrained leadership in dysfunctional facilities. We had a lot of work to do — we had lost nine months.

General McCaffrey's recent report reveals that Iraqi Security Forces, the second most important security forces on the planet after our own, continue to lack fundamental equipment. The Secretary of Defense has failed to resource his main effort, the objective to stand up the ISF enabling us to withdraw U.S. forces.

The Man in Charge

The President charged Secretary Rumsfeld to prosecute this war, a man who has proven himself incompetent strategically, operationally, and tactically. Mr. Rumsfeld came into his position with an extraordinary arrogance, and an agenda — to turn the military into a lighter, more lethal armed force. In fact, Rumsfeld's vision is a force designed to meet a Warsaw Pact type force more effectively.

We are not fighting the Warsaw Pact. We are fighting an insurgency, a distributed low-tech, high-concept war that demands greater numbers of ground forces, not fewer. Mr. Rumsfeld won't acknowledge this fact and has failed to adapt to the current situation. He has tried and continues to fight this war on the cheap.

I decided to write my *New York Times* op-ed piece critical of Mr. Rumsfeld, printed March 19, 2006, after I read the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The QDR is a flawed document that represents a poor compromise, reducing the size of ground forces at the moment we need to mobilize far greater ground combat units. It was clear that the architect of the mistakes of the past continued to make flawed decisions that would have an even more lasting impact on the security of the nation. Mr. Rumsfeld and his immediate team must be replaced or we will see two more years of extraordinarily bad decision making by the President's most visible cabinet member. Allow me to offer

a recent quote from David Brooks of *The New York Times*: “When asked if he should have expanded the military back in 2003, to give the current commanders more manpower, Bush used words that were uncharacteristically jargon-ridden: ‘The notion of warfare has changed, and therefore, we’re modulizing (sic) the army so that it becomes more operational and easier to move.’ That sounds more like a transformation briefing paper than the president.”

The President is not well served by his Secretary of Defense, a man history will not handle kindly.

The Way Ahead

So, what to do?

1. Replace the Secretary of Defense with a proven leader who has the vision to get the country’s defense establishment back on track. The Army is under strength and its equipment is in terrible shape. A Secretary who understands how to build alliances at home and abroad. Who understands the operational art and understands the contemporary operating environment.
2. We need a “Manhattan Project” to resource the development of the ISF— more and better equipment, triple the 4,000 advisor complement in Iraq. Work all the operational lines to achieve success here.
3. We need a bipartisan commission with complete transparency to deliver a series of recommendations to the President that leadership on both sides of the aisle can endorse. This is not a purely military problem — the interagency process must be brought to bear. This conflict should be as important to each of our President’s cabinet members as it is to the Soldiers who fight this war.
4. The war on terror demands we mobilize the country and significantly increase the size of our ground forces. We cannot allow Iran to become the hegemon of the Gulf, fearless in the face of a United States that has culminated at the ground combat force level.

The President’s decision to depart from containment and to finish a war that Saddam started in 1990 can be challenged and will be for a long time. We can debate the mistakes of the past, the nobility of the venture, and the improbability of success. But we will all be better off to help this Administration through its last two years by forcing upon it the remedies needed for victory.