

## CASTLE: DIPLOMATIC TALKS WITH IRAQI NEIGHBORS A POSITIVE STEP FORWARD IN THE REGION - May 3, 2007

Washington D.C. -- Delaware Congressman Mike Castle released the following statement today regarding the participation of the United States in diplomatic talks with Iraqi neighbors such as Iran and Syria.

"After years of stand-offs and harsh rhetoric, today's high-level meeting between Secretary Rice and Syrian officials is a very encouraging development and I hope it will lead to a constructive dialogue on achieving stability in Iraq. Since the beginning of this conflict, I have disagreed strongly with this Administration's decision not to build an effective regional coalition and I have called on the White House to engage in robust diplomacy with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Syria and Iran.

"Last fall, James Baker's Iraq Study Group called for the formation of an Iraq International Support Group to encourage the effective participation of countries that have a stake in the region. This week's regional conference in Egypt is a good start, but we must do more. Now is the time for Democrats and Republicans to unite behind the Study Group's recommendations and work with the Administration to initiate a new diplomatic strategy to achieve peace in the Middle East.

"President Reagan demonstrated the importance of diplomacy with both our friends and enemies in bringing an end to the Cold War. Similarly, I believe intense diplomacy with all of Iraq's neighbors is vital to ending this conflict and bringing American soldiers home."