

Statement on Testimony of General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker -- September 10, 2007

General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker are highly respected professionals who have served their country honorably in Iraq. In his testimony today, General Petraeus described security improvements in some regions of the country -- a direct reflection of the commitment of our heroic men and women in the U.S. military. The General stated that he believes U.S. troops can be reduced to pre-surge levels, approximately 30,000, by next summer without jeopardizing the security gains. I am encouraged by his plan to reduce troop levels and it is now crucial that the President implement these recommendations.

I am not, however, optimistic about Ambassador Crocker's analysis on the diplomatic and political front. I have disagreed with the way this Administration has misjudged the crucial diplomatic aspect of this conflict and we continue to see the repercussions of this miscalculation. Within Iraq, the political progress has also been disconcerting. In fact, Iraqi leaders remain deeply divided on key issues such as oil revenue sharing, local governance, and the distribution of constitutional powers. Until we undertake a truly robust diplomatic and political initiative in the Middle East, then our best efforts to improve security in Iraq will be temporary at best.

To this point, the U.S. Congress has been consumed by political in-fighting, which has done nothing to aid in the effort to achieve stability and bring our men and women home. We must have a plan for the post-surge redeployment of U.S. forces and I will continue to work with my colleagues - Republicans and Democrats - to bridge the political divide and bring about real substantive change in Iraq.