

Statement on President's Speech Regarding Petraeus and Crocker Testimony -- September 14, 2007

On

Thursday night, President Bush reviewed our military and political efforts in Iraq and explained why progress on security will enable a significant number of U.S. troops to return to their families.

I am pleased that our military leaders believe we can maintain security levels while reducing our troop presence in Iraq.

We

now have an opportunity to transition our military gains into political and diplomatic progress in Iraq.

Furthermore, a true commitment from the Iraqi people and their government is imperative. Hopefully, local political developments will, in turn, drive the national leaders to find reconciliation and compromise.

Abandoning

Iraq now will provide a safe haven for terrorism and risks thrusting the country into a humanitarian nightmare.

Just as we call on the Iraqis to find common ground, it is incumbent on the U.S. Congress to do the same. We

must find a fair balance between the important priorities of maintaining stability in the Middle East and protecting our own men and women who risk their lives to defend us all. I am doing

this by pursuing a bipartisan dialogue with my colleague Rep. John Tanner of Tennessee. Together, I believe we can develop common principles to achieve stability and bring Americans home.

We must now pursue an aggressive diplomatic and political surge to engage Iraq and its neighbors. Iraqi leaders need to move forward with the understanding that America's commitment is not absolute and not the key to their long term viability. That success lies only in the hands of the Iraqi leaders and the citizens themselves.