

## CASTLE URGES DIPLOMACY IN MIDDLE EAST -- May 1, 2008

Rep. Castle meets with Iraq's Ambassador to the U.S. to discuss comprehensive regional diplomacy

Washington, DC -- Today, Congressman Michael N. Castle (R-DE) met with Iraqi Ambassador Samir Sumaidaie to discuss the diplomatic and political strategy for achieving stability in Iraq. Rep. Castle is an original co-sponsor of H. Con. Res. 321, a resolution stressing the importance of a more comprehensive diplomatic initiative in the Middle East led by the United States, Iraq, and the international community. Rep. Castle believes that a responsible drawdown of U. S. troop levels in Iraq must be accompanied by a robust peace plan engaging all of Iraq's neighbors in ending violence and achieving political reconciliation in Iraq. Ambassador Sumaidaie joined Rep. Castle and a small group of bipartisan Members of Congress to discuss the importance of substantive dialogue and Iraq's progress in achieving greater self-sufficiency. Sumaidaie shared Rep. Castle's concern about sluggish diplomatic and political progress and noted the importance of ensuring Iraq's provincial council elections occur on schedule this fall.

"For the last several years some of us here in Congress have been advocating for a more robust international support structure to engage Iraq's political, religious, ethnic, and tribal leaders - as well as members of the international community - in a diplomatic plan of action," said Rep. Castle. "Our troops have made tremendous security gains in Iraq, but this progress is simply unsustainable if Iraq's leaders are not fully committed to reaching some level of understanding on the most divisive issues. I delivered this message to Ambassador Sumaidaie and expressed my strong support for shifting the day-to-day combat mission from U.S. soldiers over to the Iraqi security forces. Our talk was cordial and informative and we agreed to continue our dialogue on these critical issues in the future."

Before becoming Iraq's Ambassador to the U.S., Samir Sumaidaie represented his country at the United Nations and was a founding member of the Democratic Party of Iraq. Attached is a photo of today's meeting with Ambassador Samir Sumaidaie in Washington, D.C.