



HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE DUNCAN HUNTER – CHAIRMAN

PRESS RELEASE

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CHAIRMAN HUNTER OPENING STATEMENT

Full Committee Hearing on the Progress of the Iraqi Security Forces

Washington, D.C. -- On June 6, 1944, just 30 months after Pearl Harbor, U.S. forces waded ashore in Normandy. Nobody insisted that President Roosevelt produce a plan for withdrawing U.S. forces from Europe.

On March 7, 1945, the first U.S. units reached the Rhine river. Nobody knew the Germans would sign surrender papers on May 7th and nobody demanded a timetable for withdrawing U.S. forces before the victory was won.

On June 23, 1945—sixty years ago today—American paratroopers landed on the island of Aparri to link up with Filipino guerillas. Nobody asked Douglas MacArthur to prepare a plan for withdrawing from Japan on June 24th.

I mention these events because some people seem to forget how wars are fought. We don't fight them on the clock, as if a whistle will blow at the end of the day telling everyone to go home. We don't fight them on a schedule, as if war is as predictable as a train timetable.

We fight them in order to achieve the conditions of victory. And, as I suspect our witnesses will remind us, the enemy has something to do with that. The way we honor the sacrifices that our soldiers have made, that they are making today, and that they will make tomorrow, is by achieving the goals for which they have fought.

We know what those goals are in Iraq. The President has identified six strategic objectives; the first of which is a transition to Iraqi Security Self-Reliance. In other words, that the Iraqi Security Forces will be capable of ensuring that the insurgents are no longer able to prevent the establishment of a representative Iraqi government or the establishment of basic services. The Department of Defense has the lead responsibility for that goal, which is the primary topic of our hearing.

We have five other objectives, however. These include: first, establishing a political process that leads to a free and democratic Iraq. Second, the restoration of essential services for the Iraqi

people. Third, the establishment of foundations for a strong economy. Fourth, establishing the rule of law, and fifth, increased international engagement and support.

As every Defense Department witness before this committee has reminded us, we cannot achieve those goals solely by military means. In fact, the Department of State has the lead responsibility for each of them.

I've taken a little more time on this than usual, because I want to stress the point. In reviewing these goals, it's clear we have identified strategic objectives and are in the middle of a war to achieve them. Nobody in this Congress, or in the Administration, or on television can tell us when these goals will be achieved, any more than General Eisenhower could tell us on June 6th when the Germans would surrender. So, instead of asking for arbitrary timelines, deadlines, and schedules, we need to focus on those things that will help us meet those strategic objectives as soon as possible. That's the path to victory, and that's the way to honor the sacrifices of our men and women overseas.

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