

CODEL LYNCH

April 9-16, 2007



FINAL REPORT

MEMBERS

Rep. Stephen F. Lynch, *Democrat*, (MA-09)
Rep. Christopher Shays, *Republican*, (CT-04) *
Rep. Peter Welch, *Democrat*, (VT-At Large)
Rep. Todd Platts, *Republican*, (PA-19) *
Rep. Christopher Murphy, *Democrat*, (CT-05)
Rep. Bob Inglis, *Republican*, (SC-04) *

* **Member has respectfully declined to sign on to this report.**

COUNTRIES OF INTEREST

- 1) Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- 2) Republic of Iraq
- 3) Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
- 4) Republic of Turkey

MISSION STATEMENT

Pursuant to the authorization of Chairman Henry Waxman and Ranking Member Tom Davis of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and with the consent of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, CODEL Lynch was approved for travel from April 9-16, 2007 to further examine the political and military situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, assess the progress of reconstruction efforts in the region, and express personal gratitude to American service men and women deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. (See Authorization at Attachment A). In addition, the CODEL also sought to assess and support the progress of global anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts through coordinated meetings with government and banking officials in Jordan, Afghanistan, and Turkey.

I. INTRODUCTION

This report, in significant part, reflects the substance of the April 19, 2007 Oval Office briefing provided by the signatories to this report to the President of the United States regarding observations, findings, and conclusions made during CODEL Lynch's mission to Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey from April 9-16, 2007. In the interest of producing a timely report which may be of value to the Administration

and to Congress, this report attempts to present and emphasize the consensus findings of Mr. Lynch, Mr. Welch, and Mr. Murphy (CT-05) ["Signatories"]. Mr. Shays, Mr. Platts, and Mr. Inglis have respectfully declined to sign on to this report. Accordingly, Mr. Shays, Mr. Platts, and Mr. Inglis have each been invited to individually supplement this report following the date of its submission to the President of the United States and the leaders of Congress and present their particular, albeit competing, points of view.

II. THE PRESIDENT'S "SURGE" STRATEGY: CLEAR, HOLD, AND PERSUADE

On January 10, 2007, President Bush set forth a new security strategy for Iraq, with an emphasis on stabilizing Baghdad. Specifically, the President announced the deployment of an additional 21,500 U.S. combat forces to Iraq, with 5 brigades to be deployed to the Iraqi capital, as well as adding troops in Anbar province.

Accordingly, as a central mission objective, the Members of CODEL Lynch sought to examine the impact and progress of the President's new Iraq security strategy, which the President has described as the "Surge."

A. THE "SURGE" IN BAGHDAD

With the active assistance of Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno (Commanding General of the Multinational Force in Iraq), Colonel Ricky Gibbs (4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division Commander), and Lt. Col. Steve Michael (Commander of Task Force 2-12 Infantry Battalion), the CODEL was allowed to accompany units of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions on patrol outside the wire into the Dora Market area, located in the East Rasheed neighborhood of Baghdad. The Dora Market area is located in a predominantly Sunni area, adjacent to the Tigris River, and situated on the "fault line" between traditionally Shiite and Sunni neighborhoods.

Stabilization operations in the Dora Market neighborhood have been ongoing since at least October of 2006. It was reported that prior to the commencement of current operations, the Dora Market was virtually abandoned due to sectarian violence involving Sunni and Sh'ia militias as well as considerable sniper activity and the operation of several 'death squads' in the area. The death squads consist of groups of between 3 and 8 insurgents, usually Sh'ia in this particular neighborhood. Reportedly, however, these insurgents wear Sunni attire and have been abducting locals and mutilating and dumping their bodies in the street in order to intimidate the remaining residents to move out of the neighborhood.

Elements of Al Qaeda in Iraq are also reported to be active in planting Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in the area.

While each of these threats continue to be present to some extent, it would appear that due to the concentrated troop presence, the overall level of hostile activity has subsided sufficiently to allow approximately 130 vendors and shop owners to return to the Dora Market over the past several months. Specifically, food and apparel vendors have resumed business activity, normally from 7am to 1pm on weekdays. However, this is still a very, very dangerous place and it would appear that a substantial number of residents who had the opportunity and ability to leave have done so. In most cases, the actual business owners have left, having made arrangements with remaining residents to look after their property and in some cases, to operate their businesses.

The majority of the buildings, streets, sidewalks, and basic infrastructure are in a state of disrepair. There is no working electricity (a generator has been ordered) or plumbing in the area, although a rail line that runs through the neighborhood shows evidence of recent use and appears to be in good shape.

The architecture of the Dora market neighborhood is typical for Baghdad. Most of the buildings are 2 to 4 stories high and made of concrete, with little steel reinforcing. Most of their windows have been blown out. There is little or no space between buildings, which are basically attached. The streets are fairly narrow, far too narrow, we were told, for the passage of an Abrams tank, except along the perimeter near the rail line. The interior streets of the neighborhood are also very narrow and densely-constructed. Accordingly, the majority of the patrolling must be accomplished on foot. It would appear that with the narrow, cluttered streets, it would be extremely difficult to locate and avoid IEDs. Our brave troops of the 1st and 2nd Infantry Division have occupied the upper floors of a three-story concrete structure that is central to the neighborhood. The Iraqi Defense forces are quartered on the floor just below.

Lt. Col. Michael has placed .50 caliber machine guns at key vantage points on the roof tops of the market to gain coverage of the entire market. The presence and location of our troops is well known throughout the neighborhood.

B. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE SOUNDNESS OF THE “SURGE” STRATEGY

While there is no doubt that some localized stability has been gained in the immediate area of the added troop strength, it is too soon to determine whether the

strategy can succeed in the medium-to-long term. We also acknowledge that only two of the five battalions had been deployed at the time of our visit. However, it is our assessment that the current “Surge” strategy is an extremely high-risk strategy for the units involved. Based on our observations, these “Surge” units are situated in vulnerable positions with minimal structural protection and it is extremely likely that pursuing this strategy will result in a significant increase in U.S. casualties.

The first phase of the “Surge” strategy requires that the “Surge” troops clear out specific areas of Iraqi and Al-Qaeda insurgents and establish Command Outposts in the midst of violently-contested neighborhoods, such as the one we visited in the Dora neighborhood of Baghdad. This was sometimes referred to as the “clear and hold” phase of the operation. The strategy’s goal of projecting a visible military presence in these areas means that the location of our troops is widely known in these neighborhoods. These units are generally housed in the middle of densely-settled urban neighborhoods with little or no buffer or separation from hostile groups. Many of our troops are quartered on the upper floors of older dilapidated concrete structures. All this, coupled with the fact that Sunni, Shiite, and Al Qaeda insurgents are also operating in the immediate area while dozens of our troops are housed at a single location, along with dozens of Iraqi Security Forces, presents the very real possibility for a single suicide bomber to infiltrate the outpost and cause a mass casualty event. The vulnerability of our troops engaged in this operation cannot be overstated and calls into question the soundness of the “Surge” strategy.

C. ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING THE COST AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE “SURGE” STRATEGY

We consider the conduct of General Odierno, Colonel Gibbs, Lt. Colonel Michael, and the 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions in Baghdad to exemplify the highest and proudest tradition of our military. The Signatories are also unanimous in the determination that we observed excellence in the conduct and demeanor of these troops, whose morale we would describe as exceedingly high under the circumstances. However, in light of our role in the Congressional appropriations process, we must ask, notwithstanding the bravery and heroism of our troops, whether the mission itself - the task that has been assigned - is sustainable in the current environment. On that measure, we have very serious doubts.

If the essence of the “Surge” strategy is to clear, hold and persuade (and that is what it appears to be from the streets of Baghdad), it is the last leg of this “Surge” strategy that causes the greatest concern. It would appear to be a key underlying

assumption of the President's strategy that by dedicating massive amounts of U.S. resources and personnel toward providing a relatively secure environment, we hope to persuade the Sunni and Sh'ia to turn away from the civil war which is fully underway and instead embrace a transition to democracy.

We have serious doubts whether the diplomatic or "persuasion" function of this strategy is achievable by our military forces. We also seriously doubt whether a sufficient level of stability can be gained with the current force levels. As stated elsewhere in this report, we believe that this strategy is likely to sharply escalate the human and financial costs while offering a very low likelihood of success. Furthermore, it is also the assessment of the Signatories that due to the high costs of this strategy, it is not sustainable.

Notably, on April 11, 2007, the same day that we drove into the Sunni neighborhood in East Rasheed, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates announced that the tours of duty for many Members of the U.S. military would be extended from 12 to 15 months. Understandably, there was clear disappointment at the news among many of the troops. Accordingly, it was our immediate assessment that the added length of tour duty would have a deleterious effect on units involved in the "Surge" operations, particularly those units assigned to constant high threat, high stress, duties at Command Outposts.

D. MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER NECHIRVAN BARZANI

On April 12, 2007, The CODEL met with Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), Nechirvan Barzani. Prime Minister Barzani said the KRG supports the work of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, believes he is doing a good job as national leader, and supports a unified Iraqi nation. However, the Kurds are pushing for a more federal system of government with extensive local control over financial and security matters. They believe the Iraqi Army is functioning relatively well, whereas the Iraqi National Police are not. Prime Minister Barzani is critical of what he sees as the United States playing too active a roll in Iraqi politics. Instead, Barzani believes the U.S. must allow the Iraqis to solve their problems internally, acknowledging that they will make mistakes along the way. He supports a continued U.S. military presence to prevent the insurgents from creating even more chaos and violence.

III. IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

The Bush Administration has expended over \$30 billion in U.S. taxpayer funds, as well as over \$20 million in Iraqi monies, on Iraq Reconstruction. As evidenced, however, by continuing hearings held by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, U.S. efforts to rebuild Iraq and provide necessary assistance to the Iraqi people have been hampered by significant waste, fraud, and abuse. Notably, prior to the CODEL's departure, auditors from the Defense Contract Audit Agency reported to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform that unsupported costs stemming from U.S. Reconstruction contracts in Iraq have risen to over \$10 billion, with one in every six dollars audited identified as "suspect."

Accordingly, as another important objective, the Members of CODEL Lynch sought to examine the progress of U.S. Reconstruction efforts in the region and specifically, to conduct Congressional oversight of reconstruction sites that had not been subject to such examination or that had been particularly plagued by reports of waste, fraud, and abuse.

A. BAYJI OIL REFINERY

On April 12, 2007, our second day in Iraq, the Members flew by Black HAWK helicopter to Tikrit in order to meet our C-130 Hercules for the flight to Bayji.

The Delegation subsequently traveled to the Bayji Oil Refinery, located approximately 125 miles from Baghdad and along the Tigris-Euphrates river system. The Refinery, the largest in Iraq, processes crude oils from the wells in Kirkuk into benzene, diesel, propane, and kerosene. The Refinery produces over 75 percent of the country's refined products and is capable of producing over \$22 million in oil revenues daily.

Given the facility's extensive history of official corruption, waste, and abuse, as well as security incidents, oversight of the Bayji Oil Refinery was a significant objective of CODEL Lynch. Accordingly, we conducted a site examination and received a site overview briefing from Brig. Gen. Frank Wiercinski [Deputy Commander of Multinational Division, Iraq (North)], Lt. Col. Steve Harris (Brigade Commander), and Col. Yaseen (Brigade Commander of Iraqi Strategic Infrastructure Protection Forces).

Based on our discussions with Brig. Gen. Wiercinski, Lt. Col. Harris, and Col. Yaseen, as well as our own site examination, we report that some corruption and security concerns continue to exist at the Bayji Oil Refinery and in the fuel

distribution process - but to a lesser extent than previous reports have indicated. Specifically, previous reports estimated that the Bayji Oil Refinery was losing as much as \$2 billion annually as a result of corruption. Notably, threats made against Heavy Fuel Oil (a byproduct of the oil refining process) tanker drivers by insurgents have precluded the drivers from picking up oil, causing the Refinery to periodically shut down.

On February 12, 2007, control of the Bayji Oil Refinery was transferred to the Iraqi government, which has implemented *Operation Honest Hands*, an initiative to curb oil corruption. Col. Yasseen leads what is essentially a five-battalion militia, responsible for guarding the Refinery, physically preventing dishonest players from entering the facility, and escorting fuel truck convoys from the Refinery to the major filling stations around Iraq.

Under the escort system currently in place, each day's tankers are allocated to a particular province. This "single province" allocation system allows security forces to escort the tankers to their scheduled destination and assists in preventing insurgent hijacking and attacks as well as preventing drivers from absconding with the fuel.

According to Brig. Gen. Wiercinski, *Operation Honest Hands* has significantly contributed to curbing oil corruption and security incidents at the Refinery. Brig. Gen. Wiercinski noted that while production at the facility was estimated at approximately 20 tankers per day, current reports indicate that the Refinery's production capacity has increased to approximately 200 tankers daily.

B. ERBIL-IFRAZ WATER PLANT

On April 12, 2007, we continued our Reconstruction oversight activities by examining the Erbil-Ifranz Water Plant, funded by the U.S. at a cost of approximately \$200 million and the third largest water treatment plant in Iraq. We were accompanied by Andrew Manhart (Provincial Program Manager, Erbil Regional Reconstruction Team, Iraq Reconstruction Management Office), Omar Rasheed, (Kurdistan Regional Government Office of Foreign Relations), Rawand Abdulkadir Darwesh (Kurdistan Regional Government Office of Foreign Relations), and several engineers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Construction of the Plant, managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was completed in July of 2006 and management of the facility was subsequently transferred to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The Plant is located on the Great Zab River, a tributary to the Tigris-Euphrates river system, and pumps

4,000 cubic meters of potable water per hour 20 miles southeast to the city of Erbil, capital of the KRG.

Reportedly, the Plant's production capacity will increase to 6,000 cubic meters of potable water per hour within the next couple of months, pending the modernization of the electrical grid. In addition, the Plant is reportedly capable of adding two additional clarifiers, which would increase capacity to approximately 10,000 cubic meters per hour.

The development of the Erbil-Ifraz Water Plant has contributed to increasing the supply of potable water to the citizens of Iraq. However, given that U.S.-funded water sector projects in Iraq have been plagued by increased costs and significant delays, as well as management and security concerns, it is the assessment of the Signatories that continued progress and congressional oversight of the reconstruction water sector are essential to our humanitarian goal of increasing the availability of potable water to the citizens of Iraq.

According to the Special Inspector General for Iraq, Stuart Bowen, in his April 2007 Quarterly Report to Congress, with 88 percent of planned potable water projects complete, U.S.-funded projects have provided capacity to supply clean water access to approximately 5.6 million Iraqis. However, as also noted by Inspector General Bowen, the Administration's anticipated end-state of U.S. projects is to provide an estimated 8.4 million Iraqis with potable water access.

IV. ANTI-TERRORIST FINANCING & ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING EFFORTS

During the course of the Delegation's visits to Jordan, Afghanistan and Turkey, the Members of CODEL Lynch met with various Department of Treasury and State Department officials, as well as Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. AID, and local banking officials to discuss the progress of global anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts.

A. JORDAN

In furtherance of the Delegation's mission to assess and support the progress of anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts in Jordan, the Members of CODEL Lynch traveled to Amman, Jordan on April 10, 2007 to meet with Dr. Umayya Salah Toukan, Governor of the Central Bank of Jordan.

Currently, Dr. Toukan also serves as President of the Middle East and North Africa Financial Action Task Force (MENAFATF), a seventeen-Member organization that also includes representatives of the governments of Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, the Republic of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. MENAFATF, an independent and voluntary organization, seeks to develop and promote national and international policies designed to combat terrorist-financing and money-laundering. Specifically, MENAFATF is committed to ensuring the compliance of its member nations with the “Forty Recommendations”, as well as “Nine Special Recommendations”, issued by the Financial Action Task Force.

Jordan has not yet created and implemented a Financial Intelligence Unit, a national agency that is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and sharing financial intelligence with appropriate law enforcement, intelligence, and regulatory agencies. Accordingly, the Central Bank remains Jordan’s lead institution for reporting and combating terrorism financing. However, while the Central Bank is responsible for receiving all reports of suspicious financial activity from Jordanian banking institutions, Jordan’s banks rarely report suspicious transactions.

In addition, the National Assembly of Jordan has not yet enacted anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering legislation, despite previous assurances made by Jordanian officials to Department of Treasury and Department of State representatives. Accordingly, we expressed our strong support for the enactment of these measures. Furthermore, we emphasized that it is difficult for Congress to permit U.S. investors and banks to conduct business in Jordan absent the implementation of necessary anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering safeguards. The Signatories also noted the large number of private U.S. and European Union contractors, as well as non-governmental organizations, who have located in Amman as further justification for requiring Jordan’s compliance with anti-money laundering protocols.

Based on the meeting with Dr. Toukan, it is the sense of the Signatories that the Jordanian government will redouble its efforts to enact comprehensive anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering legislation during its next extraordinary session. Needless to say, we must keep the pressure on.

B. AFGHANISTAN

The CODEL Members received a briefing regarding the progress of anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts in Kabul, Afghanistan from David Gallalee, U.S. Department of Treasury, on April 14, 2007.

Specifically, Mr. Gallalee discussed Afghanistan's development of a Financial Intelligence Unit, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center of Afghanistan (FinTRACA), established in 2004. The main objective of FinTRACA is to preclude individuals that have obtained funds through illegal channels from using Afghanistan's financial system. To this end, FinTRACA collects and analyzes financial intelligence information and cooperates with appropriate law enforcement authorities to prosecute illegal financial activity. However, as noted by Mr. Gallalee, FinTRACA's objective has been significantly frustrated by the sluggish development of a modernized banking system in Afghanistan, which has served as a significant obstacle to the reporting of suspicious financial transactions. We also report that a high incidence of bank robberies is plaguing the Afghan banking system.

C. TURKEY

On April 15, 2007, the CODEL Members received a briefing regarding anti-terrorist financing and anti-money laundering efforts in the Republic of Turkey from Ambassador Ross Wilson, Chief of Mission, Deborah Jones, Consul General, and Andrew Snow, Deputy Economic Counselor. In particular, the briefing addressed the progress of Turkey's Financial Intelligence Unit, Mali Suclari Arastirma Kurulu (MASAK), which was granted enhanced authorities to investigate Suspicious Activity Reports following the enactment of corresponding legislation by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

Regrettably, the CODEL Members were informed that despite MASAK's increased authorities, the number of Suspicious Activities Reports remains extremely low given the size of the Turkey's financial sector. In fact, MASAK has not obtained a successful money laundering prosecution since its inception in 1996 and accordingly, terrorist assets are rarely frozen.

V. GENERAL CONDITIONS AND ACCESS FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONDUCTING CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

The Signatories express our significant frustration with respect to our difficulty in gaining access to certain areas that have seen little or no Congressional oversight in many months and, in certain cases, years. While prior to departure the CODEL received express authorization to conduct constitutionally-mandated Congressional oversight of Iraq reconstruction activities and military operations, we faced a persistent struggle with Department of State representatives to gain access to specific problem areas in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

A. ACCESS TO SADR CITY, IRAQ

Based on detailed data provided to the CODEL by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and following several conversations with Special Inspector General Bowen, the CODEL was informed, prior to departure, that Sadr City has been the subject of over \$230 million in reconstruction efforts, including 22 public works and water projects totaling \$30.1 million. Notably, however, these reconstruction projects have not been subject to Congressional oversight and as a result, there are no indications that American tax dollars have been reliably expended or accounted for.

Accordingly, two weeks prior to the CODEL's departure, Mr. Lynch specifically requested access to the Sadr City R3 Water Treatment Plant in order to conduct oversight activities. As of the departure date, it was therefore expected that CODEL Lynch would have access to the Sadr City R3 Water Treatment Plant site. Upon arrival, however, Members of the CODEL were denied access for "security" reasons.

The CODEL Members therefore engaged in lengthy discussions with various State Department representatives, as well as the Commanding General of the Multinational force in Iraq, Lt. Gen. Raymond Odierno. After receiving assurances from both the State Department and Lt. Gen. Odierno that maximum effort would be made to gain access to Sadr City at a future date and rather than causing any disruption in the military operations in and around Sadr City, we agreed to cancel our site visit.

In defense of Lt. Gen. Odierno, certain press and intelligence reports at the time indicated the occurrence of rioting in the Sadr City area. Moreover, and importantly, General Odierno did subsequently provide excellent access for the

Members to visit the Dora Market area of Baghdad in order to observe the effects of the President's ongoing "Surge" strategy.

B. ACCESS TO RAMADI, IRAQ

Again, several weeks prior to the CODEL's departure date, members of the CODEL had expressed keen interest in visiting the city of Ramadi, provincial capital of Anbar Province. The purpose of the planned visit was to observe the effects of the President's "Surge" strategy in Anbar Province as well as to review both ongoing and completed Reconstruction projects. Once again, however, there was difficulty coordinating the necessary transportation and access to Ramadi in order to fulfill the Members' oversight responsibilities. Accordingly, Ramadi remains one area where Congressional oversight is severely lacking.

C. ACCESS TO SOUTH EASTERN TRIBAL AREAS, AFGHANISTAN

In Afghanistan, the CODEL had requested to conduct Congressional oversight of the Coalition efforts in the tribal areas in the Khost border region between south eastern Afghanistan and Pakistan.

While certain Members of the CODEL (Members of Congress along with military escort, Major Matt Allison, USA) did gain some access to Camp Clark in the Border region south of Salerno, Afghanistan, only one helicopter was available. Accordingly, all Committee and CODEL staff as well as the CODEL's other military escort, Major Will McKnight, USA, were required to remain in Salerno.

In addition, similar to Iraq, "security concerns" were again raised as the reason that no Congressional oversight was permitted in the area of Forward Operating Bases that are co-located with Afghanistan National Army (ANA) units and which have been actively engaged in anti-Taliban operations. Therefore, the Delegation was unable to observe or speak with our troops who are fighting side-by-side with ANA troops actively engaged against the Taliban and Al Qaeda elements originating in the Waziristan, Pakistan tribal areas.

However, we did receive solid assurances from Gen. Dan McNeil (Commanding General, International Security Assistance Force, Kabul) and Col. Martin Schweitzer (Commander, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division) that the Members would be able to observe units engaged at Forward Operating Base Tillman and "the Ranch House" Forward Operating Base during a subsequent oversight visit.

D. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS REGARDING ACCESS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT

The role and responsibility of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is both specialized and, we hope, obvious. While many Congressional delegations travel to Iraq for the specific and principal purpose of visiting troops and assessing morale, members of the Oversight Committee have important additional responsibilities.

While we understand and share the importance of members of Congress visiting the troops, we are also mindful of the special Constitutional dimension of the Oversight Committee in reviewing foreign policy and ensuring that the sums appropriated by Congress are expended in a transparent and responsible manner. Simply put, in order to meet our Constitutional responsibilities, we require unrestricted access to the areas where the money appropriated by Congress is being spent.

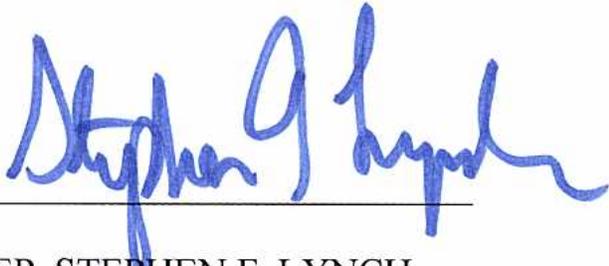
Similarly, to be sure that the equipment and war fighting materials that the American taxpayers have paid for are reaching our men and women in the battle in a timely fashion, we need full access to those war fighters, especially those who are doing the most difficult and dangerous work.

While we realize that both Iraq and Afghanistan are war zones, we also acknowledge that Congress has authorized a total of approximately \$510 billion for military operations, reconstruction, base security, foreign assistance, embassy costs, and veterans' health care in support of three operations commenced since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001: 1) Operation Enduring Freedom; 2) Operation Noble Eagle; and 3) Operation Iraqi Freedom.

While we deeply respect and appreciate the heroic work performed by our military service men and women, as well as our Department of State personnel, we must insist that appropriate courtesy, flexibility and effort be made in order to provide full access to Congress, and members of this Oversight Committee in particular, so that we may fulfill our Constitutional responsibilities as well.

Lastly, given that considerable effort is expended in order to plan and arrange Congressional visits to Iraq and Afghanistan, we must maximize our time on the ground. Conference room briefings that might reasonably occur in Washington, should happen in Washington. From our perspective, the greatest value of Congressional visits is derived from opportunities to travel to key locations, including actively-controlled areas, outside the Green Zone, as well as the tribal

areas near Waziristan, and observe and listen to the concerns of our front-line troops.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stephen F. Lynch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

REP. STEPHEN F. LYNCH
(MA-09)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peter Welch". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

REP. PETER WELCH
(VT-At Large)

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris M.". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

REP. CHRISTOPHER MURPHY
(CT-05)