Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 12, 2005

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

Almost two years since your "Mission Accomplished" statement aboard the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, US troops are still bogged down in a predictably uncertain war of occupation for which you still have not articulated an exit strategy. The announcement today that the $200 billion wild goose chase for weapons of mass destruction has officially ended empty-handed further underscores what we articulated earlier, that the war would not enhance U.S. security but would degrade it. We truly had nothing to gain, and very much to lose.

Now, daily insurgent violence only underscores for us that there can be no peace, security and stability in Iraq as long as US troops are perceived by most Iraqis as an occupying force. We remain frustrated by your failure to propose a concrete timetable for withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and articulate an associated strategy that would allow for that prompt withdrawal. We feel that you must.

No one following these daily events can deny that American soldiers and Iraqis seen as working with American soldiers are the top targets in Iraq for insurgents. Historically adversarial Iraqi communities now share the common goal of violent expulsion of US troops. The existing mayhem is providing refuge and recruits for terrorists, degrading both Iraqi and our national security. Reports indicate that despite our security efforts, the interim Iraqi President will be unable to ensure a safe election throughout the country. It is clear to us that the continued presence of US troops is doing more harm than good.

Mr. President, in calling for you to develop a U.S. troop withdrawal plan, we know that the U.S. must act on parallel tracks. Withdrawal should begin by removing all of the troops immediately from the villages, towns, and cities and redeploying a portion of them to help guard Iraq's porous borders. The U.S. troops removed from the villages, towns and cities should be replaced with newly trained Iraqi police, national guard, and soldiers. These important steps will put Iraqis in control of their internal affairs while allowing the US to help protect Iraq's borders. At the same time, the U.S. should immediately work to convene an emergency meeting of Iraq's leadership, its neighbors, the United Nations, and pan-Arab organizations to create a force of international peacekeepers. We must then transfer the training of new Iraqi security forces to our international partners.

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Further, US troops should only participate in peacekeeping if explicitly invited to do so by the new international force. To improve US legitimacy in the Middle East and among our allies, the US must end war profiteering by US companies that receive no-bid contracts and must redouble efforts to ensure the rebuilding of Iraq's crumbling infrastructure.

We strongly urge you to use either your upcoming Inaugural address on January 20 or the State of the Union on February 2 to announce the planned withdrawal of US troops from Iraq and outline a timetable for doing so. We look forward to working with you to bring our troops home.

Sincerely,

BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

PETE STARK
Member of Congress