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## The Consequences of Surrender in Iraq

### *Executive Summary*

- The enemy in Iraq is comprised of both Sunni extremists, namely al Qaeda, and Shia extremists, such as terrorist sponsors in Iran, who both seek to fortify their influence in the region, and expand it beyond.
- Democrats have claimed that a recently declassified National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) concluded that the war in Iraq has “made the war on terror more difficult to win”—even though the terrorists see the war in Iraq and the war against terrorists as one in the same.
- The NIE *actually* concluded that, should jihadists be perceived to have failed in their efforts to undermine democracy in Iraq, “fewer fighters will be inspired to carry on the fight.”
- Thus, the terrorist influence can be prevented from growing if it is defeated in Iraq, which clearly counsels for staying in Iraq to secure in place an Iraqi government that can defend itself against jihadist influence.
- Yet, Democrats continue to push for the “phased withdrawal” of U.S. troops from Iraq without any regard for the ability of the government to govern, defend, and sustain itself.
- As the President contends, “If America were to pull out before Iraq can defend itself, the consequences would be absolutely predictable—and absolutely disastrous.”
- Iran and al Qaeda would be the greatest beneficiaries of a premature withdrawal. They would see it as a victory for political violence and their extremist ideology.
- Moderate regimes in the region would then similarly be threatened by extremist groups in their own countries who rely upon political violence, and by state sponsors of terrorism.
- The enemy would then have a base of operations, like Afghanistan under the Taliban was for al Qaeda—only this time with oil resources to draw upon.
- The terrorists would use this base and those resources to continue to export their extremist ideology and to target U.S. interests for attack—even if U.S. troops were no longer in Iraq or the region.

## Introduction

Given the highly visible recent increase in violence and loss of life in Iraq, it is understandable that some are calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops.<sup>1</sup> If the campaign promises and post-election statements of Senate Democrats are to be believed, the new Senate majority will attempt to “pressure the White House to commence the phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq in four to six months,”<sup>2</sup> without any regard to the capability of the Iraqi government to govern itself, sustain itself, and defend itself.

The President contends that, “if America were to pull out before Iraq can defend itself, the consequences would be absolutely predictable—and absolutely disastrous.”<sup>3</sup> This is demonstrably the case because the consequences can be gleaned from the statements of U.S. enemies, along with their past practice. The worst enemies of the United States would suddenly have a base of operations from which to expand their influence and continue to target U.S. interests—despite U.S. departure from Iraq. This paper will demonstrate that this is precisely the goal of the enemies, and it will examine the consequences of surrendering in Iraq before the mission of helping secure an Iraq that can govern, sustain, and defend itself is complete.<sup>4</sup>

## The Enemy in Iraq: Both Sunni and Shia Extremists

The Sunni and Shia<sup>5</sup> extremists who perpetrate violence in Iraq see, and accept, terror and violence as a legitimate tool of political discourse. Just like other actors in international politics, they direct their violence toward some political end. As the President has described, “They kill in the name of a clear and focused ideology, a set of beliefs that are evil, but not insane.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Sunni extremists (al Qaeda) seek a global caliphate.**

For example, Sunni extremists, namely al Qaeda, have made clear that their goal is to establish a caliphate<sup>7</sup> in the region, and expand it throughout the world. The President has pointed out how Ayman al-Zawahiri himself, commonly believed to be the second in command of al Qaeda after Osama Bin Laden, has proclaimed this to be the goal and outlined a strategy to

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<sup>1</sup> Part of the recent upsurge in violence correlates to the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, during which attacks, and casualties, in Iraq have historically increased precipitously. Major General William Caldwell, spokesman for Multi-National Force-Iraq, Operational Briefing, Oct. 12, 2006, available at [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=6380&Itemid=30](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=6380&Itemid=30) (“Historical trends tell us that the attacks will generally increase by 20 percent during this holy month of Ramadan.”)

<sup>2</sup> Carl Levin, Press Conference of the Senate Armed Services Committee Ranking Member, Nov. 13, 2006 (claiming that “most Democrats share [this] view”).

<sup>3</sup> George W. Bush, Address to the American Legion National Convention, Aug. 31, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> George W. Bush, Press Conference of the President, Oct. 25, 2006 (“The ultimate victory in Iraq [is] a government that can sustain itself, govern itself, and defend itself.”).

<sup>5</sup> Iraq is approximately 60 percent Shia, and 35 percent Sunni, which itself is customarily broken out into 20 percent Sunni Arab and 15 percent Kurdish.

<sup>6</sup> George W. Bush, Address to the Military Officers Association of America at the Capital Hilton Hotel, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> The word “caliph” is a title given to a Muslim leader, and literally means “successor” or “deputy.” Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democratic Commitment*, 27 Fordham Int’l L. J. 4, 18 (2003). A caliphate is the jurisdiction of the caliph, namely the defined territory over which he exercises his leadership.

attain it. That strategy relies on pushing U.S. and coalition forces out of Iraq, because the terrorists would use the vacuum created by an American retreat to gain control of Iraq. The terrorists would then use Iraq as a base from which to launch attacks against America, overthrow moderate governments in the Middle East, and try to establish a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain.<sup>8</sup> Al Qaeda employs terrorist tactics to establish this empire because it cannot accomplish this end through an open political dialogue.<sup>9</sup>

**Shia extremists (Iran) seek regional domination and proclaim hatred for America.**

Sunni extremists in Iraq are fighting for what Shia extremists already have in Iran—control of a state. Shia radicalism “is just as dangerous, and just as hostile to America, and just as determined to establish its brand of hegemony across the broader Middle East.”<sup>10</sup> Similarly, their goal is regional domination. The words of Iran’s own leaders illustrate how their goal is to drive America out of the region and dominate the broader Middle East.<sup>11</sup>

Just like al Qaeda, the leaders of Iran seek to attain this goal by violence, not by votes. According to the State Department, Iran remains the most active state sponsor of terrorism.<sup>12</sup> They fund, arm, and provide direct support and safe haven to terrorist groups, such as Hezbollah. Moreover, Iran directly targets Americans; as prior to the attacks of September 11, Hezbollah was responsible for more terrorist-related American deaths than any other organization. The leaders of Iran and Hezbollah have declared their hostility for America and their intention to target Americans, and they have successfully executed their threats in the past.

**The extremists’ goal is to remake the world in their repressive image.**

Islamic extremists will not quit their war against the United States even if the United States were to withdraw from Iraq immediately, because their aspirations do not end in Iraq or in the Middle East. Leaders of both extremist sects have plainly and openly stated that they will not rest until their ideological beliefs govern the world. For example, as the President has explained, these radicals “have declared their uncompromising hostility to freedom,” their intention to reject peaceful coexistence and compromise with others, and to subjugate all peoples under their vision of a unified, totalitarian Islamic state.<sup>13</sup> As Abu Bakar, the spiritual leader of Jemaah Islamiyah, declared, “If the West wants peace, they’ll have to accept to be governed by Islam.”<sup>14</sup> In his “Letter to America” in 2002, Osama Bin Laden stated that he wants the United States to withdraw completely from all of its global interests, convert to Islam, and completely change its society to conform to the dictates of the Koran. He then warned that if Americans “fail[ed] to respond to all these conditions, then [they should] prepare for [a] fight with the Islamic Nation.”

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<sup>8</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006; George W. Bush, Address at the United States Naval Academy, Nov. 30, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006 (“[Al Qaeda] know[s] that given a choice, the Iraqi people will never choose to live in the totalitarian state the extremists hope to establish.”).

<sup>10</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>12</sup> State Department Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, Country Reports on Terrorism, p. 173 (Apr. 2006).

<sup>13</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen J. Hadley, Remarks of the National Security Advisor to the Council on Foreign Relations, Oct. 18, 2005 (quoting Abu Bakar).

Similarly, Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah, frequently proclaims that his goal is “death to America.”<sup>15</sup> As former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich has explained, this is a battle with an “irreconcilable wing of Islam.”<sup>16</sup>

The President has cautioned that Americans ignore these warnings at their peril, as “history teaches that underestimating the words of evil and ambitious men is a terrible mistake.”<sup>17</sup> Yet, President Bush has acknowledged that some American people “hear the terrorists’ words, and hope that they will not, or cannot, do what they say.”<sup>18</sup> But the attacks of September 11 and World War II both demonstrate that the unthinkable mass murder of thousands of innocents in the name of an ideology is, in fact, a reality. Moreover, Afghanistan provides a practical example of how extremists would govern a state. As the President has described, Afghanistan under the Taliban, with the support of al Qaeda, was a “totalitarian nightmare”:

A land where women were imprisoned in their homes, men were beaten for missing prayer meetings, girls could not go to school, and children were forbidden the smallest pleasures like flying kites. Religious police roamed the streets, beating and detaining civilians for perceived offenses. Women were publicly whipped. Summary executions were held in Kabul’s soccer stadium in front of cheering mobs.<sup>19</sup>

The leaders of Iran similarly significantly restrict the political rights and civil liberties of citizens, including the ability to create a government representative of the citizens’ wishes.<sup>20</sup> It is the goal of the extremists, as found in their very words, to expand this type of governance throughout the world.

***To expand their influence, the extremists must first drive the United States out of Iraq.***

As the President has explained, “The Shia and Sunni extremists represent different faces of the same threat. They draw inspiration from different sources, but both seek to impose a dark vision of violent Islamic radicalism across the Middle East.”<sup>21</sup> To attain that goal, al Qaeda, for example, must first drive the United States out of Iraq so that it can restore the safe haven it had in Afghanistan. Similarly, a Shia-dominated state in Iraq would create a formidable hegemonic axis between Iran and Iraq, which could use its combined power and influence to force its perverted vision of governance upon other countries in the region.

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<sup>15</sup> E.g., George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006 (quoting the terrorist leader).

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Newt Gingrich, Prepared Remarks of the Former Speaker of the House to the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Subcommittee on Oversight regarding the Status of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Oct. 19, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>18</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> State Department Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: 2005 (Mar. 8, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

## U.S. Surrender in Iraq Has Tangible Consequences

Most Senate Democrats support a timeline for withdrawing troops from Iraq without regard to conditions on the ground there.<sup>22</sup> Although such a departure may prevent the loss of life of U.S. troops in the short-term, the extremists have made clear that they will continue to target Americans for death until their extremist ideology governs everywhere. Secretary Rice has outlined the cost of failure in Iraq:

If we abandon the Iraqi people, before their government is strong enough to secure the country, then we will show reformers across the region that America cannot be trusted to keep its word. We will embolden extremist enemies of moderation and of democratic reform. We will leave the makings of a failed state in Iraq, like that one in Afghanistan in the 1990s, which became the base for al-Qaida and the launching pad for the September 11<sup>th</sup> hijackers. And we should not assume for one minute that those terrorists will not continue to come after the American homeland.<sup>23</sup>

If U.S. troops leave Iraq before the government there can defend itself against the extremists targeting it, then the extremists will be able to displace the governing authority and have for themselves a foothold in Iraq from which to pursue their goals.

### **Al Qaeda and Iran will be the greatest beneficiaries.**

Iran would be the primary beneficiary of a U.S. surrender in Iraq because it would be easier for Iran to assert what General Casey has described as Iran's "decidedly unhelpful" influence in Iraq. Iran is "using surrogates to conduct terrorist operations in Iraq, both against us and against the Iraqi people," and, through its covert special operations forces, is providing weapons, Improvised Explosive Device ("IED") technology and training to these surrogates, namely Shia extremist groups in Iraq.<sup>24</sup> It is similar to the relationship of support between Iran and Hezbollah; as one expert stated, "It's no accident that Iran's current ambassador to Iraq was formerly Tehran's liaison to the Lebanese terrorist group."<sup>25</sup> In this regard, if U.S. forces leave Iraq before the Iraqi government is capable of defending itself, Iraq will not be able to repel Iranian influence.

Similarly, as will be discussed later, al Qaeda would benefit from the failure of Iraq to be able to govern and defend itself because al Qaeda thrives in territory over which the central government does not exert governance, allowing al Qaeda to train and plan attacks unhindered. As General John Abizaid, Commander of United States Central Command, has cautioned,

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<sup>22</sup> 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sess., Record Vote No. 182, Jun 22, 2006 (rejecting S. Amdt. 4320 to S. 2766, FY07 Defense Authorization Bill, which, in part, called upon the President to submit "estimated dates" for the "phased redeployment" of U.S. forces from Iraq).

<sup>23</sup> Condoleezza Rice, Remarks of the Secretary of State to the 88<sup>th</sup> Annual American Legion Convention, Aug. 29, 2006.

<sup>24</sup> General George Casey, Press Conference of the Commander of Multinational Force-Iraq ("MNF-I"), June 22, 2006, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=3752>.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Rubin, *Last Chance for Iraq?*, National Review, Sept. 11, 2006.

“Failure to stabilize Iraq could increase Iranian aggressiveness and embolden al Qaeda’s ideology.”<sup>26</sup>

**Moderate regimes in the region would be threatened.**

Moderate regimes in the region would become threatened by extremist enemies of moderation and democratic reform because the departure of U.S. troops from Iraq before a viable government is in place would demonstrate that political violence works. Islamic extremists “target nations whose behavior they believe they can change through violence;”<sup>27</sup> whereas a critical element of the strategy in Iraq is to help ensure that the hopes Iraqis have expressed at the polls are translated into a secure democracy.<sup>28</sup>

Democracies are defined by their peaceful transition of government, and when a democratically elected government is overthrown by force somewhere, it may embolden anti-democratic groups everywhere. Moderate regimes in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, would rightly view the overthrow of a moderate regime by an insurgent force as a threat because such an event may embolden local insurgent populations. Moreover, states that sponsor such groups, like Iran and Syria, could view an insurgent success in Iraq as an event supporting their strategies and policies. As the President recognized, “each strain of violent Islamic radicalism would be emboldened in their efforts to topple moderate governments and establish terrorist safe havens.”<sup>29</sup>

**The enemy would have a base of operations, like Afghanistan was, only with resources.**

Iraq would become a safe haven for terrorists, even more valuable than Afghanistan under the Taliban was for al Qaeda. If U.S. forces leave Iraq before Iraq is able to govern itself, any advances made to this point would come to an abrupt halt, and eventually regress to the point of state collapse, leaving in its wake a failed state. A failed state, like Afghanistan was under the Taliban, is unable to impose order or project sufficient authority over its own territory to make itself inhospitable to terrorist groups.<sup>30</sup> Failed states afford terrorist groups easy access to valuable commodities to help fund their activities, since such commodities are not fully under central government control. For example, a failed state in Iraq would leave the abundant oil resources of Iraq available to terrorist groups. In this regard, an anarchic Iraq would be even more valuable than Afghanistan was because of the tremendous oil resources that would be available to terrorist groups there.

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<sup>26</sup> General John Abizaid, Prepared Remarks of the Commander of United States Central Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Nov. 15, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> George W. Bush, Address Commemorating Veterans Day, Nov. 11, 2005.

<sup>28</sup> George W. Bush, Address of the President to the Nation, June 28, 2005.

<sup>29</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Failed states are not necessarily state sponsors of terror in that they do not actively welcome or support terrorist groups, but they may serve as “attractive safe havens and staging grounds” for terrorist groups because the central government cannot make its territory inhospitable to terrorist groups. Susan E. Rice, *U.S. Foreign Assistance and Failed States*, Nov. 25, 2002, available at <http://www.brook.edu/views/papers/rice/20021125.htm>. At the same time, an abandoned Iraq may be susceptible to having its government taken over by factions sympathetic to al Qaeda or Iranian-supported Shia extremists, by which Iraq could then potentially become an active state sponsor of terrorism.

The world already has an example of what terrorists do with their access to oil resources, as Iranian terrorist sponsors use the “resources to fund the spread of terror and pursue their radical agenda.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, well-funded terrorists would “pursue and purchase weapons of mass murder,” just as Iran is doing now.<sup>32</sup> A failed state of Iraq would provide “our worst enemies—Saddam’s former henchmen, armed groups with ties to Iran, and al Qaeda terrorists from all over the world—. . . a new sanctuary to recruit and train terrorists.”<sup>33</sup>

***The enemy would use this base to target the United States, even if the United States were no longer in Iraq.***

There is little doubt as to how extremists with a safe haven awash in oil resources would use that asset, because, as was explained earlier, the extremists’ agenda in Iraq does not end with pushing the United States out; it is merely the first step in their continuing battle against the West.<sup>34</sup> Those who advocate withdrawing from Iraq seem to do so on the grounds that it will result in a safer America and less American loss of life. This is clearly not the case, because “if we leave, [the terrorists] will follow us.”<sup>35</sup> Their own statements and ambitions make this clear. While Americans may find the extremists’ desire to establish a worldwide caliphate unbelievable, it is not so to the Islamic extremists, who will fight their war against Western civilizations even if the United States were to withdraw completely from not only Iraq, but also the Middle East as a whole.

Indeed, these enemies must be defeated because they do not seek compromise with the United States. Democrats have put their own interpretation on a recently declassified National Intelligence Estimate to conclude that the war in Iraq has “made the war on terror more difficult to win”<sup>36</sup>—despite the fact that the terrorists themselves see the war in Iraq and the war against Islamist terrorists as one in the same. The NIE, however, *actually* concludes that, should jihadists be perceived to have failed in their efforts to undermine democracy in Iraq, “fewer fighters will be inspired to carry on the fight.”<sup>37</sup> This clearly counsels that it is in the long-term national security interest of the United States to leave in place an Iraqi government that can defend itself against jihadist influence, rather than, as incoming Homeland Security Chairman Lieberman has aptly said, “abandon 27 million Iraqis to 10,000 terrorists.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> George W. Bush, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> George W. Bush, Aug. 31, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Ayman al-Zawahiri, commonly believed to be the second in command of Al Qaeda after Osama Bin Laden, in a letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Bin Laden’s designated leader of al Qaeda in Iraq at the time, stated that “the mujahedeen must not have their mission end with the expulsion of the Americans from Iraq.” The Director of National Intelligence announced the public release of this letter in a news release on October 11, 2005, which is available at [http://www.dni.gov/press\\_releases/20051011\\_release.htm](http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/20051011_release.htm). The full text of the letter is available as a link to this press release.

<sup>35</sup> George W. Bush, Aug. 31, 2006 (quoting General Abizaid).

<sup>36</sup> 152 Cong. Rec. S10064 (daily ed. Sept. 25, 2006) (statement of Sen. Kennedy).

<sup>37</sup> National Intelligence Council, Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States, Declassified Key judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate (Apr. 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Joe Lieberman, *Our Troops Must Stay*, Opinion Journal, Nov. 29, 2005, available at <http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110007611>.

## A Timeline for Withdrawal Emboldens the Enemy

The only tangible part of the Democrats' plan for Iraq that the Administration is not already executing is either to require the phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq over the next four to six months, or require a timeline for withdrawal.<sup>39</sup> Either strategy sets the departure of U.S. troops according to some politically expedient timeline, rather than in relation to the ability of the Iraqi government to govern, defend, and sustain itself. In a different time, however, Senator Biden, in speaking about the intervention in Bosnia, cautioned against the dangers of setting "an artificial deadline" for the withdrawal of troops because that "would turn our troops into lame ducks as a given date approaches."<sup>40</sup> That rationale is at least as compelling in Iraq as it was in Bosnia.

Even retired military personnel who are critical of the Administration have rejected the proposal to set a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. On September 25, 2006, the Democratic Policy Committee held an "oversight" hearing on Iraq, inviting witnesses who have been publicly critical of the Administration's policies in Iraq. During that hearing, in responding to a question about "the consequences of setting a time certain" to leave Iraq, Retired Army Major General John Batiste stated that "pull[ing] out of Iraq on some timeline . . . without finishing the work we started" would leave a "regional mess." Army Major General Paul Eaton (ret.) cautioned that Iran would be "the greatest beneficiary" of such a withdrawal. Finally, Marine Colonel Thomas Hammes (ret.) concluded that a withdrawal would "create new and convenient sanctuaries for terrorists" in Iraq. He then listed the many "bad things" that would be available to terrorists in Iraq if the United States were to withdraw its troops, including his belief that this would "recreate Afghanistan for the terrorists."<sup>41</sup> Thus, even in a forum that was pre-arranged to be critical of the Administration's Iraq policy, the witnesses rejected the Democrats' main tangible proposal for an Iraq policy.

## Conclusion

Given the change in leadership in the next Congress, along with the multiple internal and external reviews of Iraq policy taking place, it is likely the case that there will be some initiatives policymakers will have to grapple with in the near term. Whatever those recommendations are, they will not be on stone tablets. What is for certain, however, is that a U.S. withdrawal from

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<sup>39</sup> One example of a Democratic "plan" for Iraq can be found in a letter from Congressional Democrat leaders to the President dated September 4, 2006, available at <http://democrats.senate.gov/newsroom/record.cfm?id=262426>. White House Chief of Staff Josh Bolten responded on behalf of the President to explain how three of the proposals in that letter "reflect[ed] well-established Administration policy," and the fourth proposal, to begin the phased redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq, was "dangerously misguided." Response from the Chief of Staff Josh Bolten to a Democratic Letter, Sept. 5, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> Joseph R. Biden, *Bosnia: Why the United States Should Finish the Job*, SAIS Review, Vol. 18, no. 2, p. 1 (Summer/Fall 1998). Moreover, in his "Plan for Iraq," <http://planforiraq.com/documents/pfi.pdf>, Senator Biden has stated that U.S. actions in Bosnia could be "illustrative" for U.S. policy in Iraq. This is a curious analogy, given the Democrats' demand for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. U.S. troops have been in Iraq for approximately one-third the amount of time U.S. troops were in Bosnia to create the peace Senator Biden uses as an "illustrative" example, but yet Democrats would like to pull U.S. troops out of Iraq before peace is established there.

<sup>41</sup> Senate Democratic Policy Committee Oversight Hearing on the Planning and Conduct of the War in Iraq, Sept. 25, 2006, transcript available at <http://democrats.senate.gov/dpc/hearings/hearing38/transcript.pdf>.

Iraq before a government that can govern, defend, and sustain itself against the terrorists is in place only redounds to the benefit of extremists by providing them a base of operations with oil resources for their use in their continuing war against the West.