

PRESS RELEASE



House Armed Services Committee Duncan Hunter, Chairman

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OPENING REMARKS OF CHAIRMAN DUNCAN HUNTER

Hearing on Transition to Iraqi Sovereignty

At the beginning of the war on terror, the President called on America to drain the swamp that breeds intolerance, hatred, and extremism. Nobody can seriously doubt that Saddam Hussein's Iraq was part of that swamp. We all agree he was a mass murderer who had:

- committed multiple acts of aggression against his neighbors;
- used weapons of mass destruction;
- defied the United Nations;
- continually attacked coalition aircraft enforcing UN-approved no-fly zones;
- financially rewarded homicide bombers in Israel; and,
- harbored terrorists who had killed Americans, including Abu Nidal, Abu Abbas, and Abdul Rahman Yasin, who was implicated in the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center.

Our long-term victory in the global war on terror will require changing the behavior of such regimes or eliminating them. After more than a decade of diplomacy failed to change Saddam's behavior, a coalition of nations invaded Iraq and deposed the regime, eliminating one major part of the swamp that fosters terror.

It has cost us blood and treasure. Americans have opened their wallets to drain the swamp. But, more importantly, we have offered up our sons and our daughters, some of whom have paid the ultimate price to make us safer. As painful as those losses are, there should be no doubt that their willingness to carry that burden has eliminated a threat that was clearly aimed at the United States.

The question before this country now is how to move forward. We have to do more than eliminate state sponsors of terror in order to win the war that started on September 11th. We have to create new states that represent their citizens, respect their neighbors, reject terrorism, and seek a constructive role in the world. This will be a long and difficult process. It took decades upon decades of false starts, poor policies, and a civil war before American democracy reached its current state.

With that in mind, it would be foolish to expect the process in Iraq to unfold perfectly according to some preconceived plan.

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In fact, building democracy in Iraq will be harder because there are dedicated enemies of the process throughout the region. But, we must remain committed to the task.

Maintaining that commitment means giving the troops the resources they need when the Commander in Chief says he needs them. It means honoring our promise to transfer sovereignty to the Iraqi people on June 30th. It means respecting those countries who join us in Iraq, rather than demeaning their efforts because their troops don't speak French or German. It means respecting the role of religion in Iraq while resisting those who use it to justify their own selfish pursuit of power. It means keeping our eye on the future ten years down the road and not making new policy every time the 24-hour news cycle preaches panic. It means having enough wisdom—and patience—to accept that this is a long term commitment for the American people.

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