



Woodrow Wilson
International
Center
for Scholars

LEE H. HAMILTON
President and Director

March 21, 2007

Congressman Dave Obey
2314 Rayburn House Office Bldg
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Dave:

Thank you for sharing the Democratic funding resolution on Iraq. A strategy of sustained pressure on the Iraqi government to meet benchmarks on national reconciliation, security, and improving the lives of the Iraqi people – backed by clear conditionality of U.S. support – has the best chance of advancing stability in Iraq. The proposed resolution lays out those benchmarks, and provides that conditionality. By compelling the President to report to Congress on benchmark performance, it provides a necessary mechanism to track progress. By tying continued U.S. support – including our troop presence – to benchmarks, it uses our strongest possible leverage to press the Iraqis to act.

The resolution outlines a transition of U.S. forces from Iraq that targets a 2008 departure date. Even with the more assertive congressional role outlined, the President retains his flexibility and authority as commander-in-chief, and his responsibility to carry out American foreign policy. The residual force authorized for Iraq allows the President sufficient flexibility to protect U.S. interests: protecting U.S. military and civilians in Iraq, counterterrorism operations, and training Iraqi Security Forces. The transition of U.S. forces out of Iraq outlined in the resolution is responsible, not precipitate.

More needs to be done. The training of Iraqi Security Forces must be intensified, and be the primary mission of U.S. forces in Iraq. This is necessary to enable the responsible removal of U.S. forces. A balanced political, military and economic approach to Iraq must also include a robust and sustained diplomatic offensive that advances national reconciliation within Iraq, and stability in the region.

The American people want a responsible transition for U.S. forces out of Iraq. This resolution provides a light at the end of the tunnel. It is not perfect, but it moves our national debate forward. Our political leadership is divided. The President must respect the views of the American people and constitutional responsibilities of the Congress; the Congress, in turn, must respect the President's ultimate responsibility for carrying out American foreign policy. In the debate to come, our political leaders must work toward a unity of effort that can serve America's interests, work for stability in Iraq, and bring this war to a responsible conclusion.

With best wishes,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lee H. Hamilton'.

Lee H. Hamilton