

Full text of William R. Polk's talk before the Democratic Caucus of the U.S.
Congress on September 19, 2007[^]

Last week in this room, you heard General David Petraeus present his version of Iraq. Listening to him, I was reminded of the parable of the blind Brahmins describing an elephant. One grabbed the trunk and another the tail. General Petraeus, whom I have not met and whose motives I do not mean to impugn, had hold of the tail. The elephant he described was a little fellow, more like a lapdog than an elephant, ready to fetch and carry at the orders of his master. Unfortunately, I see a different creature, one that is not following our orders, does not want us to be in its territory and has inflicted great harm upon us. The facts are these:

First, the human costs to America:

- During the years of the American occupation, April 2003-September 1, 2007, 3,738 servicemen and women have been killed;
- About 1 in each 5 soldiers has been "at least partially disabled" with over 100,000 granted disability payments and another 100,000 expected to claim them;
- In December 2005, the U.S. Surgeon General estimated that more than 1 in 3 of the half million Marines and soldiers who had served in Iraq needed mental health treatment;
- At least 50,000 have suffered concussions that will affect them with memory loss, headaches and confused thinking for the rest of their lives to such an extent that they will not be able to function well in society and will be a burden on their families and the public;
- Another large number will develop cancer as a result of exposure to an aerosol mutation (U_3O_8) of the depleted uranium used in artillery shells and bombs. (Some scientists believe this is the cause of so-called Gulf War Syndrome.)

Second, the monetary costs to America:

- Congressional allocations of over \$500 billion and increasing by more than 20% a year. They are now running at \$10 billion a month. That is to say, roughly \$14 million an hour.
- The real *cost* (by standard accounting methods) to the American economy is between 1 and 2 *trillion* dollars. In fact, some economists believe the real costs may run to as much as 6 trillion dollars.

Third, political costs to America:

Include the damage to America's reputation and capacity to exercise leadership in the world community.

[^] I did not read but rather talked from this text so it is shorter than the CSPAN recording and the stenographic text.

Eight months ago, on January 12, 2007 former Senator George McGovern, Congressman John Murtha, General William Odom and I appeared before you also in this room. At that time we warned that the situation in Iraq, bad as it then was, would get worse. We four urged that we get out of Iraq with all deliberate speed. In the 8 months since we appeared before you

- More than another 746 American soldiers have been killed;
- about three times that number have been visibly wounded;
- perhaps ten times that number "invisibly" wounded including those who have suffered concussions that will debilitate them as long as they live; and
- another 60 or so billion dollars have been wasted.

All this expenditure of blood and money has given us an Iraq which is more vicious, more hostile to America, less willing to follow our lead and more prone to support violent actions against us, now in Iraq and in the future probably all over the world. Polls show that 8 of 10 Iraqis believe attacks on us are justified to drive us out of their country. The reason why is clear:

- the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health estimated as of last year that about 600,000 Iraqis had died as a result of the war; the number now may have reached 1 million;
- the number of wounded probably exceeds 1 million;
- at least 4 million Iraqis have been turned into refugees with about 2½ million having fled the country;
- physical demolition amounts to perhaps 200 billion dollars; and
- most civic institutions have collapsed; in sum, Iraq has been destroyed.

The current reality is chaos. Nowhere in Iraq, with the partial exception of Kurdistan, is there any security: the U.S. Green Zone is under frequent attack; aircraft taking off at the American air base come under fire; no streets are safe; neighborhoods and even whole towns are virtually closed down. The whole country is a free fire zone. Law and order is not even a slogan.

The advice Senator McGovern, Congressman Murtha, General Odom and I gave you was drowned out by others. You were told to be patient, to avoid any precipitate actions, to stay the course, to vote more money and to sanction another surge in the number of troops America has sent to Iraq.

You did as you were told to do, but to at least some of us, what you heard were echoes of Vietnam. Yes, the American public was told then, the situation was bad, but more troops and more money would do the trick if we only "stayed the course." There were "measurable" successes so there was reason to hope. Indeed, there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Frequent press releases, photo-ops and sound-bytes trumpet success or at least progress, but sober, informed observers agree that this is hype, and that no real or sustainable progress has been made.

For the last four years we have been told not to listen to the echoes of Vietnam. It was a different war, long ago, and far away; it was not analogous to Iraq so we must not use it as a yardstick to evaluate Iraq.

But now President Bush tells us that Vietnam is analogous to Iraq: But in his August 22 speech, Mr. Bush rewrote the history of Vietnam to justify staying the course. If we don't, he said, we would watch the horrors of the Vietnamese "killing fields." Leave aside the stunning fact that Mr. Bush and his speech writers did not apparently know that the "killing fields" were not in Vietnam but in Cambodia, a country with which Vietnam fought a war, let us focus on just two of his central arguments:

- first, he argued that in Vietnam we should have "stayed the course." In fact, we did for nearly 16 years. Indeed, for 4 years after the Tet offensive had showed that we could not win. During those 4 years, while we slowly pulled back, we lost an additional 21,000 young soldiers and
- second, even when we had half a million American soldiers in Vietnam, we were not able to prevent the social revolution that was reshaping the country. A similar readjustment happens in all insurgencies as it did in our own American Revolution. When we withdrew from Vietnam, a massive and painful readjustment was inevitable. However, today Vietnam is a peaceful, progressive country and, surprisingly, is friendly even to the United States.

The President is right. Vietnam does offer lessons we should have learned, but they are not the lessons he thinks we need to learn. Let me tell you of my own efforts to learn them.

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Vietnam was not the first guerrilla war I witnessed. I was in the Palestine Mandate in 1946 and Greece in 1947. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to study -- sometimes uncomfortably closely -- several other insurgencies. It was Vietnam, however, that challenged me to try to understand the process.

I was then fortunate in being a Member of the Policy Planning Council of the U.S. Department of State whose Chairman, Walt Rostow, has been called the "architect" of American policy on Vietnam. Rostow was a true believer in the war. I was not. And our differences more or less forced me to begin the process that has led me to write the book before you, *Violent Politics*.

The first major task to which I was assigned in Government was the chairmanship of the interdepartmental task force, made up of the CIA, all armed services, Department of Defense, AID, National Security Council, etc., charged with helping to bring to an end the Franco-Algerian war.

The American role in Algeria was only peripheral, but Vietnam was quite a different story. Almost every branch of the American government – even the Department of the Interior – became deeply involved. And, whereas few Americans could have placed Algeria on a map, Vietnam (in Michael Arlen's famous phrase) was our "living room war." Every American experienced it at least on TV. No country was ever so reported upon as was Vietnam by Americans. Consequently, I spent a part of each day perusing a deluge of cables, intelligence reports, summaries, and policy papers in addition to myriad press dispatches.

In all the mass of materials, thousands upon thousands of pages, one looked in vain for a useful or satisfactory definition of guerrilla warfare. Indeed, there was little coherent analysis of what was happening in Vietnam. Almost everything was episodic, short on questions but quick on answers.

As the months passed, I came to believe that our lack of criteria – the lack of what came to be called a paradigm or model -- to make sense of the rush of daily events was immensely dangerous for our country. So, with Walt Rostow's tolerance, I took six weeks off from my regular duties on the Council and immersed myself in Vietnam.

Learning about my study, the National War College (now called the Defense University) invited me to summarize my findings for its graduating class of the "best and brightest" Navy captains and Army, Air Force and Marine colonels who were headed for senior command – and for combat in Vietnam.

The gist of what I told them was that I had found that insurgency was made up of three parts that fell roughly in a sequence and could be weighted in impact.

The first component was politics. In that phase, the principal task of the guerrillas was to establish their claim to speak for their people, that is, to establish their legitimacy. Generally, they did this by portraying themselves as the only true nationalists.

The second component was administration. The guerrillas had first to destroy the institutions and mechanisms by which the existing government interfaced with the population – how it delivered essential services, kept the peace, adjudicated disputes and prevented starvation. Then, the guerrillas had to step in to do what government had been doing.

The third component was combat. The guerrillas had to show that they could defeat the government, force it to surrender, withdraw or collapse.

Applying these criteria or stages to the Vietnam conflict, I argued that Ho Chi Minh had embodied Vietnamese nationalism already by the end of the Second World War. He had long opposed French colonialism and the fact that the French collaborated with the hated Japanese occupation made them even more unpopular. Ho's leadership of the nation was symbolized when the French puppet ruler, the Emperor Bao Dai, turned over rule to him in a ceremony in Hanoi on August 25, 1945.

Thereafter, fighting the French -- who were determined, despite initial American opposition, to reimpose their rule on Vietnam -- increased Ho's prestige to the point that President Eisenhower believed that Ho could have won an election, even in South Vietnam, with an 80% landslide victory. No other Vietnamese figure or group could challenge Ho and the Viet Minh. It wasn't so much that Ho was carried to power by Communists as that Communists rode on the coat tails of nationalism he embodied.

In those days, political scientists loved statistics and I guessed that the political component of insurgency, was about 80% of the whole effort.

In administration, the Viet Minh were less active, at least in the south, for a decade because many of the cadres of the southern branch of the Viet Minh, the *Giai Phong Quan*, had gone north in a population swap that brought the Catholics south.

When the Viet Minh cadres returned and became active, they systematically murdered government-appointed village officials. The astute French journalist Bernard Fall estimated that they killed about 700 officials during 1957-1958, 2,500 from 1959 to 1960 and 4,000 from 1960 to 1961. But it was not just the officials who were liquidated. As one CIA officer wrote "The terror was directed not only against officials but against all whose operations were essential to the functioning of organized political society, school teachers, health workers, agricultural officials, etc."

Thus, by about 1960 the South Vietnamese government had virtually ceased to function. It could not collect taxes or even deliver mail much beyond downtown Saigon. Its officials could move only during daylight. Even in Saigon, as I witnessed one night standing next to former Vice President and then Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge on the roof of our embassy, government patrols avoided the streets when darkness fell because they were apt to be ambushed. The one we watched was ambushed.

Disruption is followed by replacement. Having killed or chased away the representatives of the regime, the insurgents immediately begin to create an alternative administration or "anti-state." That happened in Vietnam where the Viet Minh set up a variety of local government institutions in which virtually the whole southern population became involved.

My guess was that this second stage of the insurgency amounted to about 15% of the total effort leading to Viet Minh "victory."

Thus, 95% of the insurgency was lost before the Americans became active in Vietnam. We had grasped the short end of the lever. What happened from then on was only a contest for about 5% of the total effort. So I told my War College audience in 1963 that we had already lost the war.

The war college officers were no more receptive to this account than some of our senior officers are today. Nor were the Kennedy, Johnson or Bush administrations.

So we plunged ahead, "surging" from a few thousand when I spoke to half a million and we used every "sophisticated" technique, gadget and weapon we had. But despite glowing press hand outs – coining such phrases as we hear again today – "more time was needed," "we must stay the course," "the South Vietnamese government was taking charge," and "there was light at the end of the tunnel," things did not improve.

To convince us that they had improved, in October 1967 President Lyndon Johnson brought back our military commander, General William Westmoreland, to reassure the Congress and the American people. He cut a fine figure with his uniform decked with stars and medals, was very popular with the press and what he said was comforting. With displays of charts and graphs, he advised us that the Viet Cong were on the run, their soldiers were sick and discouraged, their numbers had fallen about 15%. Indeed, they were (and I quote) "almost starving to death," with about half of their main forces "no longer combat effective." So victory "lies within our grasp" and "the enemy's hopes are bankrupt." We were entering the mop-up phase of our operations. He overawed the Congress and public, but unfortunately the Viet Minh were not listening. It was just two months later that they struck Saigon in the Tet offensive.

Today, I don't see anything quite like the Tet offensive in Iraq, but I also do not see anything like the war General David Petraeus similarly graphically displayed to you and the American public.

The General Accountability Office has reported to you that the Iraqi regime is hardly functioning even in Baghdad and has only nominal control over just 7 of 18 provinces; the investigation under the leadership of General James Jones concluded that the police force was so rotten that it should be disbanded; and the army, on which we have spent nearly \$20 billion, is a bad joke. The Iraqis, simply put, do not regard the government we support as theirs. They obey it when it is under the shadow of our aircraft and tanks, but when these leave, so does public order. That, incidentally, was what the Russians also found when they tried to occupy Afghanistan and are still finding in Chechnya.

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The bottom line is that force, even massive force, is not working. It never does. In fact, it manufactures enemies because the relatives, neighbors and friends of those who get hurt or killed seek vengeance and the place to get it is in the resistance. So the numbers of insurgents grow and as some are imprisoned or killed others take their place. Force is self-defeating.

General Petraeus admits this and offers us another way to fight the war through counterinsurgency.

Counterinsurgency sounds impressive, even mysterious, but it is not new. We tried it in Vietnam and it did not work for us; it didn't work for the Russians in Afghanistan either. We both employed the full range of techniques. In Vietnam we put virtually the entire population – about 7 in 10 villagers – in some 6,800 barbed-wire-encircled strategic hamlets, imprisoned or assassinated tens of thousands of suspected guerrillas, obliterated whole areas with a massive bombing and defoliating campaign, etc. What was the result? Listen to what the editors of *The Pentagon Papers* – the official record drawing on the most complete set of intelligence documents ever produced on any country or war – said about Vietnam: Our “program was, in short, an attempt to translate the newly articulated theory of counterinsurgency into operational reality. The objective was political though the means to its realization were a mixture of military, social, psychological, economic and political measures...The long history of these efforts was marked by consistence in results as well as in techniques: all failed dismally.”

So now General Petraeus, with much fanfare, tells us that counterinsurgency is the answer in Iraq. But even he admits (in the Manual he and General James Amos prepared for the Iraq war) that it is not the central issue. What he says, and I quote, is that “Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate.”

If this is true, and I agree that it is, can we do it? The short answer is no, we cannot. No insurgency in modern times has been defeated by foreigners because in our age of politically conscious people, natives refuse to be ruled by foreigners. Indeed, in our own Revolution, it was the growing conviction among the Colonists that the British were foreigners and the presence of British troops in Boston that fueled the American insurgency. The Iraqis today share the feelings of the Americans in 1775.

If we cannot win that way, can we not just get the Iraqi army we have created at the cost of \$20 billion to do the job. We tried that also in Vietnam. Compared to Iraq today, South Vietnam had a world-class army, armed, trained and even led by us. But neither army wanted to do what armies are supposed to do, fight.

What if we give them more and better arms? We should also be warned by our experience in Vietnam that doing so merely better arms the insurgents who buy them or seize them. In Vietnam it was first France and then America – more than Russia or China -- that armed the guerrillas. When I first went to Vietnam in 1963, one could buy even an American tank on the Saigon black market. We furnished, by way of our allies, the bullets that killed American troops.

In Iraq today, as the press has recently reported, General Petraeus followed the same path. He arranged that the huge numbers of weapons we imported be passed out, without any records, to the troops he was in charge of training. Now we have learned that 190 thousand assault rifles and other guns have simply disappeared. General Petraeus told you that he does not know what happened to them. The Iraqis know.

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We Americans know little about Iraq.

Our great American satirist, Ambrose Bierce, once joshed that war is God's way of teaching Americans geography.

We spent a long time in this school: We Americans have made nearly 200 wars, but the Roper-National Geographic 2006 survey showed that we have not been good students. After four years of the Iraq war, six out of ten Americans between 18 and 24 could not even locate Iraq on a map – almost none could they tell who lives there, what language the Iraqis use or what religion they follow. The numbers are a bit better for Germany or France but far worse for Afghanistan or Somalia.

As H.G. Wells warned us, "Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe." If he were alive today, he would see that we are skating close to the edge of economic, political and foreign policy disasters.

Even in colleges and universities throughout America, I find astonishing ignorance on these issues. Do they matter? Yes, Thomas Jefferson told us, because "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free," he said, "it expects what never was and never will be."

Speaking for myself, I admit that we teachers have let the nation down.

But, to be fair, at least some of the blame is yours. Congress is not stepping up to its Constitutional duties to lead the nation to avoid the worst that was inherent in this disastrous venture and to work intelligently, constructively and effectively toward a safer future. In a Democracy like ours, you, our Congressional leaders, must also be our teachers. You also have let us down.

Demanding to know the facts, guiding us, your constituents, to understand them and then enacting wise legislation is surely why we elect you.

These actions do not come from looking back at the polls; they come from leadership.

When I was in military training I was taught that leadership comes from the front, not from behind. That maxim is also directed at you: If you do not lead the public to understand what you are privileged and entitled to learn as members of this great institution, our country is in grave danger.

But, I am constantly told that members of the Congress do not take the responsibility of teaching, of guiding, of leading their constituents. As you know, respect for the Congress has hit an all-time low with about 4 in each five voters expressing disgust at Congress.

Unfortunately few citizens realize how difficult it is for members of the Congress to stand up against the President on National Security matters. It can be a bruising conflict. But you should take some heart from the fact that when Senator Fulbright stood up on Vietnam, he became a major champion of our Constitution. So there are compensations for courage. I hope you will find them.

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You have kindly afforded me time today to discuss what you can – and should – do. I will try to be brief.

First, I urge you to demand to know what *really* is happening. We live in an age where sound-bytes and photo-ops often take the place of real information – sometimes they even preclude it. It is rare that the bits and pieces of daily events are brought together in coherent analyses or even that what is happening is fully reported. Digging out the facts and sorting through misinformation is hard for reporters, but you, as members of Congress, have the power to demand the facts and the experience to evaluate them. You need to be much tougher in rooting out the truth. We rely on you to do so.

Second, I urge you to go back to your constituencies and help them find the facts. If they live in a dream world, hoping for miracles, relying on clever gimmicks, listening only to sound-bytes and being out of touch with reality, they will surely be overwhelmed, as the whole country was after Vietnam, by a wave of disillusionment.

Such a wave of disillusionment would be a major psychological setback for our country and perhaps especially for you as, blaming you, they may vote you out of office.

So we teachers – you and I -- should be pro-active, taking action to help our fellow citizens come to grips with reality and move toward sensible, hard-headed actions. That is, to act just as your constituents would if they faced a serious danger to health. And that is exactly what we Americans now face, a serious danger to our nation's health.

Third, you must think ahead about what we can do. The "buck" really does stop with you. It was the Congress that forced the Johnson and Nixon administrations to come to grips with the reality of the Vietnam war; today, this task is up to you. You have the constitutional right and obligation to do it.

As I mentioned a minute ago, public opinion polls indicate that 4 out of 5 of your constituents do not believe the Congress is performing its duty satisfactorily.

So let us turn to the most dangerous and most urgent task. It is deciding what to do about Iraq.

Today, our country is faced with three options among which you must choose. They are to stay the course, to cut and run or to help the Iraqis to solve the terrible problems they face. I will now briefly analyze these options:

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The First option is to stay the course. Everyone, even those who pushed us into this war and more recently General Petraeus now agree that using massive fire power and sending more troops to Iraq has not worked. The "surge" is not a coherent strategy. It is merely a tactic. It does not foresee a satisfactory end to the war and has been destructive of our national purpose and has tarnished our national image.

In Vietnam, in fact, we "stayed the course" for nearly 16 years. We lost 58,226 American soldiers dead and were responsible for the deaths of about 1 ½ million Vietnamese. At the end, we withdrew in a humiliating fashion. The scene of Americans literally beating back our Vietnamese allies from a helicopter while we took off to safety from an embassy roof was the image of America seen round the world.

Our government does not have any strategy that offers us a way to avoid that humiliating end to our Iraq adventure.

Thus, what is billed as a statesmanlike, prudent, conservative policy, giving our efforts more time, will only make certain that, as in Vietnam, when we finally get out, we will face not victory but humiliation.

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The Second option is what the President and his supporters have called "cut and run."

Rightly, everyone worries what will happen if we just pack up and leave. But, let us be clear: a precipitate withdrawal will not, as some self-proclaimed experts have said, *create* chaos – Iraq is already chaotic. – but it will *leave Iraq in chaos*.

Our 160,000 troops and massive military power have not stopped the daily mayhem. Even our expensive and much publicized fortified Green Zone is almost daily bombarded. About 4 million Iraqis have already fled their homes. The society has been shattered. Iraq today is like Afghanistan was under the Russian occupation: a non-functioning society without a home.

Every day that the occupation continues will make recovery more difficult. Is recovery possible?

During the American Revolution, one of our early statesmen, James Otis, sounding like President Bush, warned that if the British left, "America would be a mere shambles of blood and confusion."

As we know, it didn't happen like that or we would not be sitting here. In America as in other guerrilla wars, once the foreign intruder was gone, the natives began to sort out their own affairs. This is what happened in Ireland, Algeria, Yugoslavia, Kenya and elsewhere. Natives could do what foreigners were totally incapable of doing – they and they alone could stop the insurgency. De Valera did in Ireland, Tito did in Yugoslavia, Kenyatta did in Kenya, Ben Bella did in Algeria, Castro did in Cuba.

Of course, social and political reconstruction does not happen overnight and is not automatic; moreover it often involves great suffering. We should do everything we possibly can to avoid this.

Some have argued that the way to do this in Iraq is for us to divide the country. They are dreadfully wrong. If we tried to do this, hatred for America would grow even more bitter. Iraqis do not want to split up their country. Hundreds of thousands more people would be ripped out of their homes, schools, jobs, and neighborhoods because the population, particularly in the cities, even after these dreadful years of violence, is mixed. Worse, we would have created in Iraq a new Balkans which could be the seedbed of future wars. If we cut and run, the Iraqis themselves may create such a colossal tragedy. We should try to help them avoid it.

So, what can we do? The short answer is act intelligently. What does acting intelligently involve? That takes us to our Third Option.

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The Third Option is to get out of Iraq on an orderly schedule sufficiently rapidly to convince the Iraqis that they must pick up the pieces and implement a carefully constructed program that will help them to do so.

This is the operational plan laid out by former Senator George McGovern and me in *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now*. (published by Simon & Schuster in October 2006.)

Still the only available plan, it lays out in detail how to accomplish withdrawal with the least possible damage to American interests and to the Iraqi people; it contains cost estimates, a timetable and evaluation of success in a fully integrated and mutually supporting series of actions that, taken together, *could save thousands of American lives and American taxpayers \$350 billion*.

This is not just speculation and I am not an armchair theorist: for 4 years I was in charge of planning American policy for the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. I have written several of the basic US national policy papers and participated in writing many more. I know what planning requires and have put what I have learned into the effort on Iraq. What I have done is not perfect. No plan ever is. But this plan has sensible, cost-effective and productive elements that interact to provide a framework for a future with which we and the Iraqis can live in safety and even in prosperity.

Here I can outline only a few points of the plan, the full text of which is available in *Out of Iraq: A Practical Plan for Withdrawal Now*. But in short, consider just five key steps:

■ The first step is to replace our military force, with a "multinational stability force." It should not be imposed upon Iraq but should be employed by the Iraqis. This force should not try to fight the insurgents but to create and maintain an acceptable degree of stability. Stability will not be perfect. The key word is *acceptable*.

What happens then is simple and obvious: when the general population feels that *enough* of its objectives have been accomplished, it stops supporting the insurgency; when that happens the fighters, the actual insurgents, lose their legitimacy and their support. As Mao Tse-tung put it in his 1937 study of guerrilla warfare, the "fish" lose the "sea" that sustained them. The insurgency then dies, often very quickly.

So the multinational national stability force is intended to help bridge the gap between the withdrawal of the Americans and the coalescence of the Iraqis. This task, of course, is harder today than it would have been two years ago and will be much harder two years from now. But we believe it should be achievable in an acceptable fashion in about two years at a cost of about \$6 billion – or about 2% of what we will spend if we stay there.

■ The second step is the creation of an effective national police force. It must be more than a hit squad for the majority to be used against the minority. That is what Iraqis believe the one we have created now is.

To avoid the danger of it being used for violent, sectarian purposes it must be counter-balanced. This can be achieved in part by the multinational stabilization force but also by what is traditional in Iraq -- neighborhood, village and tribal home guards.

■ Third, we should stop encouraging the growth of an Iraqi army. Until Iraq rebuilds its civilian institutions, an army is a danger to all Iraqis. Iraqi armies, even long before Saddam Husain, have been the seedbed of dictators and the cause of national disruption.

We should redirect the billions of dollars we are spending to create an army into creating what Iraq really needs, something like our Corps of Engineers to help rebuild the country. Only if the basic infrastructure is put back can jobs be created to reduce the massive unemployment – in many places up to 50%.

■ The Fourth step is a series of actions to convince the Iraqis that we really are leaving their country. To do this,

- 1) We should immediately stop work on military bases – of which we have some 75 and which convince the Iraqis that we intend to stay;
- 2) We should stop using and paying the armies of mercenaries – now the second largest military force in the country. They are the “loose canon” of Iraq – out of all control and supervision. They are a major threat to American national interests and reputation;
- 3) We should avoid actions that suggest that we intend to hang on to Iraq’s one significant national economic resource, its oil;
- 4) We should turn the vast and expensive Green Zone over to the Iraq government, and replace it with a far more modest American embassy; and
- 5) We should close the vast prisons we have created. They now hold some 25,000 Iraqis who must either be released or tried.

■ Fifth, we should offer all the help we can muster to the growth of civic institutions, professional societies and grassroots organizations.

This is a far more complex and long-term process than the previous steps. It is comparable to reeducation after surgery: without it, Iraqi society will never recover from the trauma of the war and occupation.

But, this is a field in which we have not only much experience but also many talented people and existing organizations. We can encourage our great

foundations, universities and professional societies to interface with existing and competent Iraqi educational, public health and development authorities.

There are several other elements in our plan which will reinforce these basic actions, but these, I believe, will go far toward stabilizing Iraq and beginning the necessary work toward recovery.

In monetary costs, the whole program might cost roughly \$12-14 billion.

Implementing the program would save

- the lives of perhaps a thousand or more Americans and far more in incapacitated or walking wounded;
- about \$350 billion in direct costs,
- perhaps \$1 trillion in indirect costs,
- it would staunch the hemorrhaging of respect and good will for America throughout the world and
- finally, it would do far more than any police measures to reduce the danger of terrorism.

Failure to act by the next election will cause tragic losses across the board to our country. The 746 American soldiers killed since Senator McGovern, Congressman Murtha, General Odom and I warned you last January will be followed by at least that many more and the 80 or so billion dollars wasted will be followed by two or three times that amount. Moreover, we are likely to suffer terrorist attacks here at home and to lose even more of the good will and respect we have labored so hard for so many years to garner. And you can be sure that the American public will be angry and disillusioned.

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You in Congress are America's last line of defense.

America's future is in your hands. The buck stops with you.

So I end by echoing our great statesman-educator, Thomas Jefferson: "let us hasten to retrace our steps and to regain the road which alone leads to peace, liberty and safety."

Thank you.

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