

Thursday, February 15, 2007

Mr. Speaker, I think it's safe to say that regardless of any difference of opinion over military strategy in Iraq, we all agree that the outcome in Iraq will affect our national security, and the security and stability of the Middle East for generations to come.

I was not a member of this distinguished body in October of 2002 when many of my colleagues were faced with the decision of whether to authorize the President to go to war in Iraq.

But four years later, I was elected by the people of my District who asked me and this Congress to set a new course in Iraq because it is clear to them that the Administration's course is not working.

That's not to say there has not been some success. Our troops have performed bravely and succeeded in their mission to end Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. The Iraqi people exercised their newfound right to vote. And those who murdered innocent Iraqis have been given fair trials, and justice has been served.

But since the initial military victory, political, diplomatic and economic failure has become widespread.

Today sectarian violence is at an all-time high and American troops are now caught in the middle of a civil war.

Now the Administration is engaging in a military escalation of the war. They tried this strategy before, and it didn't work.

It didn't work because we need more than a military strategy. We need political and economic solutions too.

We need a strategy that employs all of the elements of national power to ultimately put the Iraqis in charge of their own security and stability.

So far, a military strategy has not solved the problems we have in Iraq.

So far, a military strategy has not brought Sunnis and Shi'ites together to maintain a unified government and a peaceful political environment.

We know that a military strategy alone cannot create commerce and jobs for the Iraqi people.

A military strategy alone cannot rebuild the basic infrastructure that has been destroyed over the past four years.

A military strategy must be combined with sufficient political, diplomatic and economic components. But that is not happening here.

I disagree with many of my colleagues in this chamber who support the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops.

We have heard from too many generals - including those who have spoken out against this escalation - about the dangers of even more violence and instability in the Middle East if we simply withdraw.

I do believe American troops have a role in Iraq - a supporting role. They should continue to train Iraqi soldiers, and their mission must ultimately be to put the Iraqis in charge of their own security and stability. But let me be clear: American troops have no place in the middle of a civil war.

This resolution reaffirms this body's support for the men and women of the United States military.

Many of our troops have given their lives or suffered serious injury so that one day the people of Iraq can enjoy the same freedoms we have here in the United States. Their service and their sacrifice make me even more proud to be an American.

I hope and pray that we can have all of our brave men and women in Iraq and Afghanistan return safely to their families.

But while they are in harm's way, we must honor their service by ensuring that the burden of success or failure is not left to them alone. We have a responsibility to utilize every political, diplomatic and economic tool at our disposal to ensure success in Iraq.

Thank you.

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