

Rep. Woolsey Sept. 15, 2005 Iraq Hearing
Testimony of General Joseph P. Hoar, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)

Thank you, Madam Chairman, for providing me an opportunity to testify before this distinguished group. I applaud the purpose of these hearings.

I should begin my testimony by again pointing out that the Iraq adventure was the wrong war, at the wrong time, waged with extraordinary incompetence by the civilian leadership. Despite all of this, our magnificent armed forces continue to serve with courage and determination at great personal sacrifice.

Success as defined by our civilian leadership three years ago is out of reach. However, there is still the possibility that a stable pro-Western Iraq can take its place in the community of nations. If this were to come about, it would be because our political leadership has realized that this counter-insurgency campaign, this budding civil war is all about politics, ideas and religion. It cannot be won by killing Iraqis. Were this possible, the over 25,000 Iraqis killed already might have been enough.

We need a paradigm shift that places a major political figure in charge, one who can guide U.S. policy through ratification of the constitution, and the election of a new government in January. The emphasis must be on the political success of these signal events. Events that must be supported by a major security effort and a developmental effort, all coordinated to move the political process forward.

Militarily, the highest priorities are to protect the political process and to train military and security forces. Search and destroy operations in which U.S. forces are withdrawn after an area is cleared must stop. After the election, training Iraqi forces and the protection of the new government are the highest security priorities.

Developmental projects should put everyone to work who wishes to be employed. Our country has apparently forgotten the CCC experience of the 1930s in which tens of thousands of unemployed Americans were put to work on public works projects. Construction of sewers, roads, bridges, and buildings are all possible with skilled and semi-skilled Iraqi workers.

Pressure to improve the efficiency and the equipment of the Iraqi security forces must be increased. Well-trained and equipped Iraqi security units should be able to take over most security missions outside the Sunni triangle next year. In the following year, 2007, combat support and combat service support units necessary to support Iraqi combat formations should be trained and equipped. By that time, a much smaller U.S. presence should be required.

I should emphasize that this is an optimistic view. It is possible that even with limited success by 2007, that a new threat will emerge that will demand out attention.

The invasion of Iraq has created a force of thousands of Jihadists in Iraq where none existed over two years ago. Even if stability comes to Iraq, these battle hardened extremists will migrate to other countries. Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Israel would all be endangered.

As we draw down U.S. forces in Iraq, contingency planning must begin to come to the aid of friendly countries which could be destabilized by terrorists trained in the cauldron of Iraq and who are now seeking to overthrow other governments in the region.

This last possibility reflects the unintended consequences resulting from the conduct of this unnecessary war in Iraq.