

**The Honorable Steve Chabot, Chairman
Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia**

“Preserving Progress in Iraq, Part III: Iraq’s Police Development Program”

November 30, 2011

The Subcommittee will come to order. Good afternoon. I want to welcome my colleagues to this hearing of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia.

Before addressing the topic of today’s hearing, I would like to say a few words about President Obama’s recent announcement of a full withdrawal from Iraq by the end of 2011. For over 8 years, U.S. servicemen and women have labored in Iraq and sacrificed beyond our comprehension to achieve real, tangible gains. The mere fact that we today are discussing how to help Iraq improve the effectiveness of its police force is testament to that fact.

Despite this, Iraq remains in a precarious position. It is painfully clear that although the Iraqi army has progressed remarkably from where it once was, Iraq is not yet prepared to defend itself from the threat posed by its nefarious neighbors, Iran and Syria. It is with this concern in mind that the U.S. and Iraq endeavored to negotiate an agreement which would maintain a small U.S. troop presence into 2012. Public reports indicate that General Lloyd Austin, Commanding General of US forces Iraq, requested and recommended approximately 20,000 U.S. troops remain in Iraq. Unfortunately these negotiations failed due to mismanagement by the White House. Amazingly, the White House is now trying to tout the breakdown and lack of agreement as a success inasmuch as it has met a promise President Obama made as a candidate. This blatant politicization calls into question the White House’s entire effort to secure a troop extension. Fulfilling a campaign promise at the expense of American national security interests is at best strategic neglect and at worst downright irresponsible. And the White House tacitly admits this in negotiating an extension in the first place.

I fear, however, that our objective is no longer to ensure that Iraq is stable, but merely to withdraw our forces by the end of this year in order to meet a political timeline. Saying that Iraq is “secure, stable, and self reliant,” as Deputy National Security Advisor Denis McDonough recently did, does not make it so. And to borrow a quote from then-Senator Clinton, it requires “the willing suspension of disbelief” to believe that withdrawing our forces from Iraq at a time when Iranian agents seek to harm at every turn our country and its allies advances our strategic interests. Although I understand that Iraq is a sovereign country, I believe there is much more we could have done to secure a reasonable troop presence beyond the end of this year. Accordingly, I’d like to again echo Senator Lieberman’s call to reopen negotiations with the Iraqis. It would be a failure of colossal proportions to withdraw our forces before Iraq is ready to stand on its own.

Today's hearing is being called to evaluate the Department of State's Iraq Police Development Program (PDP) which has regrettably been plagued by mismanagement and poor planning since its inception. A recent audit by the Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) raises a number of serious questions about the efficacy of this program.

SIGIR's audit paints a picture of a program which has been formulated without a clear understanding of or attention to the actual needs of the Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (MOI). In a dooming interview conducted by SIGIR officials, Iraq's Senior Deputy Minister of Interior Adnan Al-Asadi rhetorically asked "What tangible benefit will Iraqis see from this police training program? With most of the money spent on lodging, security, support, all the MOI gets is a little expertise, and that is if the program materializes. It has yet to start." More to the point, he suggested that the U.S. "[take] the program money and the overhead money and use it for something that can benefit the people of the United States, because there will be very little benefit to the MOI from the \$1 billion."

Although I appreciate Mr. Asadi's sensitivity to the current fiscal climate, his statement makes very clear that the PDP, as it exists today, will not meet Iraq's needs and has little if any Iraqi buy-in. And although our witness here today may testify that the Iraqi MOI does in fact appreciate the value of the currently formulated PDP, the Government of Iraq has yet to sign a written agreement committing to the program or offer a single dollar to contribute to it.

I am also deeply concerned by the reports of obstruction and noncooperation on the part of the Department of State during SIGIR's audit. This is extremely distressing and, to echo the sentiments of several of my colleagues in the other body which they recently expressed in a letter to Secretary of State Clinton, the Department of State is legally obliged to cooperate fully with SIGIR in the execution of its mission; jurisdictional games are unacceptable.

Although I have many concerns about the nature of the current PDP, I do not believe that a permutation of it is unimportant. The intent of this hearing is not to foreclose the idea; it's not the idea, but the implementation that worries me. Helping Iraq build an effective police capability is of paramount importance. The devil, as they say, is in the details and it is my hope that with proper planning the U.S. can help Iraq develop a capable and accountable police force that serves its people's needs.