

JAN 30 2007

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your recent letters regarding the way forward in Iraq and the role of benchmarks for political issues Iraq must solve. The President has also asked that I reply on his behalf to your December 12, 2006, letter to him concerning the importance of announcing a deadline for beginning a phased redeployment from Iraq.

I share your view that the Iraqi Government must meet the goal it has set for itself – establishing a democratic, unified, and secure Iraq. We believe the Iraqi Government understands very well the consequences of failing to make the tough decisions necessary to allow all Iraqis to live in peace and security. President Bush has been clear with Prime Minister Maliki on this score, as have I and other senior officials in discussions with our counterparts. We expect the Prime Minister to follow through on his pledges to the President that he would take difficult decisions.

In his January 10 address, the President stated that after careful consideration he had decided that announcing a phased withdrawal of our combat forces at this time would open the door to a collapse of the Iraqi Government and the country being torn apart. The New Way Forward in Iraq that the President announced on January 10 is designed to help the Government of Iraq to succeed. This strategy has the strong support of General Petraeus and his commanders, and we must give the strategy time to succeed.

On your point about a political solution being critical to long-term success, I also agree. However, with violence in the capital at the levels we have seen since the Samarra attack on February 22, 2006, extremists and terrorists have been able to hold the political process hostage. The President's strategy is designed to dampen the present level of violence in Baghdad and ensure that Iraq's political center has the security and stability it needs to negotiate lasting political accommodations through Iraq's new democratic institutions.

The Honorable  
Carl Levin, Chairman,  
Committee on Armed Services,  
United States Senate.

At the same time, the President has made clear to the Prime Minister and other Iraqi leaders that America's commitment is not open-ended. It is essential that the Government of Iraq – with our help, but its lead – set out measurable, achievable goals and objectives on each of three critical, strategic tracks: political, security, and economic. In this regard, Iraq's Policy Committee on National Security agreed upon a set of political, security, and economic benchmarks and an associated timeline in September 2006. These were reaffirmed by the Presidency Council on October 16, 2006, and referenced by the Iraq Study Group; the relevant document (enclosed) was posted at that time on the President of Iraq's website.

Beyond that, as the President said, Prime Minister Maliki made a number of additional commitments including:

- Non-interference in operations of the Iraqi Security Forces;
- Prosecution of all who violate the law, regardless of sect or religion;
- Deployment of three additional Iraqi army brigades to Baghdad; and
- Use of \$10 billion for reconstruction.

We will continually assess Iraq's progress in meeting these commitments as well as other initiatives critical to Iraq's development.

Sincerely,



Condoleezza Rice

Enclosure:

As stated.

## UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION

### Notional Political Timeline

#### September 2006

- Form Constitutional Review Committee
- Approve law on procedures to form regions
- Agree on political timetable
- Approve the law for Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)
- Approve the Investment Law

#### October 2006

- Approve provincial elections law and set date for provincial elections
- Approve a hydrocarbon law

#### November 2006

- Approve de-Ba'athification law
- Approve provincial council authorities law
- Approve a flag, emblem and national anthem law

#### December 2006

- Approve Coalition Provisional Authority Order 91 concerning armed forces and militias
- Council of Representatives to address amnesty, militias and other armed formations
- Approve amnesty, militias and other armed formations law

#### January 2007

- Constitutional Review Committee completes its work

#### February 2007

- Form independent commissions in accordance with the Constitution

#### March 2007

- Constitutional amendments referendum (if required)