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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6050

May 9, 2007

Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

I am writing in connection with your letter of January 20, 2007 in which you advised me regarding a set of benchmarks that the Government of Iraq has set for itself.

You wrote that "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."

Yesterday, I met with Mowaffak al-Rubaie, Prime Minister Maliki's national security adviser. During the course of our meeting, Dr. Rubaie stated that the Presidency Council never reaffirmed the benchmarks. He was adamant on this point even after I showed him the statement in your letter.

This is an important point as the Presidency Council, whose three members, President Jalal Talabani (Kurd), Deputy President 'Adil 'Abd al-Mahdi (Shia Muslim) and Deputy President Tariq al-Hashimi (Sunni Muslim), are elected by the Council of Representatives and represent the three major ethnic groups of the country.

Earlier today, State Department Spokesman Sean McCormack stated "These

are the benchmarks that they've laid out for themselves. We didn't come up with them. They came up with them. And they need to be seen in the eyes of the Iraqi people as delivering for the Iraqi people.”

It seems to me that it would make a difference if the benchmarks and associated timeline were only approved by an advisory group as compared to the Presidency Council.

Accordingly, please confirm that the benchmarks and associated timeline, which you attached to your January 30, 2007 letter, were reaffirmed by the Presidency Council after being agreed upon by the Policy Committee on National Security, as stated in your letter.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carl Levin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carl Levin
Chairman