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**COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S ASSESSMENT
OF THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT'S RECORD
OF PERFORMANCE**

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
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**COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S ASSESSMENT OF THE IRAQI
GOVERNMENT'S RECORD OF PERFORMANCE**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, September 5, 2007.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ike Skelton (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. IKE SKELTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM MISSOURI, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. Good morning. Today the committee meets to receive the testimony of Comptroller General David Walker, an old friend, on the status of the government of Iraq's efforts to meet the benchmarks put in place in the supplemental appropriations act that we passed earlier this year.

This is the first of several very critical hearings in the current status of political and security efforts in Iraq. Today's hearing is particularly important as we rely on the Government Accountability Office to bring an objective analysis of these issues before us. I don't think it will surprise anyone who reads the paper to learn that the government of Iraq has not met most of the benchmarks.

In particular, the government of Iraq has met only one of eight legislative benchmarks, which does not send the signal that the national government of Iraq is working hard at reconciliation. These legislative benchmarks address core political issues that must be resolved when we look at the benchmarks and where we are on them.

It is important to remember that these 18 measures of progress in Iraq did not originate with Congress. In almost all cases it was Prime Minister Maliki and its government who designated them as important steps to take. If they have been able to follow the time line they first proposed, most of the political benchmarks would have been completed by March of this year. Instead they have only completed one by September. This is the fundamental dilemma we face in that country. Our soldiers fight hard. They are showing some results. And we should take every opportunity to give thanks to them for their sacrifice and their work on behalf of our Nation. But, however, it doesn't seem to be matched by the government of Iraq.

When the President announced the surge it was intended to improve security to create space for a political process. By some measures the heroic efforts of our troops have created some space. But there has not been any great political progress. We are left asking

ourselves why should we expect this record to be different in the future and whether further American efforts will be of any effect. It is not clear to me why we should continue to move ahead with this strategy at the cost of American lives and dollars if the Iraqis are not stepping forward themselves.

Over the next week this committee will hold four hearings, in which this is the first. To look at Iraq policy and hopefully help members come to some agreement as to how we should proceed, this hearing is appropriate to go first to create a baseline for our future discussions. And I thank Mr. Walker greatly for his testimony, not just today, but Mr. Walker, you've been very, very kind with your time and your advice on previous occasions. We appreciate it.

Before I turn to the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Saxton, my friend, for remarks he would like to make, let me make one administrative comment. If it becomes clear during the course of the hearing that some of this discussion should occur in a closed session, I am prepared to adjourn the hearing early at 12:30 so we can meet for a classified briefing with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) at that time in Room 2212. I hope we can keep the discussion open if we can. But if we must adjourn, if members feel that we must, we will just have to do it.

So again, David Walker, thank you so much for being with us. Mr. Saxton.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JIM SAXTON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM
NEW JERSEY, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES**

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the Honorable David Walker for being with us here today. He has done a great professional job that we always expect and that he always does. I want to start by saying that while it is important that we continue to assess the progress being made in Iraq, I have some concerns about the hearing this morning. First, the benchmarks were put in place to enable us to assess the progress being made in Iraq. However, the mandate given to the GAO was to report on whether the benchmarks had been met. Those are two different things. By solely examining whether each benchmark was achieved, without considering the actual progress being made under each area, it appears that this hearing has been set up with a goal of providing a negative picture by failing to accurately reflect the current activities on the ground in Iraq.

Second, there are no Administration officials here to provide the complete story on the GAO report card.

And third, almost daily there has been more and more positive news being reported on the progress being made in Iraq. And yet today we will be turning a blind eye, or at least it appears to me that way, to this progress, which is very concerning to me.

On the intent of the benchmarks, the first point that I raised earlier this year—Mr. Chairman, as you correctly pointed out, Congress mandated a series of progress reports to gauge the Iraqi government's performance on a variety of benchmarks. Some benchmarks, as you also pointed out, Mr. Chairman, such as enacting legislation on de-Baathification, on amnesty, on the military disarmament program, came from the Iraqi's own national reconciliation

plan. Still other benchmarks, such as forming a constitutional review committee, completing a constitutional review itself, passing legislation for equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources, and providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support the Baghdad security plan originated with the Iraq Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki. These were all Iraqi goals, and they are today.

The supplemental appropriations act, Public Law 110-28, later outlined a total of 18 benchmarks, but set no deadlines for the Iraqi government. Instead Congress mandated that the Administration assess Iraqi progress on the benchmarks so that we will be informed as we possibly could be about the political, economic, and military efforts underway and the trends associated with them.

The President's interim assessment in mid-July stated that the Iraqis had made progress on eight benchmarks and unsatisfactory progress on another eight. It further stated that as of mid-July it was too soon to measure the progress on two measures, saying that the prerequisites for legislation on both amnesty and a strong militia disarmament program were not yet present.

But now today, interestingly enough, Congress has required the Comptroller General to determine whether or not the Iraq government has achieved 18 benchmarks. That was never the intent. I say interestingly enough because the legislation set no deadlines. And of course the task force before Mr. Walker was different than that of the Administration. Whereas the President was to provide an interim report in July and a final report in September, an assessment of progress toward meeting the benchmarks, the Comptroller General was to assess by September 1st whether the Iraq government had achieved these benchmarks; a yes or no, pass or fail grade.

It is interesting that the Administration's task was to report progress, while the GAO's task was to report a report card, and that the GAO report card was due two weeks before the second progress report. Moreover, I wonder about the fact that Mr. Walker appears before us today in this public setting and for the record to discuss his report on how it differs from the President's assessment. And yet as I pointed out before, no Administration witnesses are here to provide their views or comment on the GAO report card. It seems to me that such a one-sided hearing merely provides a forum for political rancor and rhetoric and not for an open public debate on how one can define progress in Iraq. And that brings me to the question of what these benchmarks actually mean and whether they will accurately reflect activities on the ground. Putting aside the discussion of whether Congress was seeking positive Iraqi government trends toward political, economic, and military goals or the achievement of those objectives, I can't help but feel that trying to boil down the establishment of the new nation to 18 individual measures, many of which are subjective and not at all interrelated, misses the point. To be accurate, the military surge which reached full strength in mid-June is working. General Petraeus and others have told us that there have been positive developments, such as decreased ethno-sectarian violence in Baghdad, increased civilian cooperation with tip lines and more caches of weapons discovered and destroyed. And attacks in Anbar Province are at a two-year low thanks in large part to the growing mo-

mentum of the bottom-up cooperation among the local tribal leaders, which has knocked al Qaeda and other outside influences back on their heels.

We hear daily reports. Just this morning CBS reported, let me quote, CBS, Baghdad, Iraq, one week before General David Petraeus is expected to give his report on U.S. progress in Iraq, CBS Evening News anchor, Katie Couric says that she has already seen dramatic improvements in the country. We hear so much about things going bad, but real progress has been made there in terms of security and stability, Couric said on Tuesday. I mean, obviously, infrastructure problems abound, she says, but Sunnis and U.S. forces are working together. They banded together because they had a common enemy: al Qaeda. Couric traveled to the City of Fallujah and Anbar Province, which I might add some of my colleagues have done with similar reports, which U.S. forces entered in April 2003 and again in November 2004. That is the same city, she says, in house-to-house fighting American forces uncovered nearly two dozen torture chambers. They are no longer there. We found numerous houses also where people were just chained to the wall for extended periods of time, U.S. military intelligence officer Major Jim West said back on November 22, 2004. The face of Satan was there in Fallujah. I am absolutely convinced it was true, said Marine Lieutenant Colonel Gareth Brandl. Couric went on, It is also the city where four American military contractors were set on fire, mutilated, and hanged from a bridge by insurgents. Now today Fallujah is considered a real role model for something working right in Iraq, Couric said. Reportedly we have even seen this cooperation spread to the Diyala Province and outskirts of Baghdad.

I find it interesting how 18 benchmarks have fallen far short of providing the accurate measure of important Iraqi progress over the last few months. Progress that many of us have remarked upon as stability spreads due in large part to the so-called bottom-up efforts of our soldiers, Iraqi citizens, and our leaders the Sheikhs. If our existing congressionally mandated yardsticks cannot reflect the positive gains, we must really start to question the value of these benchmarks.

It took our own Nation nearly a decade to evolve from the Articles of Confederation to the U.S. Constitution, and through the amendment progress we are still perfecting it. It took Germany, Japan, and South Korea even longer to recover from wars and firmly establish their stable institutions of government. And none of these nations face the challenges that the Iraq government is tackling. None of them had a major terrorist group fermenting violence and unrest in their borders. None of them had regional actors providing arms, manpower, and ideological support for active insurgencies. To my knowledge, none of them had such an imbalance of vulnerable natural resources.

At the end of the day our Nation must decide whether to pursue victory in Iraq and, if so, at what cost. Today's hearing will not answer these questions. But in acknowledging that we cannot determine the U.S. direction forward based solely on individual subjective objectives imposed by another sovereign nation, I do hope to better gain an understanding of the things to help me consider more fully our available options from a strategic perspective, what

are our overall trends on the Iraqi and on the political system, on the economic system, on the anti-terror and counterinsurgency fronts.

Mr. Chairman, once again I believe this is an important topic, and I look forward to our witness testimony. Thank you, sir.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. Let me mention to the members, it is impossible to read the chart that is before us. But if you will look on page four of the testimony and charts thereafter, you will be able to follow the benchmark testimony much better. I might point out that the gentleman before us is the chief of the GAO, which is, and I will reiterate, the independent arm of the Congress of the United States. Mr. Walker, thank you for being with us.

**STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID M. WALKER, COMPTROLLER
GENERAL, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Chairman Skelton, Mr. Saxton. It is a pleasure to be before the House Armed Services Committee again. Today I am pleased to appear to discuss GAO's report on whether or not the government of Iraq has met 18 benchmarks contained in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans Care, Katrina Recovery, and Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007. This act required GAO to report on September 1, 2007, the status of the achievement of these benchmarks as of that date.

Consistent with GAO's core values and our desire to be fair and balanced, we used our independent and professional judgment to consider and use a partially met rating for some of these benchmarks. We felt that it was inappropriate in certain circumstances to just use "met" or "not met".

Furthermore, consistent with our independent and professional judgment, we also provided commentary in order to provide contextual sophistication with regard to these benchmarks. It is consistent with Chairman Skelton's comments, our understanding that Congress wanted to use this as a baseline for us to be able to assess progress moving forward, and we have attempted to do our job accordingly.

In comparison, the act requires the Administration to report on whether satisfactory progress is being made toward meeting these benchmarks. And Mr. Saxton is correct, that there is a fundamental difference between what we were asked to do and what the Administration was asked to do. I might, however, also note that progress is a highly subjective issue. And by definition one would expect that there would be a better rating that would be achieved if one solely focused on progress. In my opinion, you need to look at both. You need to look at where do we stand as of a point in time and what progress is being made, and you need to consider the source. I think that is important.

Let me state at the outset that our independent and professional assessment on where we stand on these 18 benchmarks, or where we stood as of the end of August, should not diminish in any way, shape, or form from the courageous efforts of our military and those of our coalition partners. They are making a difference, they are doing their job.

To complete this work we reviewed U.S. agency and Iraqi documents, and we interviewed officials from the Department of Defense, State, and Treasury; the Multi-National Force Iraq and its subordinate commands; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Central Intelligence Agency; the National Intelligence Council; and the United Nations. These officials included, among others, Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus. We made multiple visits to Iraq in 2006 and 2007, most recently from July 22, 2007 to August 1, 2007. We obtained information from the Pentagon up until August 30, 2007. We asked for data through the end of August. We had data through August 15th, but we did not receive data through the end of August. Our analysis was enhanced by approximately 100 GAO Iraq-related reports and testimonies that we have completed since May of 2003. As the chairman mentioned, all of these boards are in your testimony, and I would commend you to take a look at the testimony if you have difficulty reading this.

First, I think it is important to understand the origin of the benchmarks. The origin of the benchmarks are not the United States Congress, and they are not the United States Government. The origin of the benchmarks are overwhelmingly from the Iraqi government. Going back to June of 2006 and reaffirmed in subsequent statements by Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq in September 2006 and January 2007, the commitments on these benchmarks were most recently stated in a May 2007 international compact for Iraq.

The second board, if we can, as of August 30, 2007, based upon our independent and professional assessment, we believe that the Iraqi government had met three, partially met four—

The CHAIRMAN. Pardon me. That would be on page six of the testimony before us, because it is impossible to read the chart.

Mr. WALKER. Sorry about that, Mr. Chairman. Some of those in the front row can read it. But I agree, when you are back there up on the top of the dais it is tough, so that is why we put it in the testimony as well. But I think the key is that the bottom line is based upon our independent and professional judgment the Iraqi government, as of August 30, 2007, had met 3, partially met 4, and did not meet 11 of the 18 benchmarks. If you want to break that down by the three categories, you will find that they had met one, partially met one, and not met six in the legislative area. On the security area they had met two, partially met two, and not met five in the security area. And in the economic area they had partially met one of one in that area. So that is how it breaks down from that perspective. This chart shows our summary judgment and provides commentary.

The next board, and also contained in your testimony, notes information with regard to legislative goals. As I mentioned—

The CHAIRMAN. Excuse me, Mr. Walker. That would be page eight of our handouts.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are eight legislative goals. And as you can see of the eight, the government had met one of the eight as of August 30th; namely, the rights of minority political parties and Iraq's legislature protecting those rights. The government also partially met one benchmark to enact

and implement legislation on the formation of regions. This law was enacted in October 2006, but it will not be implemented until April 2008.

Further, the government has not enacted legislation on de-Baathification, all revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament.

Now, with regard to the next board, which—Mr. Chairman, if you could help—which page that might be on your testimony, because I have yesterday's from a different hearing.

The CHAIRMAN. That will appear on page 10 of the handout before us.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

With regard to security, two of nine security benchmarks have been met. Specifically Iraq's government has established various committees in support of the Baghdad security plan and established almost all of the planned joint security stations in Baghdad. The government has partially met the benchmarks of providing three trained and ready brigades for Baghdad operations. And also eliminating safe havens for outlaw groups, they partially met that. Five other benchmarks have not been met. The government has not eliminated militia control of local security, eliminated political intervention in military operations, ensured that even-handed enforcement of the law is achieved, increased Army units capable of independent operations, or ensured that the political authorities made no false accusations against security forces. It is unclear whether sectarian violence has decreased, a key security benchmark. That is a subset of one of the 18 key benchmarks. And I know there is a strong difference of opinion between us and the military on that, and I am happy to answer questions on that. Frankly it is difficult to measure perpetrators' intents. It is difficult to know how much civilian violence is sectarian related and how much isn't. And so, therefore, we have in our non-classified report the overall violence trends which we do feel comfortable with and which are used by a variety of parties.

Next it represents the overall situation with regard to violence historically. And as you can see in looking at this chart, there was a decrease in overall violence in July. The August data has not been released yet for public dissemination, but it will be hopefully in the near future. I think you can see that there was a decrease in July. That is encouraging. At the same point in time one month does not a trend make. Furthermore, the level of violence in July of 2007 was roughly equivalent to the level of violence in February of 2007. And as you all know, next month—pardon me, this month, later this month begins Ramadan. And historically there has been an increase in violence during the Ramadan period. Hopefully that won't be repeated again this year. And historically there has been somewhat of a decrease in violence right before Ramadan. Again, hopefully we will see a change going forward, but only time will tell.

Next please. The next chart shows where things stand with regard to our overall assessment as of August 30th.

The CHAIRMAN. That is on page 11 of our handout.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The next chart shows where our assessment as of August 30, 2007, how it compares with

the Administration's July assessment. Several key points here. Number one, ours is of August 30th; the Administration's was as of July. As you all know, the Administration is set to report again within the next week with regard to where things stand now.

Second, as Mr. Saxton properly pointed out, ours is based upon whether or not the standards have been met, partially met or not met, whereas the Administration's is based upon progress, whether or not they believe satisfactory progress has been made. I think you need to consider both. At the same point in time I think you should note that while there are differences between our assessment and the Administration's, only on one of these 18 is there a significant difference. By that I mean we said "not met" and they said "met". Only one. And that is the first one dealing with the Constitutional Review Committee and completing the constitutional review. I don't know what their new assessment is going to say. I would hope and expect that you will probably see better ratings in some of these areas from the Administration in September than July, but I don't know that for a fact.

I will say this: The GAO represents the only independent and professional assessment that the Congress will receive on these 18 benchmarks. Let me restate that. The GAO represents the only independent and professional assessment that the Congress will receive based upon these full 18 benchmarks.

So in conclusion, as of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4 and had not met 11 of the 18 legislative security and economic benchmarks. Importantly, in late August Iraq senior Shi'a, Sunni Arab, and Kurdish political leaders signed a unity accord signaling efforts to foster greater national reconciliation. The accord covered draft legislation on de-Baathification reform and provincial powers laws, as well as setting up a mechanism to release some Sunni detainees being held without charges. However, the polarization of Iraq's major sects and ethnic groups and fighting among Shi'a factions continues to diminish the stability of Iraq's governing coalition and its potential to enact legislation needed for sectarian reconciliation. Hopefully these agreements will ultimately result in laws, but only time will tell.

As the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, in our view it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and homeland security foreign policy and other goals of the United States. Future Administration reports on the benchmarks will be more useful to the Congress if they clearly depicted the status of each legislative benchmark, provided additional quantitative and qualitative information on violence from all relevant U.S. agencies, and specified the performance and loyalties of Iraqi Security Forces supporting coalition operations. It is not enough just to look at their readiness. You also have to look at their reliability. Both are important in order to ascertain their ability to effectively support the coalition.

Last, let me say that clearly some progress has been made in al Anbar province and parts of Baghdad, clearly, as a result of the surge. The question is why, is it transferrable, is it sustainable? And the real question for this Congress is not what has happened in the past, but where do we stand now and what is the proper way forward, including what goals should we be trying to achieve and

what role should our military and other key players within the government play to try to help achieve those goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer questions of the members.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Walker can be found in the Appendix on page 47.]

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Walker, thank you. Thanks to your staff for the excellent work that you have presented us today. I will just ask one question, then turn to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. Walker, there has been some dispute about the level of violence in Iraq. And we have heard certain press claims sectarian violence against civilians is down, and your report seems to disagree with that. The latest unclassified DIA data that we have also seems to disagree with that.

What is the source of the confusion regarding the violence against civilians? What is really going on? What standards should we look at? Where do we go from here?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first there are several sources with regard to overall violence. And we have unclassified information that is included in our report, and we showed that on the board. Whereas you can see that violence, overall violence increased up until June, it decreased in July, and we will see the August numbers here in the near future. That is aggregate violence statistics. And I think they speak for themselves. And we are comfortable with those numbers.

Here is where the disagreement is, Mr. Chairman. To my knowledge only MNFI, the Multi-National Force of Iraq maintains data on sectarian violence. That is a subset of overall violence. And as one can understand at the outset, it is difficult with any degree of certainty and reliability to know which of the overall violence relates to sectarian factors and which don't. And the MNFI believes that their data shows that sectarian violence has gone down. And in fact we were made available of some of that data through August 15th. We asked for data beyond that. We weren't provided them. We have not been able to get comfortable with the methodology that MNFI uses to determine sectarian violence. We are comfortable with the methodology that is used to determine overall violence. We think it is important that you consider both.

But let me just reinforce this, that with regard to sectarian violence, benchmark number 13 says, "reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security." There is agreement that militia control of local security has not been eliminated. There is a difference of opinion, a strong difference of opinion, as to whether or not sectarian violence has decreased. So the only area that I am aware of today where there is a strong disagreement between what we are reporting and what the military is saying is the sectarian violence portion of goal 13. That is it. It is not that there aren't other disagreements that exist, but that is the only one that I am aware of where there is a significant difference of opinion, and hopefully I have explained to you why we reached the judgment we did.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Walker, thank you very much. Mr. Saxton.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, let me try to be pleasantly disagreeable on one point that you made, and I again

appreciate the great job that you have done in preparing to come here this morning. But in your assertion that you are the only independent and professional reporting service that we will hear from, I would beg to differ. I understand that the military is not independent, but they certainly are professional. And I think the same could be said about our intelligence service, so with that little amendment.

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Saxton, I agree they are professional, but they are not independent. And just as in corporate America, the reason you have auditors is do you want to just rely upon the people who are responsible for executing? They are totally professional, no question about that, and you definitely ought to consider their opinion, but they are not independent.

Mr. SAXTON. We agree.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you.

Mr. SAXTON. Let me just follow up on the chairman's question. In recent weeks it seems to me that almost every expert, whether we consider people like General Petraeus or people in think tanks around town like Michael O'Hanlon, have remarked upon the decline in sectarian violence. Your report notes the level of violence in Iraq is unchanged. I am going to read here a list of statistics put forth, as you correctly pointed out, by the Multi-National Force of Iraq that demonstrate, at least to a large extent, that sectarian violence, in my opinion, has gone significantly down. And I wonder if you can explain, given the following information, the GAO report continues to state that the benchmark for reducing sectarian violence has not been met.

First, throughout all of Iraq, since the height of the ethno-sectarian violence in December of 2006 until the end of August 2007 the overall number of civilian casualties killed and wounded has dropped according to these numbers by 71 percent.

Second, ethno-sectarian violence in all of Iraq are down to less than one-half of the levels at the height of the violence last December.

Third, attacks of any type in the Anbar province have gone from a high in October of 2006 of more than 1,350 per month to fewer than 250 per month today. Overall, incidents of violence against any target in Iraq are down from a high of 1,700 per week in mid-June 2007 to fewer than 950 a week today. High profile attacks, such as car bombs and suicide vest attacks, are down in March 2007 by more than 170 per month to 88 a month in August.

So it seems clear to me that if one looks at these numbers, which you say are the only ones that exist, one would have to come to a different conclusion than you did.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you, Mr. Saxton. Let me be clear. The data that we are using is unclassified data that is in the report. And it is based upon a methodology that we are comfortable with. And it therefore provides a basis to get a sense for overall trends, you know from month to month and over time.

Let me also be clear that the information with regard to sectarian violence is classified. We have some information in our classified report talking about certain issues there. Let me acknowledge that there has been a decline in what is being reported there without getting into specifics. But let me also reinforce that we are not

comfortable with the methodology that is being used. I am not saying the numbers are right or wrong. I am saying we are not comfortable with the methodology. I mean, we in our report say, look, here is what we did. We have clearly defined, consistently applied, transparent criteria for determining whether something is met, not met or partially met. You don't see the same thing with regard to some of these other evaluations.

And last, let me just reinforce that there is a significant difference of opinion between us and the military on the sectarian violence. And it is because we can't get comfortable with their methodology. We are not saying they are wrong. We are saying we can't get comfortable that they are right.

But the key is this. Sectarian violence is only one of two criteria under benchmark 13. The other one is eliminating militia control of local security. There is agreement that that has not been met. So arguably the military might like to say, gee, maybe we should have given a partially met for number 13. That might be their argument. You can talk to General Petraeus about that, because they clearly agreed that eliminating militia control of local security is not met.

Well, that doesn't really change our overall assessment very much, because we are assessing 18 benchmarks. But you are correct in saying there is data out there that shows a decline in sectarian violence. It is classified. And our concern is we are not saying they are wrong; we can't get comfortable that they are right. And therefore we are using the data that we are more comfortable with.

Mr. SAXTON. There is obviously evidence that you can't get comfortable with them, and there is also evidence that they can't get comfortable with you. I am reading here the first paragraph of today's *Washington Post* story headlined "Military Officers in Iraq Fault GAO Report". The first paragraph says, "A bleak portrait of the political and security situation in Iraq released yesterday by the Government Accountability Office sparked sharp protest from top military command in Baghdad whose officials described it as flawed and factually incorrect." That demonstrates a level of uncomfortability on the other side as well.

Mr. WALKER. But Mr. Saxton, I think two things: One, it is not uncommon for those who are being held accountable to have a problem. Second, I think if you read the rest of the article, which hopefully you have had a chance to do or will, I think you will find that the one area of significant disagreement is what we have already talked about. I mean, they weren't attacking the overall thing. They said they have a strong difference of opinion on sectarian violence. I respect that difference of opinion. I understand why they have a difference of opinion. I acknowledge that their data shows a decline without getting into details. I am telling you that we couldn't get comfortable with their methodology. I am not saying they are wrong. We couldn't get comfortable that they are right.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I have one more short question, and then I will relinquish my time. In any situation as complex as this situation that exists in Iraq, we find things that happen from time to time that are different than we might have

expected. And it seems to me that it is fairly important that we measure those events in terms of progress as well. And I would submit for your consideration and for your comment that one of the events or one set of events that has occurred is something that has been referred to as “bottoms-up progress”, meaning that Iraqi citizens, particularly in Anbar province and other places, have done some things that we didn’t expect them to do and therefore were not made part of the benchmarks. The fact that the leadership in Anbar has forsaken al Qaeda and decided to help us is one of those situations which I don’t believe we are accurately measuring. Would you comment on that?

Mr. WALKER. Yes, I will. There is a long-standing phrase in the region of the world that we are talking about that says “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. The question is for how long. There is absolutely no question that progress has been made in al Anbar province. There is absolutely no question that there have been some dramatic changes in al Anbar province. There is absolutely no question that some progress has been made in parts of Baghdad. The question is why? Is it transferrable? Is it sustainable? Those are key questions.

Al Anbar, as you know, is not Baghdad; it is west of Baghdad. It is roughly about 15 percent of the population of Iraq, and it is predominantly Sunni. And it was an area where there was a disproportionate amount of al Qaeda activity. And there have been significant changes there. No question about it.

Mr. SAXTON. But do you assume that it is temporary?

Mr. WALKER. I don’t make any such assumption. No, I don’t at all. In fact it is my understanding, Mr. Saxton, that what Congress expects it will do is that this will be a baseline and that you will get periodic progress reports from the Administration and GAO presumably to see how things were done over time. And I think we can and we will consider, from a standpoint of contextual sophistication, things beyond just the specific language of the statute. We did it this time. The statute didn’t say that we could give a partially met rating. But I felt that given our core values and professional standards it wouldn’t have been fair and balanced not to do that, and so that is why we did that.

Mr. SAXTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Walker.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. I remind my members we are now under the five-minute rule. Mr. Spratt.

Mr. SPRATT. General Walker, thank you for your testimony and thank you for your report. We need an honest broker, and you provided that role. The purpose of the surge is buy time and space for the political authorities to work out their differences and complete certain tasks that are essential to a functional government. That is what the President said in February when he announced his plan. That is what General Petraeus has said repeatedly. Admiral Mullen, when he was testifying before his confirmation as Chairman Joint Chiefs, said, “Look, no amount of troops and no amount of time is going to resolve this situation unless there is a political solution.”

So that is the purpose of the surge. If the surge is beginning to work militarily, the question is: Why are the Iraqis not resolving their problems politically, if it is working militarily? Is it because

the benchmarks are unrealistic, unfair, more than one can reasonably expect? In that respect, remember where we derive these benchmarks—from speeches made by Maliki and President Bush and others. Or is it because the surge is working militarily, but politically the government of Iraq is dysfunctional, not interested or not committed to the whole process? Or is it because militarily the results have not been dramatic enough and substantial enough yet to effect a political solution?

Mr. WALKER. Well, let me give you a comment. First, you are correct that the purpose of the surge is to provide breathing room or space for the representatives, the elected representatives of the Iraq people to make political progress. And while the surge has had some impact on the ground from a military standpoint, as I have acknowledged, we have yet to see significant progress from a political standpoint. Now, whether or not there will be prospectively, only time will tell. Why there hasn't been progress—it is a very complex situation in Iraq. There are 60 percent Shi'a, but only 60 percent. The Shi'a don't look at it the same way. There are subsets of the Shi'a. There are 20 percent Sunni, there are 20 percent Kurds. The Sunni under Saddam Hussein ruled the country. They are 20 percent, a minority. So there are different groups with different interests who may be doing a scenario analysis of how things might come out for their group, depending upon what might happen going forward.

I think the bottom line is this. In order to try to be able to provide stability and security over time, you have got to have more political progress. That was the primary purpose of the surge. So far it hasn't worked, but we will see whether it does in the future.

Mr. SPRATT. Are the benchmarks, in your opinion, unrealistic, ineffective, unfair, the wrong measures of progress?

Mr. WALKER. My view is that the benchmarks is what we were asked to do, which we did. But I do believe that as conditions change over time one needs to be able to keep that in mind and not be wedded solely to these benchmarks. And you want to understand what is going on with these benchmarks, but you also want to consider subsequent events. You want to consider other things that would be a supplement to, but not a substitute for, these benchmarks.

Mr. SPRATT. One of the benchmarks originally used, set by ourselves, was oil production, and another was electricity production. And looking very basically at the economy, the way we felt in 2003 and 2004 was that this would be the way we would be judged by the Iraqi people. We don't have a benchmark to that effect.

Do you think we should have a basic economic benchmark to determine whether or not the economy is getting back on its feet, beginning to be productive again?

Mr. WALKER. I think it is important to consider whether or not progress is being made in areas that are important to the daily lives of Iraqis; safe streets, clean water, reliable electricity, et cetera, et cetera. These are fundamental things that any citizen in any country would care about. And they also—if progress is made there, it can help gain support for the government because, people are feeling a difference in their daily lives.

Mr. SPRATT. Thank you very much.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman. The gentleman from New York, Mr. McHugh.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As always we all deeply appreciate yours and GAO's work and study, this report included. Let us talk just a second, as a follow-up to Mr. Spratt's comments, about the current benchmarks, how they are structured, et cetera. I would tend to agree with you, it is difficult to assess how progress is being made if you don't consider the day-by-day lives of the Iraqi people. But beyond that, are there any other changes, additions, amendments to this process, as you have been charged by Congress, that you would like to see enacted?

Let me give you an example. You commented about benchmark 13, that there are in fact two pretty distinct and important components; the first being reducing the level of sectarian violence, and the second being the lessening of and eliminating militia control in local security. And that even, I guess the way you put it, even if sectarian violence, if you agreed on data and there was a substantial reduction, it still wouldn't be a met benchmark because of the militia component. Should those be two different benchmarks that you can look at?

Mr. WALKER. I think one of the things that ought to be considered is not only whether or not these are appropriate, but whether or not you might unbundle some of these benchmarks. I also think you ought to think about whether or not there ought to be additional benchmarks. For example, what about on the foreign policy front? What is being done within the region to try to bring the players together to try to help achieve a better political solution in Iraq because there are forces outside of Iraq that have significant influence in Iraq other than us. And, furthermore, another example would be what is being done in the international community to try to provide more support for capacity building for the Iraqi ministries so that they can start delivering results that the people will benefit from and care about.

Now, realistically we are not going to get more support from a military standpoint. We have already seen that the support is declining for military support. But there is no reason that we shouldn't be able to get more international support for capacity building as it relates to civilian agencies, and they desperately need it. So those would be a couple of examples.

Mr. MCHUGH. One of the big holdbacks of course has been the lack of security that the surge has been attempting to provide, and I tend to agree with your comment. The big question is are the gains that we have made through this surge sustainable and transferrable. I believe the unclassified portion of a recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) in Iraq said that it is in all likelihood with the removal of American forces that those factors, those gains could not be sustained. So if we listen to the military, or I should say the intelligence communities, this is probably an effort that ought to go on for more than a few weeks, as it has.

Let us go back to violence. I understand the uncomfortable status that you have with respect to sectarian violence. I just got back from Iraq, as I am sure a good number of our colleagues have as well, and I was in Fallujah. And I am concerned about this discrep-

ancy on data. So let us talk a bit about overall, overall incidences of violence. Those two are down as well, according to the data.

Do you disagree with the data, or are you uncomfortable with the data with respect to attacks across the board, from a high of 1,700, according to the data that we were provided in mid-June, to fewer than 960 a week now? That is not classified, that is not ethno-sectarian. But is there an agreement at least between you and the compilers of these data as to the overall violence incidents?

Mr. WALKER. On figure 4, which talks about average number of daily enemy initiated attacks against the Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, and civilians, May 2003 to July 2007, we are comfortable with that overall methodology. There is other information that we have, which may be in the classified report, that kind of breaks it down.

Mr. MCHUGH. But overall you would agree, as the data that we have been provided, that there is a significant reduction in overall violence in Iraq since mid-June? I understand that is a short period, but that is the period of the surge.

Mr. WALKER. If you just look at the publicly available data, which is in my testimony, that goes through the end of July. There was a significant reduction between June and July. But it is about the same level as February. My view is when you are looking at performance, you need to look at three things: How do you stand as of a point in time, how are you trending and how does it compare from a contextual sophistication as to the relevant importance and what is a reasonable amount of progress to achieve within a certain amount of time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. May I interrupt before I call on Mr. Ortiz? I am having a difficult time in determining how one determines what sectarian violence is. Assume, Mr. Walker, a building is blown up, downtown Baghdad, there is no sign or claim of who blew it up. How do you say this is sectarian, how do you say this is insurgent done, how do you say this is al Qaeda done or maybe by some criminals.

Mr. WALKER. That is one of the primary concerns we have, Mr. Skelton. If you look at the graphic I just talked about, it does break it down between who the attacks are on—Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, or civilians.

The CHAIRMAN. There is no calling card.

Mr. WALKER. Right, correct. And that is one of the reasons that we can't get comfortable with the methodology for determining what subset of the data that we are comfortable with relates to sectarian versus non-sectarian violence.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Ortiz.

Mr. ORTIZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General, thank you so much for your report. Progress in Iraq is being measured by benchmarks, and according to your report, the Iraqi government only met three of those 18 benchmarks. The vendors market is not included in what is the benchmarks. The marketplaces where they pay them up to \$2,500 to open the markets, where they fix the stalls because there is a delegation of Americans, generals, and politicians coming to see the marketplace. They are surrounded by 30,000 troops, helicopters, and airplanes. When we go to Iraq, we

are not free to go most of the time to where we want to go see. They teach us or they show us what they want us to see. And I am just wondering, there is a story here that came out yesterday in *The Post*. And I don't know whether you saw it or not. The Dora market, where they wanted to open up in July and they couldn't, they reconstructed the area, and they gave each vendor \$2,500. They were selling shoes and all kinds of stuff. Why? Because there was a delegation of members of Congress and other people coming in. The thing is does the United States militarily, particularly the Army, have the ability to sustain their current presence and missions in Iraq long enough to see a significant change in progress, so that the Iraqi government can exist and to be successful without a United States presence.

Mr. WALKER. There is absolutely no question that the Army is stressed and strained, largely due to our commitment to Iraq. But the Army is also trying to accomplish a number of other major objectives at the same point in time, transformation and a variety of other things. We are doing work right now dealing with some of these issues that we will be reporting on separately. And I think one of the key questions that this Congress needs to consider is everybody wants to win in Iraq, but one part of the definition is what does it mean to win? What is the definition of winning?

And second, what is the proper role of our forces, among other things, on the ground? And to me there is several things that they are doing. And the question is, is all of them appropriate? They are fighting al Qaeda, and I think there is probably a broad-based agreement we ought to do that. We are training Iraqi forces, and there is probably a broad-based agreement we ought to do that, although while trying to make sure that those forces are balanced and not part of the violence problem. But we are also policing the streets of Baghdad and other areas. And I think reasonable people can and will differ about whether that is a proper role for the U.S. It is one thing to provide logistical and intelligence and other type of support, air power or whatever, that the Iraqis don't have. It is another thing to be on the front line being the one policing the streets and we are a foreign force.

Mr. ORTIZ. And the reason I ask this is because when members go to Iraq, we want to make sure that we see a realistic picture of what is happening, and sometimes we don't. And I am not trying to point any fingers at anybody, but they showcase a particular area and this is where we go. But when we look at readiness, readiness is not only fighting in Iraq. It is to be ready to respond to any action around the world.

I just came back from Germany and Italy visiting our troops, and we do have serious problems in Italy and in Germany, because we don't have enough troops. Twenty years ago we had 200,000 troops in Germany. Today we have 24,000 troops. We had 800 bases in Germany. Now we have 14 bases. And I just talked to some of the leaders there. We have a serious problem. Readiness is not only Iraq. Readiness is being able to respond to other parts of the world. We have hot spots all over the world.

I know that my time is running out, but I do hope we have a second round, and thank you so much, General, for being with us, and maybe you would like to respond.

Mr. WALKER. First, as I said, the Army is stressed and strained. We need to make sure that we are making decisions based upon current and projected threats. The threat is different in Europe today than it was 20 years ago. But we need to make sure that we have an adequate number of forces in the right places with the right type of support to be able to meet current and future credible threats and their issues there.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Everett.

Mr. EVERETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At the offset, let me say that I am uncomfortable, although this is an important subject, in both the setting and timing of this hearing, and I would like to associate myself with Mr. Saxton's opening remarks.

Having said that, General, thank you for being here. I have great respect for the work that GAO normally does. As the chairman of investigations also on the Veterans Affairs (VA) Committee for many years, I appreciate the great help I got from them. I would also say that you are not always right. You have got a good record, but you are not always right.

Let me refer back to your conversations on ethno-sectarian violence that you had with Mr. Saxton. And I believe this is a direct quote from you: "Not saying they are wrong but we can't be comfortable with their figures."

If you are not saying they are wrong, that to me means that they could be right.

Mr. WALKER. They could be. And I said that. I said we are not saying they are wrong. We are not comfortable they are right, but even if they are right with regard to the benchmarks that we have, it is one subset of 1 of 18 benchmarks, and our overall assessment would not change materially as a result of that. Now whether or not that—

Mr. EVERETT. Thanks. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I want to yield to Mr. McHugh for the remainder of my time.

Mr. MCHUGH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

General Walker, just to talk a bit about that, and I thought that the chairman's question as a follow-up to my discussion about overall violence, it raises a good point.

Should we bother ourselves, in terms of assessing the progress or a lack thereof in Iraq, with trying to separate ethno-sectarian violence from just your regular, ordinary, run-of-the-mill car bomb, whatever that means? Maybe we ought to just talk about it overall. Should that be a change in the benchmark that would make everybody more comfortable?

Mr. WALKER. I would debate whether or not it makes a lot of sense to try to segment sectarian violence. As the chairman said, you know, even if somebody left a calling card every time something happened, it doesn't mean it is accurate. Alright? I mean, I think you need to have data that you can feel comfortable with, and it is reasonably reliable data. And frankly, you know, how much of a difference does it make why somebody was attacked and what the casualties were?

Mr. MCHUGH. Mr. Chairman, as the chairman, maybe we could consider, with your guidance and leadership, making that kind of

change, because if that were changed then, as General Walker agreed with my earlier comments, we would have seen more than a 70 percent reduction of overall violence since mid-June. Again, not a long-term trend, but its timing with the surge, and we wouldn't have to concern ourselves about these semantical differences.

General, let us talk a second about constitutional review.

When I was in Iraq, we heard from the deputy national security adviser to the Iraqi government about what they felt was pretty substantial progress, and, in fact, your report acknowledged that the benchmark, however, it is not being met. They are working toward constitutional review, and it—you alluded to that fact.

Why wasn't that given at least a "partially met" rating on your scale?

Mr. WALKER. First, we acknowledge that the Constitutional Review Committee has been formed, but we also noted that there are numerous actions that have to be taken by that Constitutional Review Committee and that there really hasn't been significant progress with regard to those actions. And so our view was that, yes, the Constitutional Review Committee has been formed, and we noted that, but there hasn't been enough progress made to deserve a "partially met."

Mr. MCHUGH. That is a very full answer. I appreciate it. And that is my only curiosity.

Mr. WALKER. Just because it is not met doesn't mean there is no progress.

Mr. MCHUGH. I appreciate that.

You might have a comment about the upcoming Administration report. The words you used, you would hope and expect that they would show more progress. Can you tell me why you hope and expect that?

Mr. WALKER. Over the passage of time, you would hope that the actions we are taking are making a difference, and in some areas they are. And I would expect that the Administration would have a desire to show progress, and then that is why I say you have got to consider what they have to say, but they are obviously not independent about this.

The CHAIRMAN. Mr. Reyes.

Mr. REYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Walker, for being here and for your assessment of the situation as it exists today.

One of the things that has been frustrating when we talk about progress or lack of progress or perceptions or the ability of our military to stabilize Iraq is the fact that the insurgents can strike whenever and wherever they want.

In previous hearings here, we have been told that progress has been made in certain parts of Iraq. I can remember Mosul and Tikrit being held up as the examples of what we wanted to accomplish. This was in a hearing about two years ago. A couple of weeks after that hearing, that area was attacked by the insurgency, the governor was assassinated, the mayor was killed, professors were killed.

So that has been part of what has been so frustrating with this, the inability to really get a good assessment of progress, real

progress, established progress, which is, I think, what you have been talking about in terms of is it real, is it sustainable, is it transferable.

Having said that, one of the benchmarks deals with increasing the number of Iraqi Security Forces that are capable of operating independently. That is without U.S. forces being there to sustain them and support them.

Since 2003, we have spent over \$20 billion to train and equip Iraqi soldiers and police officers so that ultimately they can have that stand-alone capability.

Your report states that this goal has not been met and that the number of Iraqi units capable of independent action has actually decreased. I would ask you to comment on and explain why that has been after the amount of money was spent.

Mr. WALKER. Let me just note that you are correct in noting that we said that it has not been met and that the number of units that can operate independently has declined since March. Let me also say that the details of that are in our classified report, and it might be better to talk about that during the classified session.

Mr. REYES. Okay.

Mr. Chairman, are we having a classified session?

The CHAIRMAN. The question is, are we having a classified portion? We can thereafter, you bet.

Mr. REYES. Thank you.

When one of the major problems we face in building up the Iraqi Security Forces, as has been mentioned here, not just the sectarian violence but also sectarian militia infiltration of the armed services, would you be comfortable in discussing the infiltration as an issue and as a problem, or would that be—

Mr. WALKER. The only thing I would say is that is a concern. It has been. It remains a concern, and I think the details would be something that would be more appropriate to talk about in a classified briefing.

Mr. REYES. Very good. I will reserve until the classified.

The CHAIRMAN. As I mentioned earlier, if there is a necessity for classified discussion, we will do that at 12:30, Mr. Walker, and I hope that meets with everyone's approval, and I realize that will not get through everyone, but that is the best we can do.

Mr. Thornberry.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Mr. Walker, I appreciate your skill in dealing with the situation where you knew whatever you all came out and said was going to be used as political fodder in a very intense political debate. You knew you were going to be pushed and stretched into all sorts of policy areas beyond the face of the document, and I appreciate your ability to try to stick with the objective facts you were asked to measure.

I have been a strong advocate of using objective metrics to help as a tool in measuring progress, particularly in areas of national security.

One of the things I realized in trying to do that on the Intelligence Committee is it is incredibly hard work to try to pick your metric so that it is useful through the passage of time so that it is something that can be measured and helps point you in a certain direction.

As I went through these 18 metrics that you were handed, I realized the origin of them, but you would not argue that all are of equal weight, for example, in trying to determine future policy of the United States or the government of Iraq?

Mr. WALKER. I would agree they are not of all equal weight, and we didn't try to weight them.

Mr. THORNBERRY. It occurs to me this discussion, which has been the subject of great controversy about whether sectarian violence is going down, is in large measure a function of a difficulty in measuring it. Not whether it is or is not going down, but how do you know.

Mr. WALKER. That is correct.

Mr. THORNBERRY. So, your position is that you can't know for sure in a way that is measurable. Doesn't mean it is not happening, doesn't mean it is happening, but you can't measure it, and therefore you have to give the results that you give.

Mr. WALKER. Right, and I am not sure that those that are keeping the statistics can reliably measure it either.

Mr. THORNBERRY. I think that is an important point for us all to discuss. How do you measure whatever it is you are talking about, and how do you assign importance to the different things that you are talking about?

I am struck by that, too, when you look at the legislative area. That hits a little close to home for us. You have been a tremendous advocate, for example, of this Congress taking action to put Social Security on a more stable financial footing. If you were to give us a grade about how well we have done on that, it would be 'not met', right?

Mr. WALKER. It would be failure.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Yeah. And using, just as a way of example, even if a bill had passed out of the House and a bill had passed out of the Senate while you are waiting on a conference committee, the Administration report would show progress but your report would show 'not met'.

Mr. WALKER. I don't know. We might give you "partially met" on that.

Mr. THORNBERRY. I hope that happens. I am not holding my breath but the point is, as I understand, let's see, 8 of the 18 benchmarks are waiting on the Iraqi legislature to pass a bill. And one of those has been met so far, and you described already one of—another that you describe as partially met because they passed the bill, but it hasn't taken effect yet, is that true?

Mr. WALKER. That is correct. There are eight benchmarks they have met. One they have partially met. Six have not been met in the legislative area.

Mr. THORNBERRY. Well, I appreciate the work you all have done. I would hate for somebody to judge by this standard in a number of areas because I am not sure that this Congress would come out as well as a lot of us would hope.

But I also look forward to continuing to work with your organization in looking for objective measures to see whether the things are getting better that stand the test of time. It is a huge job. I am just beginning to appreciate that difficulty, but I think your folks can help us do that, and I appreciate it.

Mr. WALKER. Somehow I doubt that Congress is going to ask us to measure its own effectiveness in some of these areas but, you know, who knows.

The CHAIRMAN. I thank the gentleman.

The gentleman from Arkansas, Dr. Snyder.

Dr. SNYDER. Thank you.

I guess I spent too much time with Mr. Thornberry because he and I are coming at this in similar ways. I think either from an independent view—over 30 years ago when I worked for a community action agency, I attended what we thought was this brand new measuring by objectives and which I think makes a lot of sense that you come up with what the goals of the organization are, and then you come up with some measurable ways of dealing with it. At that time, I was a supervisor of a list of volunteers, and it wasn't enough to have good people roaming through poor communities. You wanted to see was there something measurable. So we have these benchmarks where, you know, we are all looking at as something measurable.

The concern I have is getting back to a line that you have at the very end of both your summary and in the main text in which you say as the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and with homeland security goals, foreign policy goals, and other goals of the United States.

And my concern is I am not—I don't believe that we are spending enough time talking about what are our goals for the region and for individual countries, and I came up with just a quick list here. One would be the goal of fighting terrorism, international terrorism, organizations such as al Qaeda. What is our relationship, what is our long-term policy goal with regard to Iran, Syria, and it is both on the Iraqi border but it is also involvement with Lebanon. Saudi Arabia, we recognize it as an energy state, a stabilizing state, but also has not developed much in terms of democratic principles.

Also Turkey, one of our NATO allies who has issues with regard to Kurdistan and the border. The whole issue of energy policy and where oil fits into that. Jordan, and the influence that it has not only with regard to Iraq, but probably a million or so Iraqi refugees that it has there, but also Jordan's big relationship with Palestinians and its relationship with Israel.

The whole issue of genocide. One of the things we don't have is what would happen if we didn't have any military force there? Would the number go—talk about a trend, this perspective of looking at what would happen to human rights down the line. The whole issue of intelligence. Our ability to gather intelligence throughout the world. How does our military mission fit in and the future of Iraq fit into gathering intelligence?

Our relationship with the Muslim world as a whole. The view of the Muslim role in the world as a whole. Is it worse than the United States has seen in a very long time?

Anyway my point is, I am not asking you what do you think the individual goals are for each of those nations, what is our strategic goal for that region? But we have a series of what we think are measurable objectives, but I am not sure how they relate to any of

these specific strategic goals, or we don't have articulation of the goals for that area.

And I will use one specific example with regard to Iran. The President in his speech in Australia talked about Iraq being an ally against international terrorism. And we have heard people talk about it being an ally against Iran. Well, a democratic Iraq may have a different view of what its relationship with what Iran will be.

So my question is, should we be having a hearing here—we have had this one today on measuring the objectives. Shouldn't we be having a bigger discussion on what are the foreign policy goals of this Nation with regard to some of those areas that I outlined? And then have a discussion about what are the objectives that we are going to look at with regard to achieving those specific foreign policy goals that you mentioned in your statement.

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, Mr. Snyder, let me say that what we did in issuing this report is what the Congress asked us to do on the time frame you asked us to do it. And in my professional opinion—

Dr. SNYDER. I am not talking about this should be your burden, I am talking about it in terms of the goals.

Mr. WALKER. But I think we can help you. In my opinion, I think we need to fundamentally reassess what our goals ought to be: Micro in Iraq and macro within the region, and with regard to the Islamic community, et cetera.

Second, we need to define objectives in order to try to help achieve those macro and micro goals. We need metrics and milestones that will help to assess where we are, how we are progressing, which ones are more important than others, and what is a realistic path, you know, an expectation to have on making that progress, and we need to have periodic reporting on that based upon relevant and reliable data that is reviewed by independent parties. We would be happy to work with the Congress to try to achieve that should you so desire.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman.

The DIA has furnished us a declassified monthly attack trend by category. I have laid it in front of each of the members. You might find it of interest. Going back to May of 2003 through July of 2007.

And the gentleman from North Carolina, Mr. Jones, is recognized.

Mr. JONES. Thank you very much.

And, Mr. Walker, thank you, and I realize that any time that you give a report, especially during wartime, that it is going to be very controversial, because it depends on those who are listening and what side of the political aisle they happen to be on, and I think that is sad for this reason: The American people are frustrated. They want to know that the Congress is meeting its constitutional responsibility and therefore, however the Congress sees its constitutional responsibility, to help with the White House to have a direction for victory and a definition and understanding of victory. It is critical.

You are one that I have great respect for. You have said for years this country is going financially broke disregarding the war. I

heard my friend from Texas talking about your position about Social Security. And all of this ties into it.

But the faces I saw yesterday at Walter Reed, the 19-, 20-, and 21-year old kids that have great attitudes, they are not talking the policy, the things we are trying to do based on our constitutional responsibility.

But those faces are going to be the veterans for the next 30 and 35 years, and the majority of them are amputees. A couple will never get out of a wheelchair without help. So this is important. And it will be important what Petraeus and Crocker say next week.

I—and this might be piggybacking or associating with what Mr. Reyes was talking about—but I look at, in amazement, at benchmark 11, ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing evenhanded enforcement of the law. And you and the Administration agree on that it is not happening, if I read this correctly. Are not met. Unsatisfactory.

Who is responsible for making sure that the Iraqi Security Forces are being evenhanded? To me, that is the basic. If you are going to have any type of reconciliation or any way that different segments of Iraq's population can somehow figure out that we can be friends, we can work together, but if you have got the Iraqi Security Forces that are not being overseen and told you have got to get—you must do a better job of this. I don't know where in the world we are going.

Would you speak to that, please?

Mr. WALKER. The ultimate responsibility is the Iraqi government. And a subset of that would be the military commanders of the Iraqi forces. But the ultimate responsibility is the Iraqi government.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Walker, I would think that, and, again, you have your role based on your responsibilities. But I would think that this Congress and this Administration, there are some of these benchmarks that, in my humble opinion, over a five-year period of time and over one trillion dollars and our troops are worn out, quite frankly. I talked to many during the August break. I have Camp Lejeune down in my district, and I saw them off base.

But to me, there has got to be the Congress and the Administration. I mean, how much longer, if you are here next year or the year after, and you are saying to those who are sitting on this committee, next year and the year after, that we are still looking at failure in meeting benchmarks, then what would you as private citizen David Walker, what would you say to the Congress? Where are you going? How would you—what would you advise the Congress at that time as private citizen?

Mr. WALKER. Obviously the public is very frustrated. This is an important yet polarizing issue. I came back to what I said before to Mr. Snyder. I think it is time for the country to reassess what the goals ought to be, what the objectives ought to be, what the metrics and milestones ought to be, and I am happy for us to try to provide our independent professional judgment to the Congress if you want to do that, to be able to do that.

Let me also note that while the President is Commander in Chief, the Congress has the responsibility to appropriate funds. And we also know only the Congress can declare war, but yet that

hasn't been declared since World War II, and yet we have spent a lot of money and lost a lot of lives since then.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman from Washington, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

We have talked about a lot of the numbers, and I appreciate your analysis there. But to a certain point, I think what Mr. Snyder and Mr. Thornberry and others have talked about in terms of the objectives and where we are going is really the more important point. If there is a 1,000 deaths, whether they are sectarian or civilian, one month, and then there is 1,200 the next or 800 the next, what we really want to know is what is it telling us and where are we going.

What you told us earlier—the mission of our troops is what is really important. Fighting al Qaeda is really important. Patrolling the streets of Baghdad is a much different question. And the one thing I would think you would agree with is unquestionably there is a large amount of sectarian violence in Iraq.

We can't say that we have turned any sort of corner. If we are going down at all, it is month to month. It is province to province. It is not comprehensive, across-the-board success.

I trust you would agree with that regardless of what numbers—

Mr. WALKER. There is still significant sectarian violence. The data shows that it is declining, but it varies in geographic areas. Only time will say whether it is sustainable. Hopefully it is.

Mr. SMITH. You mentioned one of the benchmarks. If the militia control of local security is something we are trying to prevent—but in one way of looking at Iraq, they are trying to fill a power vacuum after Saddam Hussein went down. It is really an overstatement to say there is no central government. But I don't think it is an overstatement to say I doubt you can identify a community or a part of Iraq that the central government really has control of. There is various factions battling in a bunch of different places, and there are different factions in different places.

Our success primarily came in al Anbar from getting the Sunnis to turn on al Qaeda. We picked one local faction. We had the rarest of circumstances in Iraq where we could clearly say this faction is worse than that faction. No doubt about it. And we are trying to line up with them, and we have had that success.

My concern is that doesn't lead to long-term success in Iraq. If the whole point of this is secure Iraq so we can bring our troops home and—as Mr. Jones has pointed this out eloquently, we all know the costs. I don't think there is a single member here who would deny the cost of maintaining our troop presence in Iraq at its level or anything close to it.

We want to stop that, and what I have been frustrated by for three years, no matter what all of the progress—up, down, sideways—we are getting no closer to bringing the troops home, because who are we going to turn it over to, and right now what is happening is local militias in different places are getting control, and some of the violence in Baghdad is because the ethnic cleansing has been completed. The Shi'a now totally control a neighborhood. There is nobody left to kill. That is not exactly success.

So my frustration is I don't think our troops are moving this forward in most places in a positive direction. It is the sectarian stuff is sorting itself out.

And getting past the numbers for the moment, six to seven months from now, how does any of what I just described change in a way that we have a reasonable group to turn security over to, either a central government—which I think is pure fantasy, but if we want to talk about that, we can—or to some local militias who are not a friend of ours. I don't see any of those two scenarios. And if so, isn't it really time to figure out how to de-escalate?

Mr. WALKER. I don't think all of these 18 benchmarks are equal. We didn't try to weight them. Congress didn't ask us to weight them, but I think one of the things that you ought to think about on a going forward basis is are these the right benchmarks, should some be added and should you try to weight them in some way?

That brings me back to the point that I said before. It is time to reassess what are our goals, what are our objectives, who should be doing what, including what the proper role of our forces should be.

Mr. SMITH. I just took a stab at that reassessment, actually. What do you think of that reassessment? As with everybody here, I have got a lot to learn on this. It changes rapidly. If it is true the way I just described it, it puts a totally different picture than we are just sticking it out until we get the security over and turn this over to somebody we can trust.

So I am curious in the moments left here—

Mr. WALKER. Well, you know, I think it is one thing to help the Iraqis help themselves, but ultimately there are certain roles and functions that the Iraqis have to be able to perform on their own. And there are certain things that only the Iraqis can do: I mean, pass the legislation, and try to do that, okay?

But I think there are certain things that we are doing right now that ideally Iraqi forces ought to be doing versus U.S. forces. I mean, we are a foreign force to the Iraqi people. And most countries, including our own, don't like for foreign forces on the ground for too long.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Let me follow through on that, if I may. For instance, what should the Iraqi forces be doing that we are doing for them?

Mr. WALKER. Well, for example, I think that the most notable area is that we are trying to achieve and maintain security of the streets in portions of Baghdad and other parts of the country rather than necessarily just focusing on training the Iraqis and providing certain logistical air support and going after al Qaeda wherever al Qaeda might be. That is probably the biggest single issue, Mr. Chairman, that I would point to.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

The gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Forbes.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Walker, for your good work, and thank you, Mr. Walker, for being here and for your good work, and whenever we are doing an analysis of success or analysis of success for any programs, as I understand it, we need a couple of criteria. First of all, you need competent analysts that are doing that, and we certainly recognize you

and your shop are competent at what you do. We also need independence, and as I understand your testimony, you believe that you would be more independent than General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker in making this analysis.

Mr. WALKER. They are clearly professional and clearly capable, and they are clearly on the ground, but I don't think you can say they are totally independent.

Mr. FORBES. I don't know that any of us are totally independent, but you are more independent—

Mr. WALKER. We are more organizationally independent, without question. Ambassador Crocker works for the President of the United States. General Petraeus works for the President of the United States, because the President of the United States is Commander in Chief of the military.

Mr. FORBES. Now assuming that I may agree or disagree with you on independence. The other factor that is important in making an analysis is information; is that correct?

Mr. WALKER. That is correct.

Mr. FORBES. Who has more information about the situation in Iraq? Your office or General Petraeus?

Mr. WALKER. Depends on what the issue is. He has more information with regard to conditions on the ground, with regard to military. We probably have more information with regard to legislative and economic issues than he does.

Mr. FORBES. The third thing that goes into play is the metrics; and, what I understand, the metrics you used is basically the benchmarks.

Mr. WALKER. And that is what we were required to use by law.

Mr. FORBES. You were required to use these metrics, and the benchmarks that you have here—I think I heard your testimony correctly—was primarily given to you by the Iraqi government. Is that true on a lot of the benchmarks?

Mr. WALKER. The first exhibit shows what the source of the benchmarks are. They are overwhelmingly issues that the Iraqi government agreed to.

Mr. FORBES. My question for you is—you probably know better than anybody in this room the kind of information and the metrics that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker is using, and my question is of—having assessed that, do you feel they have meaningful, accurate, and objective methods and metrics for doing their analysis, and if not, what suggestions would you have for them in terms of changing their metrics?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, having not seen what they are going to say, I can't comment on whether it is reasonable or reliable. I will say this—

Mr. FORBES. If I can clarify my question. It is not whether it is reasonable or reliable. It is the metrics they will be using. Are you familiar with their metrics?

Mr. WALKER. I don't know what metrics they use.

Mr. FORBES. So at this particular point in time you don't know their metrics. Their metrics could be something different than what the Iraqi government said what they should do.

Mr. WALKER. One I know I have a concern about, which we have talked about at length, is sectarian violence.

Mr. FORBES. How do you differ in your metrics from their metrics?

Mr. WALKER. First I question whether it is a relevant metric. Violence is violence. Second, I question the reliability of being able to determine with any degree of certainty that something is sectarian-related versus non-sectarian-related.

Mr. FORBES. Of the metrics that you were given, did you agree with these metrics and would there have been any changes that you would have used in this metrics?

Mr. WALKER. First, we can talk more in the classified briefing about the one issue I talked about before. Second, these are not the benchmarks that I would pick with a clean sheet of paper up.

Mr. FORBES. Just in conclusion, you think you are more independent than Petraeus or Ambassador Crocker. They could have more information or less information. We don't know that. And the metrics you used would not have been the metrics you would have used if you could have picked on a clean sheet of paper but Petraeus and Crocker would not be so limited because they had a clean sheet of paper because we didn't dictate to them what metrics to use.

Mr. WALKER. No. I think you did say that they are supposed to show whether or not satisfactory progress is being made in these areas but they do—may do things other than these that you didn't ask them to do and I expect they will.

Mr. FORBES. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Let me compliment the committee. You are staying well within the five-minute rule. We get more folks the opportunity to ask questions.

Mrs. Tauscher, the gentlelady from California.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Thank you very much for being here.

I applaud you and your staff for what I consider to be a very comprehensive report, considering you didn't pick the metrics, considering that I do believe you are independent, when we stipulate to some of these things up front, and what has been a Gordian Knot for both the Congress and the American people for the last five years.

I just got back from my fourth trip to Iraq last week, and I did not find the kind of progress that I had been led to believe that we would achieve. Let me also stipulate that when you have the finest fighting force in the world and you add more of them, there will be more security where they can be.

We are now at 160,000-plus troops. There isn't anybody on this planet that doesn't know that we cannot sustain that number through March. So we are going to have a withdrawal of troops. When we have that withdrawal of troops, one of the questions I tried to ask or did ask and did not get a satisfactory answer out of either General Odierno or Petraeus last week was what we have in March, some drawdown, whatever that number is; presumably, it will be in the 25 to 30,000 range if we go down to where we were previously. Considering that there have been modest gains, considering that the Sunni tribal leaders in Anbar have, at least, at best, a transactional movement toward us to get rid of al Qaeda. Whether it is sustainable or not, I don't know. In the absence of a central

government in Iraq that can actually create the environment where Iraqis are going to be willing to fight and die for their country, your benchmarks are devastating when it comes to the readiness of the Iraqi military, and they actually comport with the Administration's assessment.

So the missing years, the years of 2004 and 2005 where we were mentally accomplishing all of this training, we don't now have an Iraqi force that is ready to take over, and as you said, there are two different parts of the Iraqi security force component: One is the military, the Ministry of Defense (MOD), and the other is the MOI, the Ministry of Interior. We are going to get a report in the next couple of days from the Jones Commission, and I am pretty safe—it is pretty safe to say they are going to be absolutely devastating about the military, about the Ministry of Interior, the police. That is where we have had a real conundrum where we look like occupiers, where we have to patrol the streets.

So if there is no central government that can cause Iraqis to fight and die, if these assessments about the military readiness are as bad as they appear to be and we have no police force that is going to come on that is not going to be full of sectarian death squads, how are we meant to move forward considering that—I know a lot of my colleagues that I like and respect insist on talking about the metrics and your independence, which isn't the subject.

I think this is a question of after \$330 million a day, 3,700 dead, 30,000 devastatingly injured and with a military that is stretched beyond capacity for another contingency, what is in the national security interest of the American people? And I think that is the debate we should be having. After five years, if this is where we are, is it in the national security interest of the American people to just continue to do this?

And I think that your assessment is not about the MOI, but I would be interested in any kind of intelligence you have about the military, the Ministry of Interior and whether you think that there is any capability at all for the Iraqis to begin to do at least the police work.

Mr. WALKER. Clearly there has been unsatisfactory progress on the political front. Clearly there hasn't been enough progress on the security front with regard to the Iraqis' role. Our people have made a difference. Clearly they have made a difference in recent months.

And clearly there are concerns with regard to the fact that I think it is 15 of the ministers have now drawn support for the current government and that there are concerns about sectarian infiltration of the ministries as well. You mentioned one which obviously is more of a concern on day-to-day security issues.

And I think that is why I say we have to step back, okay? What should our goals be? What should our objectives be? Who should be doing what? What are the metrics and the milestones that we need to have in order to be able to try to assess that?

You know, it is time to reconsider all of those, I believe.

Mrs. TAUSCHER. I appreciate that. I just think that we have been launched on a false debate here. I don't want to continue to debate whether the surge is successful or not. I think the question really is: What is in the national security interest of the American people,

and is this situation sustainable? And I think the answer is it is not.

Thank you.

Mr. SPRATT [presiding]. Mr. Turner.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you.

Mr. Walker, I too want to echo what others have said about GAO and its reputation and all of the work that you do. So many times in all of our committees it is important to get an assessment that tells us what an agency is doing, what a policy is doing or what the consequences are of action or inaction. So I want to commend you and the work that certainly everyone in your agency does.

You have emphasized several times the issue of independent and professional and maybe a little too much, in my opinion, your emphasis on independence, because you know everyone comes with their own bias, their own funding resources that they have to respond to and the like.

But nonetheless, your statement of independent and professional—and I want to ask you this question because of what we are going to be doing next.

In looking at your assessment, I don't think overall there is a whole lot of disagreement on this committee about the conclusions that you reached.

But you are preceding General Petraeus and the ambassador when they come in and tell us what their views are. And with your emphasis of independent and professional, I know that you don't mean to diminish what they have to say for us. I mean, General Petraeus has said that they would be honest and straightforward. He will tell us if our policies are not working, if we need to be doing something different or if we are making progress.

I know the people in this committee have a great deal of respect for General Petraeus.

So perhaps you could give us some guidance as to how you see us proceeding. We have your independent professional report, which I don't think you have heard too many people pick specific items that they had significant difference of opinions as to what you have said factually.

How would you recommend that we review and critically undertake an analysis of what General Petraeus and the Ambassador will say for us?

Mr. WALKER. First, I have tremendous respect for General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker. I have no doubt in my mind that they are extremely capable professionals that you ought to seriously consider whatever they have to say. I think they will give you their views.

My view is when you are dealing with independence, there are two issues on independence. There is individual independence and institutional independence. From an individual standpoint, they may be giving you their independent view, but they are not institutionally independent from the executive branch. That is a fact.

Second, they clearly are in a better position to assess certain things than we may be because they are on the ground.

On the other hand, you know, I think it is important for you to be able to consider what they have to say, what General Jones and his group have to say, what we have to say, and you need to tri-

angulate that. You need to triangulate that information and try to be able to, you know, assess what you are comfortable with.

But I come back to what I said before: I think we need to figure out where we are and where do we go from here irrespective of what they have to say.

Mr. TURNER. I agree with you. But to focus on they are not institutionally independent, it almost sounds as if it is diminishing the professionalism and what they are going to say. I know you don't mean that.

Mr. WALKER. Not at all. I think they are extremely capable professionals, and I think you ought to seriously consider what they have to say. That is all I am saying.

Mr. TURNER. On the issue of benchmarks, you said if you have a blank piece of paper you would start with other benchmarks.

Could you give us some examples of these, that when you were going through this analysis, you thought, "These really ought to be here?" There is information that I could provide on it.

Mr. WALKER. One, with regard to the overall strategic interest of what are we trying to accomplish in the region, you know, that is not in here. Okay. Second, with regard to whether or not what is being done is changing the daily lives of Iraqis, you know, which obviously could help, that is really not in here.

There is no attempt to really weight these. Some are more important than others with regard to us being able to withdraw troops. Some are more critical than others, us being able to do that.

So those would be some examples. We did what we were asked to do but we are willing to work with Congress to try to improve this if you are so desirous.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you.

Mr. SPRATT. Mrs. Davis of California.

Mrs. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, General Walker, for being here. I wanted to follow up a little bit on the points that have just been made, because I think the question, to me, seems to be: What is our mission there, and what is it about the different efforts that are being made that will move us toward—move the Iraqis more in the entire community toward political reconciliation, and it seems to me that if they ask it that way, that perhaps what is happening in al Anbar isn't necessarily feeding into that goal. And while it is a calculated risk, and I think it is an important one, and I think it demonstrates the adaptability of our forces, that is important.

On the other hand, it certainly raises some questions about whether it is really going to bring about that—the coming together, the reconciliation that we are all looking for. Because the Sunnis clearly are joining with us but they are not joining with the Iraq government. If you look at that—even having this benchmark, I don't know whether it is going to help with that.

How do you see—I think you just referenced it a little bit. How do you see getting to the realities on the ground and some of the changes that are being made with the surge—or without the surge for that matter—that actually are consistent with the benchmarks? And does that make the benchmarks totally irrelevant, so that we need new ones? Or is it an important question to ask because, in many ways, it is somewhat contradictory?

Mr. WALKER. I do not think the benchmarks are irrelevant. I think the Congress needs to consider these benchmarks. My point is I think there is additional information that the Congress needs to consider in addition to these benchmarks.

And more fundamentally, I think we need to reassess what should our goals be, what should our objectives be, what should the metrics and milestones be. Not take this as a given. And not take the goal that the President has articulated or the goals that he has articulated as a given at this point going forward. There needs to be an exchange there.

On al Anbar province, no question progress has been made there for a variety of reasons. The question is, is it sustainable, transferable, and will it directly support the types of goals and objectives that we seek to achieve throughout Iraq, not necessarily just in one section of Iraq?

Mrs. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. How would you judge then whether or not those efforts would bring about political reconciliation if in fact that is an overriding goal that we have?

Mr. WALKER. I think when you look at these benchmarks, and I really don't want to weight them at this time, I think some of these benchmarks are clearly more important than others if the objective is to be able to get the Iraqis to be able to be self-supporting to the point where we can start withdrawing forces.

Some of these are clearly more important than others, and I would be happy to try to work with the committee on that.

Mrs. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. If I could turn really quickly to page 15 in the report where you reference the level of detail that you all were requesting for the level that the Department of Defense (DOD) has—I think part of it was on the levels of sectarian violence, but other issues—did you believe that the numbers and the statistics that are being provided to the Administration are all of the information that is out there? I guess that is really the question. There seems to be some frustration about what—you are being provided with numbers that DOD has. Is that—was that a concern and an issue, and is that something that—

Mr. WALKER. Let me say there are various sources of information. There are various types of information. They are not all the same.

I think it is very important for you and every member to read the National Intelligence Estimate report, the classified versions. I think it is also very important for you to read the classified version of our report.

Mrs. DAVIS OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, General.

Mr. SPRATT. The gentlelady's time has expired.

Dr. GINGREY from Georgia.

Dr. GINGREY. Mr. Walker, you had said in the early part of your testimony that you felt that the military and General Petraeus' upcoming report on Monday was going to be likely very professional, as you would characterize, I am sure, your own report.

But you did question the independence of that report and not questioning the independence of your own report.

I would like to ask you to comment on—I know you do good work. I know the Government Accountability Office in regard to many things—certainly we talk about Social Security and other

issues, but I would question whether or not you have the professional ability the military, the commanders on the ground, have in regard to making this assessment.

And it seems to me that your report—I am not suggesting that it is deliberate, because it does have the effect of undermining Petraeus-Crocker report that we will receive on Monday. The timing of these reports, I am sure you have nothing to do with it. I have nothing to do with it. But let me just specifically ask you this: You have a lot of people on the ground. You said the last group was in Iraq from August the 22nd, I think, to September the first—July 22nd to August the 1st.

In this report you obviously couldn't be there and you had to rely on a lot of other people within your department.

How much unanimity of opinion was there within your own organization or was there some discrepancy with regard to—the word “spin” is not the appropriate word, but as somebody, you know, writing the headlines on a report that a beat reporter presents to them, it can change the context significantly.

Comment on that for me.

Mr. WALKER. Yes. First let me be clear.

What I said was that we are the only independent and professional you are going to get on the 18 benchmarks. General Petraeus is going to focus on the security situation. I doubt he is going to focus on the political and economic. And he is in a great position to deal with the security, and you ought to seriously consider whatever he has to say.

With regard to our own views, we had a debate within our agency about whether or not we should provide a “partially met” rating and, if so, under what circumstances, because the statute does not call for that. It says either “met” or “not met.”

In my independent and professional judgment, I felt that it was incredibly important for us to recognize that in some circumstances a “partially met” rating was a better reflection, a more fair and balanced reflection of what the conditions were as of the point in time. And ultimately we agreed on that but that there was not agreement initially.

Second, I felt it was very important, and we achieved agreement on it, that we provide contextual sophistication, that even on those areas that are not met doesn't mean there is no progress—

Dr. GINGREY. Let me ask you with regard to benchmark number 10. You rated this as not met with providing Iraqi commanders with authority to execute Baghdad operations, make tactical and operational decisions without political intervention.

Mr. Walker, it is my understanding that contrary to past experiences, Prime Minister Maliki and possibly other high level officials are not interfering with operations against Shi'a individuals and groups, and if you could then explain your assessment.

Now in your conclusions, you say in the middle of that paragraph, despite Iraqi leaders recently signed the unity accord, the polarization of Iraq's major sects and ethnic groups and fighting among Shi'a factions diminishes the stability of Iraq's government Coalition's potential to enact legislation needed for sectarian reconciliation.

It seems like you have sort of prejudices yourself in that regard and several of these benchmarks where you give a zero score to are just not accurate.

Mr. WALKER. First, it is very important to understand that “not met” doesn’t mean zero. Okay. “Not met” means that they haven’t made enough progress to justify a “partially met.” Now some of these it doesn’t, you know, doesn’t make sense to have a “partially met.” There is no way to have “partially met.” You either do it or you don’t do it.

I believe there is some additional information with regard to these benchmarks in our classified report that we might be able to talk about as well.

Mr. SPRATT. The gentleman’s time has expired.

Mr. Larsen of Washington.

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thanks for coming to help us out, and I say that deliberately, because I think you are helping us out.

I don’t think that—well, if your report—if the GAO’s report is potentially undermining General Petraeus’ report Monday, then so did the unclassified versions of the NIE that came out a few weeks ago and so was General Jones’ report tomorrow that is calling for the total disbandment of the National Iraqi Police. And so will probably the outside perspective that we are going to get from defense experts and so on.

You would be in good company, in other words, if your report was, in fact, undermining General Petraeus.

I think we are missing the boat here where your reports and these other reports aren’t there to undermine anybody or support anybody. These reports are there to help us understand the situation as fully as possible, short of all of us spending a year-plus in Iraq, side by side with the privates and the corporals and the sergeants and our own military.

So don’t walk away from here, at least from my perspective, that your report is undermining anyone or anything on this. This is one piece of information for us to consider as we are trying to make some very hard and very difficult decisions about Iraq.

And I am certainly with my colleague, Susan Davis, and colleague Ellen Tauscher, and others on their remarks about sort of us focusing so much on the surge, so much on street corners in Iraq that we are ignoring what is going on in the region, what is our strategic vision in the region, what is Iraq getting us in the end for U.S. national security interests in the region. And we need to be beginning that transition of thinking, because right now Iraq is sort of the—is the tail wagging the foreign policy dog for us, and it ought to be in reverse. We ought to be placing Iraq in some context in that region for us.

Now having said that, you mentioned al Anbar several times in response to questions. Questions about is it—is the success there, which there is some relative success there, is it transferable, is it sustainable. You have asked those questions but I want to ask you, do you have an opinion on that? Do you think it is transferable? Do you think it is sustainable? And if not, do you have questions that we should consider? Seems to me General Petraeus may in fact discuss this with us next Monday, if not Ambassador Crocker.

And how should we formulate or what questions should we formulate about the al Anbar experience and how it might be transferable to a much larger city, Baghdad, with a much more complex set of sectarian issues?

Do you have opinions on that?

Mr. WALKER. Based upon non-classified information, first, I think it is important to note that there was a disproportionate amount of foreign fighter activity in al Anbar province—al Qaeda, as well—al Qaeda in Iraq, as well as foreign fighter activity. What changed dramatically was the tribal leaders and others decided that al Qaeda had gone too far, allegedly, and therefore they are trying to fight al Qaeda.

Now, one has to understand that, and one would argue—and I have heard broad-based agreement here—that we ought to be doing whatever we can to eliminate al Qaeda. So that is relevant, and we have to determine how we can transfer that.

Second, al Anbar is about 15 percent, I understand, of the total Iraqi population. It is not part of Baghdad. It is predominantly a Sunni community. So when you talk about sectarian violence like Sunni versus Shi'a or whatever, that is not really that relevant there, okay? Now not to say that there aren't differences within the Sunni community, the Shi'a community, there are. But that is another example of where the al Qaeda experience might be able to be transferable but the sectarian experience might be different than what we are experiencing elsewhere, including in Baghdad, because of the demographic makeup of that province.

Those would be a couple of examples.

Mr. LARSEN. So those would be some questions to explore?

Mr. WALKER. And I agree with your characterization. I think you ought to seriously consider what Admiral Crocker and General Petraeus say. You ought to consider ours along with theirs and along with General Jones and triangulate.

Mr. SPRATT. Mrs. Drake of Virginia.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Walker, for being here. I think what is frustrating is that we really tied your hands and that there is things out there that we can all see that aren't really able to be reflected on this page.

And I also went to Iraq over August. And when we met with the Deputy Prime Minister, the question that I had for him was that it was my understanding that he had the votes to pass the legislation that we are so interested in. His answer back, kind of surprised, was, well, yes, he had 75 percent of the vote and could very easily pass the legislation, but if he did that he would be cutting the entire Sunni politicians out, and they would feel that they had no impact on the government, no political clout.

So what happens on your report is that all of the legislation is not met, but number 16, where you talk about rights of minority political parties, is met. Where had they passed that legislation, it would have been—I guess you would have had to say those weren't met, because you would have cut an entire segment out of the political process and made them feel—so I don't know how you are able to weigh when you look at this what it really means. Because when he explained it, I thought I would much rather they wait, get the

consensus that they are trying to build in order to pass this legislation, than to cut an entire segment out of the population.

If you want to comment on that, I have a couple more before I run out of time.

Mr. WALKER. Of course, Ms. Drake. First, if I understand the situation directly, and I don't know what was said, that wouldn't change our assessment on number 16. The infrastructure is there to protect minorities. But on the other hand, in any democracy a super majority is going to prevail. That is a political judgment which they are making to say that I don't think it is right to be able to pass it right now because it could have a significant adverse effect on the ability to achieve national reconciliation. That is their judgment.

Mrs. DRAKE. Right. So they lose points instead of gaining points for trying to do something that will give greater stability?

Mr. WALKER. No, they wouldn't lose any points. We wouldn't change number 16. That would stay the same. Actually they would be gaining points if they actually passed some legislation. Then the question is whether or not there could be an adverse effect someplace else because they did that.

Mrs. DRAKE. The other comment that he made that was so interesting, because he clearly was also disappointed with the national government, but he wanted us to understand that their focus and their goal right now was to create the institutions of government so that one party could not take over; no one could grab power and be in absolute control. And that is very similar to what Admiral Fallon talked about recently, and explaining that our objective is to create those conditions that are necessary for a government to function, like rule of law and protecting the rights of citizens. I guess part of my frustration is that you are not able to reflect that, and maybe like you have said, we need to come back and give you a wider range to do it.

I also on that same vein am concerned that the economic status isn't really reflected in the benchmarks either. And I just read this week about Mosul ready to wear, and that we are going to be importing clothing made in Iraq to be sold in America, as well as—you never read about the 60 countries that are helping us on the reconstruction effort. So I just think, to the average person looking at this and saying things haven't gotten better when there are a lot of things that can't be reflected in this report—so, that must be a frustration to you as well.

Mr. WALKER. It is. If I were drafting benchmarks, some of these would be there. Some of them would be different. There would be other ones that would be there. And I think that is something Congress ought to seriously consider, and I think you ought to think about changing.

Mrs. DRAKE. And my last comment, and you have addressed it, and I have heard you say it deals with the level of violence, and your interpretation and then what we hear when we go. Our trip we actually met with four sheikhs, two Sunni, two Shi'a, which surprised me, because I thought they could never even speak to each other, much less work to take their region back, and to be sitting in the room in front of us, Sunni, Shi'a, Sunni, Shi'a. So I was

a little too—and you have talked about it. I know I am running out of time, but I just wanted to mention that.

We also asked General Petraeus what the best measurement would be, and his answer is the reduction in the number of Iraqi civilian deaths. That was a big factor for him.

Mr. WALKER. I think that is great that he said that, because basically what we are saying is: What difference does it mean if it is sectarian or non-sectarian? Let's focus on violence, irrespective of the nature of it.

Mrs. DRAKE. But you would agree that overall the number of civilian deaths has decreased?

Mr. WALKER. In August. And I would have to go back and look beyond that.

Mrs. DRAKE. Thank you. My time is expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Along that line, the unclassified DIA chart that was passed around may be of some help to the gentlelady regarding this issue.

The gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Murphy, five minutes.

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. General, let me just, I used to teach at West Point, and I taught constitutional military law there, and I used to teach on the first day about the separation of powers, executive, legislative, judicial. Part of the reason why the judicial branch is there is it checks and balances. It is an independent branch, a Supreme Court lifetime appointment. I know there is some criticism about your independence. I would like the record to reflect that you have a 15-year term. You are nine years into that term. And General, I appreciate your service to our country. And I also appreciate your son Andy's service in Iraq as a military personnel. So thank you for testifying and doing what you do.

When I was in Iraq as a captain in 2003, I assisted about 600 Iraqi troops in training. The President told us for years that the strategy for our troops to come home was that the American soldiers would train and equip the Iraqi Security Forces. We kept hearing from the President of the United States that as they stand up, we will stand down. However, when I was in Iraq we couldn't even get uniforms for our Iraqi troops. In fact, we outfitted them with the Chicago White Sox baseball caps. That was their uniform.

As the *New York City Times* reported in July, and your report confirms, since the escalation of armed forces this year, 9 months ago, began, the number of Iraqi battalions rated as capable of operating independently of American forces has fallen from 10 Iraqi battalions to 6 Iraqi battalions. The report also states that the decrease in the number of trainee Iraqis is due to, and I quote, "manning shortages as well as logistics and sustainment shortfalls," end quote. So the President's escalation strategy emphasizes peacekeeping and force protection and deemphasizes training Iraqi troops. In practical terms the President's escalation has enmeshed American troops even further making their sole mission, or focus of their mission, peacekeepers in an Iraq religious civil war. So I now question what the President is trying to deem a success for his escalation this year.

So General, my question is: Is the President's escalation helping or hurting our efforts to train Iraqi troops, in your professional opinion? And if it is hurting those efforts, isn't the President being disingenuous when he calls the surge a success?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, clearly the surge has had an impact in al Anbar province and part of Baghdad. The question is: Is it sustainable? Clearly it has not served to where you get the political progress, which is one of the purposes of the surge. The preliminary purpose of the surge is to get breathing space so you can get political progress and try to move toward unification of Iraq. That hasn't happened yet. Whether or not it will happen is a question mark. And obviously, to the extent that you have forces that are policing the streets, they are not available to do other things, including training Iraqi troops.

But I don't have the data in front of me to say whether and to what extent there may have been a diminution in the amount of effort that we have given toward training over the time of the surge. I will have to look and see and maybe be able to provide you something separately on that.

[The information referred to can be found in the Appendix beginning on page 67.]

Mr. MURPHY. Well, let us talk about the whole premise, or the major part of the premise of escalation was to give them the political ability to find a political solution. In your report, I think when we look at the political success of the Iraqis, our troops, and I know you would agree, are doing a terrific job in an almost impossible mission in Iraq. The Iraqis, on the other hand, are just coming off their summer vacation. The Sunnis, 15 of the 37 cabinet members, just quit. So we look at the whole premise behind the surge was to allow them to get their footing politically. They were given the opportunity for six to nine months, and what have they done with that? They took a summer vacation, or they have quit while our troops are fighting every single day. And I know we talked here as far as strategically. Our focus in America has been on that Iraqi street corner, as compared to the regional war on terror, when al Qaeda has gotten stronger and stronger in the war with Afghanistan and Pakistan toward national security, the detriment of our national security.

So General, I would just ask you, if you can, in closing, because my time is expiring, if you could comment on the political benchmarks and what this Congress should be focused on besides your report going into the future, if you could.

Mr. WALKER. Just very briefly let me just say, I think you need to be considering things beyond Iraq, as I mentioned, with regard to the region. I also think you need to be considering things as to the ripple effect and the opportunity cost of what we are doing in Iraq with regard to our ability to do things in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world to achieve broader macro strategic objectives.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank the gentleman. Let me state that we will break at 12:25 and reconvene in 2212 at 12:30. Those that have not had the opportunity to ask questions in open session will be the very first we will call upon to ask questions, Mr. Walker, in the closed session, and then we will start all over again on the top row.

Mr. Conaway from Texas.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. David, thanks for being here. Several times in your comments, you have used two descriptors: “professional” and “independent”, for you and your agency. And I am in unqualified agreement with both of those descriptors. The third one that has been kind of badgered about is objectivity. All of us have personal biases that we bring to work every single day. And you and I as certified public accountants (CPAs) know that one of those tenets is we are supposed to be objective with respect to whatever it is we are doing.

Can you comment for us how you and your agency deal with personal—I don’t have a clue what your personal opinion is as to whether what we are doing is working or not; it is none of my business, but it shouldn’t have an impact on this report. Can you help us—two things: one, look at or visit with us about how you manage personal biases in a very tough area? And two, given the stunning turnaround in al Anbar, and your phrase “contextual sophistication”, the lack of reference to that in your report, does that reflect a bias that we need to be aware of?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, we have independence and quality assurance. On independence we are subject to generally accepted auditing standards, which means that institutionally we have to be independent and every individual who works on the engagement has to be independent. That is different than objectivity and personal bias. We then have extensive quality control procedures that we put in place to make sure that we have checks and balances with regard to not only making sure we have independent people assigned to the job, but that we have checks and balances to make sure that we are making sure that that objectivity is maintained. Because ultimately we want to be professional, objective, fact-based, non-partisan, non-ideological, fair, and balanced. As I mentioned before, Mr. Conaway, I made a judgment that in order for us to meet that criteria, especially the fair and balanced, we had to use the partially met criteria. We had to provide more contextual sophistication. With regard to al Anbar, al Anbar is not necessarily lending itself toward necessarily one of these 18. But I have made a special effort in the hearing yesterday, the hearing today, and I am sure I will for the one this afternoon and the rest that I am going to have this week, to acknowledge that progress has been made in al Anbar and part of Baghdad. I am acknowledging that. And that is something that you ought to think about. But then we have to come back, is what are we trying to achieve, what are our goals, what are our objectives, and to what extent is that sustainable and transferable to achieve those goals and objectives.

Mr. CONAWAY. And so a conscious decision was made to not make reference to the turnaround in your report.

Mr. WALKER. There wasn’t a conscious decision made. I don’t know that, for example—in al Anbar, as I said, I think the primary thing that has happened is that the tribal leaders made a decision that al Qaeda went too far and is now trying to fight against al Qaeda. And we are clearly the enemy of al Qaeda. So to the extent we can end up joining forces, that is great. But al Qaeda was also disproportionately represented in that province.

Mr. CONAWAY. I am not trying to talk about that, although I have seen news reports that at least 20 of those tribal leaders gave their lives as a result of making that decision to go against al Qaeda.

One real quick little nitpicking thing. Page 14 of the report referenced your recommendations. The Secretary of Defense and the heads of other appropriate agencies recommend that they provide information to the President on trends in sectarian violence. Given the overall comments this morning about that issue, maybe you want to revisit, and I don't need a comment from you, but maybe you want to revisit that recommendation.

Mr. WALKER. I think if you are going to have sectarian violence, you need to provide a broader context. But I debate whether or not that is the relevant measure.

Mr. CONAWAY. But this is your recommendation.

Mr. WALKER. I understand what you are saying.

Mr. CONAWAY. Thank you very much.

Mr. WALKER. Thank you very much, Mr. Conaway.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. We will ask Mr. Courtney to ask his questions now. Then we will adjourn to 2212. Mr. Courtney.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There has been sort of a suggestion here that maybe there was an overstatement of some of the negatives and underrepresentation of the positives. But I actually, when Congressman Spratt and I were over on our trip to Iraq, we visited the joint security station and accidentally just sort of stumbled on in the course of a conversation with a colonel, who was doing a fabulous job with the policing aspect, stumbled onto the fact that only two hours of electricity was being supplied to this Sunni neighborhood. And the colonel, who again was briefing us on the military side, just launched into a tirade about the fact that Shi'a neighborhoods were getting lots more hours of electricity, which at the time seemed kind of hard to imagine how that could possibly occur. But then there was the story that just came out about a week or so ago where the Iraq Electricity Minister, Kareem Waheed, basically said that switching stations now are under the control of militias and—who are literally forcing the people operating it to supply different levels of power to different sectarian neighborhoods in Baghdad.

Now, benchmark 13 on sectarian violence and militia control, again, only used sort of the top line numbers of people being murdered as a measuring stick of the militia control. But in fact there are many other ways where it is affecting people's daily lives, where the militia control is really having a negative impact. Again, that is not even part of the scope of your report, because you weren't asked to go into that. But I am just curious whether that whole situation, which again was sort of revealed a week or so ago, was something that GAO looked at.

Mr. WALKER. Well, we do do work with regard to electricity, water, oil production, a variety of other issues. As I said, I think it is appropriate to consider what are the trends there to the effect that it affects the daily lives of Iraqis. I think you are raising another good point. Don't just look at the totals; look at the distribution. Is there an equitable distribution? Because that is another angle where sectarian differences can result in material variances.

Mr. COURTNEY. And it is also a measuring stick of really the central government's ability to control people's—

Mr. WALKER. It is a market test.

Mr. COURTNEY. Right. And obviously they can't control it, because they are in the hands of militias when the utilities are being basically—decisions are being made at gunpoint by the militias that are in control. The other question was just on the \$10 billion that was allocated, appropriated by the Iraqi government, and, according to your report, either dribs and drabs at best are being spent, but maybe you can just sort of embellish on that a little bit.

Mr. WALKER. They have allocated the money, but there is a real question as to whether or not it is actually going to be spent for a variety of reasons. There have been circumstances in the past where the Iraqi government has allocated monies and where they haven't been spent. And so merely because you have allocated it doesn't mean you are going to spend it. And if you do spend it, who is going to benefit from it, and what outcome are you going to achieve from it? So those are some of the issues we were addressing there.

Mr. COURTNEY. And is the roadblock within the ministries?

Mr. WALKER. Well, first, they had a huge human capital crisis, a huge human capital crisis. They had a brain flight out of Iraq. And therefore the capacity to be able to get things done is a real problem.

Second, they have really antiquated systems, information systems. They have totally inadequate control, so it is really a combination. They didn't have the right type of contracting capability, just to be able to get things done. People are concerned that they are going to get prosecuted if they don't do it by the rules. So there is lots of factors that have led to a gap between merely allocating the money and actually getting things done.

Mr. COURTNEY. It certainly seems like an issue for us next week, to be talking to, maybe, Ambassador Crocker about, in terms of why the State Department is not giving the support, in terms of political support to help design effective bureaucracies.

Mr. WALKER. That comes back to the capacity building thing. The international community can and should be doing more with regard to capacity building, in my view.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you, Mr. Walker.

The CHAIRMAN. I am going to ask Mr. Hayes to ask a question for 30 seconds or make a statement for 30 seconds, and then we will take up with Mr. Hayes at Room 2212 in classified session. Mr. Hayes, 30 seconds.

Mr. HAYES. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Walker and all your staff. Thank you for your hard work. What I would like for you to do, based on the conversations today, is to submit a recommendation to the chairman and this committee of a good objective course to follow as we move forward to accurately reflect the desire of this committee on a bipartisan basis to protect our military and do everything we can to ensure its success.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. And ladies and gentlemen of the committee, we will adjourn until 12:30 at 2212.

Mr. WALKER. If I can, Mr. Chairman, just for the record thank our very capable staff. They put in an incredible amount of time and energy into this, and I want to publicly thank them.

The CHAIRMAN. That is very good. Excellent work. Thank you. See you at 2212.

[Whereupon, at 12:28 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

United States Government Accountability Office

GAO

Testimony
Before the Committee on Armed Services,
House of Representatives

For Release on Delivery
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**SECURING, STABILIZING,
AND REBUILDING IRAQ**

**Iraqi Government Has Not
Met Most Legislative,
Security, and Economic
Benchmarks**

Statement of David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States



GAO-07-1221T

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to appear today to discuss our report¹ on whether or not the government of Iraq has met 18 benchmarks contained in the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act of 2007² (the Act). The Act requires GAO to report on the status of the achievement of these benchmarks. Consistent with GAO's core values and our desire to be fair and balanced, we also considered and used a "partially met" rating for some benchmarks. In comparison, the Act requires the administration to report on whether satisfactory progress is being made toward meeting the benchmarks. The benchmarks cover Iraqi government actions needed to advance reconciliation within Iraqi society, improve the security of the Iraqi population, provide essential services to the population, and promote economic well-being.

To complete this work, we reviewed U.S. agency and Iraqi documents and interviewed officials from the Departments of Defense, State, and the Treasury; the Multi-National Force-Iraq (MNF-I) and its subordinate commands; the Defense Intelligence Agency; the Central Intelligence Agency; the National Intelligence Council; and the United Nations. These officials included Ryan Crocker, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, and General David H. Petraeus, Commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq. We made multiple visits to Iraq during 2006 and 2007, most recently from July 22 to August 1, 2007. Our analyses were enhanced by approximately 100 Iraq-related reports and testimonies that we have completed since May 2003. We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Summary

In summary, we found

The benchmarks were derived from commitments first articulated by the Iraqi government in June 2006.

The Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and did not meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks. Overall, key legislation has not been passed, violence remains high, and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend

¹GAO, *Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks* (GAO-07-1195) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 4, 2007).

²Section 1314 of P.L. 110-28.

\$10 billion in reconstruction funds. These results do not diminish the courageous efforts of coalition forces and progress that has been made in several areas, including Anbar Province.

The Iraqi government met one of eight legislative benchmarks: the rights of minority political parties in Iraq's legislature are protected. The government has not enacted legislation on de-Ba'athification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament.

It is unclear whether sectarian violence in Iraq has decreased—a key security benchmark—since it is difficult to measure whether the perpetrators' intents were sectarian in nature, and other measures of population security show differing trends.

As the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and with homeland security goals, foreign policy goals, and other goals of the United States.

**Origins of the
Benchmarks**

The benchmarks contained in the Act were derived from commitments articulated by the Iraqi government beginning in June 2006 and affirmed in subsequent statements by Prime Minister Maliki in September 2006 and January 2007 (see fig. 1). Iraq's commitments to these benchmarks were most recently stated in the May 2007 International Compact for Iraq.

Figure 1: Origin of Iraqi Benchmarks

BENCHMARKS Public Law 110-28	2006		2007				
	June 24 Point Iraq National Reconciliation Plan	Sept. Prime Minister Maliki's Benchmarks	Jan. Additional commitments by Prime Minister Maliki	Jan. President Bush's New Way Forward speech	Jan. Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review	Jan. & Feb. Prime Minister Maliki's speeches	May Congressional commitments by GOI
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.		■		■			■
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.	■	■		■		■	■
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.		■		■		■	■
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.		■					■
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.	■	■		■			■
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.	■	■					■
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.	■	■				■	■
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.						■	■
9. Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.			■	■	■		■
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	■		■	■	■	■	■
11. Ensuring that the Iraqi security forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.			■	■	■	■	■
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."				■		■	■
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.						■	■
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.						■	■
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces' units capable of operating independently.	■				■		■
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.							■
17. Allocating and spending \$10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.			■	■	■		■
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces.						■	■

Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Department of Defense, and Iraqi government data.

¹Iraq'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.

²In December 2006 the Multi-National Force-Iraq and government of Iraq agreed to establish the Joint Security Stations.

GAO Assessment of the 18 Benchmarks

As of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and did not meet 11 of its 18 benchmarks. Overall, key legislation has not been passed, violence remains high, and it is unclear whether the Iraqi government will spend \$10 billion in reconstruction funds.

Figure 2: GAO Assessment of the 18 Benchmarks

Benchmark	GAO assessment	Status
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and completing the constitutional review.	<input type="radio"/>	Committee formed but amendments not approved by the Iraqi legislature and no referendum scheduled.
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.	<input type="radio"/>	Laws drafted.
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.	<input type="radio"/>	3 of 4 components drafted; none being considered by parliament.
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Law enacted; implementation scheduled for 2008.
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.	<input type="radio"/>	Commission law enacted and implemented; however, supporting laws not enacted.
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.	<input type="radio"/>	No law drafted.
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.	<input type="radio"/>	No law drafted.
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Committees established.
9. Providing three trained and ready brigades to support Baghdad operations.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Forces provided; some of limited effectiveness.
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	<input type="radio"/>	Political intervention continues.
11. Ensuring that Iraqi security forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.	<input type="radio"/>	Iraqi security forces engaged in sectarian-based abuses.
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Militia infiltration of some security forces enables some safe havens.
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.	<input type="radio"/>	Militias control some local security; unclear whether sectarian violence has decreased.
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	32 of 34 stations established.
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.	<input type="radio"/>	Number of independent units declined between March and July 2007.
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Legislators' rights protected; minority citizens' rights unprotected.
17. Allocating and spending \$10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Funds allocated but unlikely to be fully spent.
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces.	<input type="radio"/>	Unsubstantiated accusations continue to be made.

● Met

◐ Partially met

○ Not met

Source: GAO analysis of UN, U.S., and Iraqi data

Most Legislative Benchmarks Have Yet to Be Enacted and Implemented

The Iraqi government met one of eight legislative benchmarks: the rights of minority political parties in Iraq's legislature are protected. The government also partially met one benchmark — to enact and implement legislation on the formation of regions; this law was enacted in October 2006 but will not be implemented until April 2008. Six other legislative benchmarks have not been met. Specifically, a review committee has not completed work on important revisions to Iraq's constitution. Further, the government has not enacted legislation on de-Ba'athification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament. The administration's report cited progress in achieving some benchmarks but provided little information on what step in the legislative process each benchmark had reached. We provide that information below.

Figure 3: Enactment and Implementation Status of Six Legislative Benchmarks

	Drafting laws												Enacting			Implementing
	Law drafted and reviewed	Draft referred to Council of Representatives/Supreme Council of Judiciary	Draft passed on amended by Speaker's Office	Final reading completed by Council	Draft reviewed by Committee	Second reading completed in Council by Speaker's Office	Draft approved by Council/President	Third reading completed in Council by Speaker's Office	Ratification completed	Law published	Guidance issued by Prime Minister	Orders written by Prime Minister	Decisions issued by Cabinet	Demobilization		
De-Ba'athification^a	✓	✓														
Hydrocarbon laws																
Framework	✓															
Revenue sharing	✓															
Ministry of Oil Restructuring	✓															
Iraq National Oil Company	—															
Formation of regions	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Elections																
Electoral commission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Provincial authorities ^b	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Provincial election law	—															
Provincial election date ^d	—															
Amnesty	—															
Disarmament and demobilization	—															

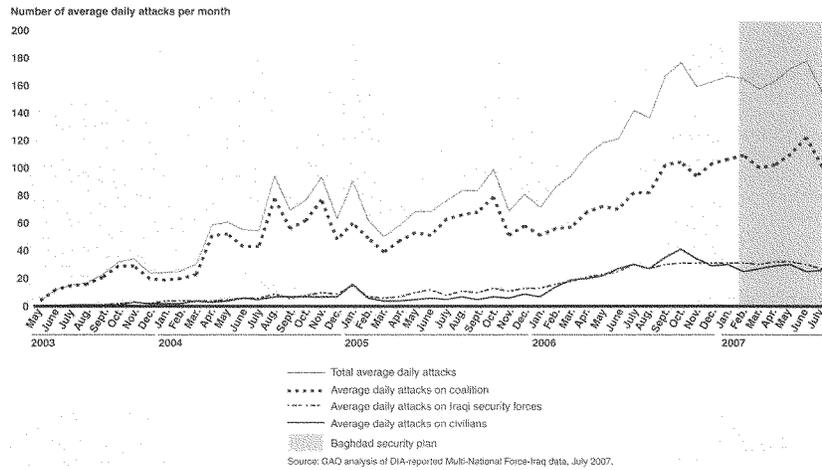
— No legislation drafted
 Source: GAO analysis of Department of State, Department of Defense, UN and Iraqi government data.

- Notes:
- ^aThe Iraqi legislature is considering several competing drafts.
 - ^bThe Iraqi Constitution exempts the law on formation of regions from following the Presidency Council's ratification process that is set out in Article 138 of the Constitution.
 - ^cThe draft deals with broader federal versus provincial powers, according to the United Nations.
 - ^dAccording to State, the Iraqi government may not need a law to set the election date, though to date this is unclear.

Mixed Results in Achieving Security Benchmarks

Two of nine security benchmarks have been met. Specifically, Iraq's government has established various committees in support of the Baghdad security plan and established almost all of the planned Joint Security Stations in Baghdad. The government has partially met the benchmarks of providing three trained and ready brigades for Baghdad operations and eliminating safe havens for outlawed groups. Five other benchmarks have not been met. The government has not eliminated militia control of local security, eliminated political intervention in military operations, ensured even-handed enforcement of the law, increased army units capable of independent operations, and ensured that political authorities made no false accusations against security forces. It is unclear whether sectarian violence in Iraq has decreased—a key security benchmark—since it is difficult to measure perpetrators' intents, and various other measures of population security from different sources show differing trends. As displayed in figure 4, average daily attacks against civilians have remained unchanged from February to July 2007.

Figure 4: Average Number of Daily, Enemy-Initiated Attacks against the Coalition, Iraqi Security Forces, and Civilians (May 2003-July 2007)



Comparison of GAO and Executive Branch Assessments

Public Law 110-28 requires GAO to report to Congress by September 1, 2007,³ on whether or not the government of Iraq has met 18 benchmarks contained in the Act, and the status of the achievement of these benchmarks. The Act requires the administration to report in July and September 2007 on whether satisfactory progress is being made toward meeting the benchmarks. As stated previously, we considered and used a “partially met” rating in several circumstances. Figure 5 compares the two assessments.

³GAO provided this report to Congress on September 4, 2007, the first business day following September 1, 2007.

Figure 5: Comparison of GAO Assessment with Administration's July 2007 Initial Benchmark Assessment Report

Benchmark	GAO assessment	Administration assessment of progress
1. Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2. Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Ba'athification.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydrocarbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6. Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.	<input type="radio"/>	a
7. Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.	<input type="radio"/>	a
8. Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad security plan.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9. Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even-handed enforcement of the law.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation."	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13. Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14. Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
15. Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17. Allocating and spending \$10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
18. Ensuring that Iraq's political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi security forces.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary	3 met, 4 partial, and 11 not met	8 satisfactory, 2 mixed, and 6 unsatisfactory
<input checked="" type="radio"/> Met <input checked="" type="radio"/> Partially met <input type="radio"/> Not met <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfactory <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mixed <input type="checkbox"/> Unsatisfactory		

Source: GAO analysis of UN, U.S., and Iraqi data.

*According to the U.S. State Department, conditions are not present for these benchmarks.

Conclusions

As of August 30, 2007, the Iraqi government met 3, partially met 4, and had not met 11 of 18 legislative, security, and economic benchmarks. The Iraqi government has not fulfilled commitments it first made in June 2006 to advance legislative, security, and economic measures that would promote national reconciliation among Iraq's warring factions. Of particular concern is the lack of progress on de-Ba'athification legislation that could promote greater Sunni participation in the national government and comprehensive hydrocarbon legislation that would distribute Iraq's vast oil wealth. In late August, Iraq's senior Shi'a, Sunni Arab and Kurdish political leaders signed a Unity Accord signaling efforts to foster greater national reconciliation. The Accord covered draft legislation on de-Ba'athification reform and provincial powers laws, as well as setting up a mechanism to release some Sunni detainees being held without charges. However, the polarization of Iraq's major sects and ethnic groups and fighting among Shi'a factions further diminishes the stability of Iraq's governing coalition and its potential to enact legislation needed for sectarian reconciliation.

Reconciliation was also premised on a reduction in violence. While the Baghdad security plan was intended to reduce sectarian violence, it is unclear whether violence has been reduced. Measuring such violence may be difficult since the perpetrators' intents are not clearly known. Other measures, such as the number of enemy-initiated attacks, show that violence has remained high through July 2007.

As the Congress considers the way forward in Iraq, it should balance the achievement of the 18 Iraqi benchmarks with military progress and homeland security, foreign policy, and other goals of the United States. Future administration reports on the benchmarks would be more useful to the Congress if they clearly depicted the status of each legislative benchmark, provided additional quantitative and qualitative information on violence from all relevant U.S. agencies, and specified the performance and loyalties of Iraqi security forces supporting coalition operations.

Recommendations

In preparing future reports to Congress and to help increase transparency on progress made toward achieving the benchmarks, we recommend that:

1. The Secretary of State provide information to the President that clearly specifies the status in drafting, enacting, and implementing Iraqi legislation;

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2. The Secretary of Defense and the heads of other appropriate agencies provide information to the President on trends in sectarian violence with appropriate caveats, as well as broader quantitative and qualitative measures of security; and
 3. The Secretary of Defense and the heads of other appropriate agencies provide additional information on the operational readiness of Iraqi security forces supporting the Baghdad security plan, particularly information on their loyalty and willingness to help secure Baghdad.

We provided drafts of the report accompanying this testimony to the relevant U.S. agencies for review and comment, which we incorporated as appropriate. We received written comments from the Departments of State and Defense and technical comments from the Central Intelligence Agency and National Intelligence Council, which are included in the report. State and DOD concurred with our recommendations but disagreed with our assessment of certain benchmarks. Although we analyzed classified data, including the August 2007 National Intelligence Estimate for Iraq, the testimony and report only contain unclassified information, as of August 30, 2007. We issued a classified report to supplement the information discussed in our report.⁴

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Contact and Staff Acknowledgements

If you or your staffs have any questions about this testimony, please contact me at (202) 512-5500 or Mr. Joseph A. Christoff, Director, International Affairs and Trade, at (202) 512-8979. Key contributors to this testimony include Stephen Lord, David Bruno, Howard Cott, Timothy Fairbanks, Mattias Fenton, Whitney Havens, Dorian Herring, Bruce Kutnick, Judith McCloskey, Tetsuo Miyabara, and Kathleen Monahan.

⁴GAO-07-1223C.

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**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS SUBMITTED FOR THE
RECORD**

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. ELLSWORTH

Mr. ELLSWORTH. In your thorough analysis of whether the government of Iraq has met the 18 benchmarks contained in Public Law 110–28, you came to the determination that Benchmark #6, enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty, remains unmet. Your assessment for Benchmark #6 states, “There are currently thousands of detainees, including over 24,000 held by coalition forces. According to multinational force officials, there could be considerably more detainees in the future as the Baghdad security plan progresses. The Coalition’s Task Force 134 is building and expanding prison facilities to accommodate additional detainees.”

Please assess, in your judgment, the current state of the Iraqi judicial system in managing detainees. Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has promised to make the Iraqi judicial system more independent. How has the Central Criminal Court of Iraq functioned in delivering legal judgments on insurgent and criminal captives?

Mr. WALKER. GAO has not reviewed the detainee management program or the workings of the Central Criminal Court in Iraq.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. MURPHY

Mr. MURPHY. Is the President’s surge helping or hindering efforts to train and equip Iraqi security forces. To what extent has there been a diminution of effort in training these forces over the time frame of the surge?

Mr. WALKER. GAO is currently conducting work to assess the Iraqi security forces; however, it has not evaluated the impact of the surge on the U.S. train and equip program. Training and equipping Iraqi security forces has been and continues to be a major component of the U.S. strategy in Iraq. Since 2003, the U.S. government has provided about \$20 billion to train and equip Iraqi security forces.

The administration’s September 2007 benchmark assessment states that while only a small percentage of battalions are rated as capable of completely independent counterinsurgency operations (Operational Readiness Assessment Level One), over 75 percent are capable of planning, executing, and sustaining operations with some Coalition support and making significant contributions to combat operations (that is, are rated as Operational Readiness Assessment Level two). The administration reports that the greatest constraints on independent operations are a shortage of trained leaders and immature logistics capability.

As we reported in March 2007, several conditions continue to negatively impact the development of Iraq security forces.¹ First, the Iraqi security forces are not a single unified force with a primary mission of countering the insurgency in Iraq. About 40 percent of the Iraqi security forces have a primary mission of counterinsurgency—specifically, the Iraqi army. The other major component—the Iraqi police—has civilian law enforcement as its primary mission. Second, high rates of absenteeism and poor ministry reporting result in an overstatement of the number of Iraqi security forces present for duty. Third, sectarian and militia influences have divided the loyalties of Iraqi security forces. Numerous U.S. and UN reports have also stated that militias still retain significant control or influence over local security in parts of Baghdad and other areas of Iraq.

In July 2007, the administration reported that militia presence is still strong and will likely remain so until the security situation begins to stabilize. The report stated that the Iraqi government has made unsatisfactory progress toward eliminating

¹See GAO, *Stabilizing Iraq: Factors Impeding the Development of Capable Iraqi Security Forces* (GAO–07–612T, March 13, 2007).

militia control of local security, which continues to negatively affect the public perception of the authority and fairness of the Iraqi government. Similarly, the September 2007 report by the Independent Commission on the Security Forces in Iraq stated that sectarianism in the National Police undermines its ability to provide security and should be disbanded.

