



**Statement of the Co-Chairs of the Iraq Study Group
January 11, 2007
James A. Baker, III and Lee Hamilton**

We are pleased that the president reviewed the report of the Iraq Study Group carefully and seriously. Some of our recommendations are reflected in the new approach that he outlined Wednesday, while others have not been adopted.

We agree with President Bush that, "the situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people," the consequences of failure are severe, and "only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people." As the president said, "the essential U.S. security mission" in Iraq is the training of Iraqi forces. We support increasing the number of American advisers embedded in Iraqi Army units with the goal that the Iraq government will assume control of security in all provinces in Iraq by November 2007. We recommended many of the benchmarks President Bush outlined for Iraq, and agree that now is the time for the Iraqi government to act.

We hope the president and his administration will further consider other recommendations of the Iraq Study Group. The president did not suggest the possibility of a transition that could enable U.S. combat forces to begin to leave Iraq. The president did not state that political, military or economic support for Iraq would be conditional on the Iraqi government's ability to meet benchmarks. Within the region, the president did not announce an international support group for Iraq, including all of Iraq's neighbors, nor mention measures we suggested to reach a comprehensive Arab-Israeli settlement.

The Iraq Study Group indicated that it could "support a short-term redeployment or surge of American combat forces to stabilize Baghdad" complemented by comprehensive political, economic and diplomatic efforts. Questions, of course, remain about the nature of the surge. We are encouraged by the president's statement that "America's commitment is not open-ended" and Secretary Gates' statement that the addition of 21,000 troops would be viewed as a temporary surge. The violence in Baghdad will not end without national reconciliation.

America's political leaders have a responsibility to seek a bipartisan consensus on issues of war and peace. We want to be helpful in forging that unity of effort. We welcome President Bush's commitment to form a working group with congressional leaders that will work across party lines in pursuit of a common policy.

Media contact:
John Williams
713-301-6816
john.williams@bakerbotts.com