SPEECH OF
HON. PETER A. DeFAZIO
OF OREGON
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2007

- **Mr. DeFAZIO:** Madam Speaker, tomorrow the President will announce he has yet another new strategy for victory in Iraq. This strategy will come just over a year after he released his last strategy for victory in Iraq, which was completed in November 2005.

- According to the Brookings Institution's Iraq Index, since the President released his last plan, more than 900 U.S. troops have been killed in Iraq, more than 2,200 Iraqi police and military forces have also been killed. The number of Iraqi civilians killed has risen from 1,778 in January 2006 to nearly 3,300 in December 2006. The number of multiple fatality bombings has increased from 41 in November 2005 to 69 in December 2006.

- In other words, by virtually every measure, the violence in Iraq is worse this year than last year, the political situation is more volatile and deteriorating by the day and the civil war is expanding.

- After nearly four years, after more than 3,000 U.S troops have been killed, after more than 22,500 U.S. troops have been injured--nearly half of whom have been injured severely enough that they cannot return to duty--and after more than $300 billion of U.S. taxpayers' money has been spent with no benefit to U.S. national security and with little progress toward stabilizing Iraq, what is the President's response? All indications are that he will propose to compound the failure by escalating the war, putting tens of thousands of more American lives at risk, and borrowing tens or hundreds of billions of dollars more in order to prosecute a war that cannot be won militarily.

- It is past time to end the open-ended commitment the President has made in Iraq. Reportedly the President will propose benchmarks the Iraqi government must achieve, but since there will be no consequences if the Iraqis fail, these benchmarks are meaningless. The Iraqi government has failed to follow through on previous commitments, yet the President's response has only been to express continuing support for the Iraqi Prime Minister. His proposal this week will likely be more of the same.

- As long as the U.S. military remains stuck with the President's pledge of unlimited support, Iraqi politicians and security forces will use the U.S. presence as a crutch and will fail to take the necessary steps to solve their differences, establish an effective and inclusive government, end sectarian violence, and create a secure and prosperous society.

- Democracy and stability cannot be imposed on unwilling parties. As New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman said recently on Meet the Press, a stable, pluralistic democracy in Iraq is everyone's second choice except ours. The Shias want power for themselves. The Sunnis want power. And the Kurds want power and independence. What they don't want to do is share that power, and we can't make them.

- Being confronted with the reality of a U.S. withdrawal should force the Iraqi factions to reach the political compromises necessary to move their country forward. If not, there is no reason to prolong the U.S. involvement in Iraq if we want a stable country more than the Iraqi people and their elected leaders do.

- The U.S. cannot impose freedom, security, and unity in Iraq by force. Those worthy goals can only be achieved by the Iraqi people themselves, which will only happen when the Iraqi people and their leaders decide to put aside their sectarian differences. The U.S. cannot force Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds to make peace or to act for the common good. They have been in conflict for l,400 years. Nor should the U.S. military be forced to remain in Iraq essentially as an army for one side of a civil war. The U.S. military cannot solve the sectarian violence and the lack of political reconciliation in Iraq. Only the Iraqis can.

- In a minute, I will address where I believe we need to go from here. But, before that, I want to briefly review how we got into Iraq and how the Bush administration's many mistakes have brought us to the disaster we face today.

- The list of the Bush administration's failures with respect to Iraq is long and well-known. But it bears repeating, particularly since the administration may be making similar ones with respect to Iran.

- The administration manipulated, misrepresented and in some cases outright lied about the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction programs and non-existent ties to al-Qaeda in order to build support in Congress and among the public for the war.

- The administration went in with too few troops to successfully carry out the mission.

- The administration went in with few real allies.

- The administration went in with no exit strategy.

- The administration failed to stop the rampant looting in the wake of Saddam Hussein's ousting, which set back recovery and reconstruction.

- The administration failed to understand the ethnic tensions that were unleashed in Iraq.

- The administration failed to understand the ethnic power bases in Iraq.

- The administration relied on Iraqi exiles with no support among the Iraqi people.

- The administration did not turn over authority to Iraqis early on. Instead, they stood up the Coalition Provision Authority to run Iraq, which cemented in the minds of the Iraqis that U.S. forces were an occupying power.

- The administration largely used inexperienced political hacks to run the CPA rather than experienced foreign service-types or individuals with subject matter expertise.

- The administration disbanded the Iraqi army, which added to the security problems by creating a large pool of unemployed, armed, and alienated Iraqis.

- The administration purged the Iraqi government of all Baath party members, even low-level Baathists, which continues to hamper the delivery of even basic government services to Iraqis since the bureaucracy has basically been created from scratch.

- The administration failed to conduct proper oversight of reconstruction resulting in waste, fraud, and abuse, poor contractor performance and Iraqi expectations for progress not being met.

- This is not an exhaustive list, but it highlights some major failures that have contributed to the chaos in Iraq.

- The administration claims that what has happened in Iraq was unforeseeable. In reality, many critics predicted the problems in Iraq. The administration just chose to ignore those who raised concerns. The problems in Iraq are actually worse than predicted because of the administration's blunders.

- The administration ignored the doctrine created by its own Secretary of State Colin Powell when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The ``Powell doctrine'' says that the U.S. should go to war only as a last resort and then only with overwhelming force. In his article ``U.S. Forces: Challenges Ahead'' in Foreign Affairs in 1992-93 Powell posed a number of questions to be asked by U.S. policymakers before launching a war. Is a vital national security interest threatened? Do we have a clear, attainable objective? Have the risks and costs been fully and frankly analyzed? Have all other non-violent policy means been exhausted? Is there a plausible exit strategy? Have the consequences been fully considered? Is the action supported by the American people? Does the U.S. have broad international support?

- The answer to these questions in the case of the Iraq war is no. But the administration went ahead anyway and Powell put aside any misgivings he may have had and publicly supported it.

- The administration ignored General Eric Shinseki, then the head of the Army, who testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 25, 2003, that the administration's plans failed to include an adequate number of troops. He said, ``I would say that what's been mobilized to this point--something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers are probably, you know, a figure that would be required. We're talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that's fairly significant, with the kinds of ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems.''

- Secretary Rumsfeld and his deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, called Shinseki's estimate "far off the mark" and "wildly off the mark." Wolfowitz said it would be "hard to believe" more troops would be required for post-war Iraq than to remove Saddam Hussein from power.

- It may have been hard for an ideologue like Mr. Wolfowitz to believe, but it wasn't hard for a military professional like General Shinseki to envision.

- Many Members of Congress also raised concerns. I personally wrote to the President on September 5, 2002. I challenged the supposed threat posed by Iraq's assumed WMD programs. I raised questions about more pressing national security challenges like North

Korea and Iran. I raised questions about the impact the war would have on U.S. relations with allies and our reputation in the world. I posed questions about what the impact of a long-term occupation of Iraq by U.S. forces. I asked about the impact of diverting military and intelligence resources to Iraq from the battle against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. And I raised concerns about the economic impact and the impact on U.S. taxpayers from the war.

- The administration dismissed the concerns and warnings of critics like me and launched this ill-advised war. I voted against it. We're forty-six months into the war, where do we go from here?

- The President apparently believes that the U.S. needs to escalate the conflict in Iraq by sending 30,000 or more additional troops to Iraq. I think that is a mistake. It will not bring stability to Iraq, and I oppose it and will vote against it if given the opportunity.

- Just as importantly, the President's chief military advisors oppose it. As General John Abizaid, then the head of all U.S. forces in the Middle East, testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on November 15, 2006, ``I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, the core commander, General Dempsey, we all talked together. And I said, in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American Troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no. And the reason is because we want the Iraqis to do more. It is easy for the Iraqis to rely upon to us do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future."

- The President didn't like what he heard, which may be why General Abizaid is expected to retire this March. As a Lebanese-American who is fluent in Arabic, his understanding of the region will be greatly missed. General Casey has also been removed as commander of U.S. forces in Iraq.

- Shinseki, Abizaid, Casey. There is a pattern here of the Bush administration ignoring the advice of military leaders and firing them when they don't tell the President what he wants to hear.

- Let me be clear, I do not believe there is any level of U.S. troops that could stabilize Iraq at this point.

- But, I think it is particularly offensive that the President is reportedly planning to put 30,000 additional U.S. lives at risk when that escalation is virtually certain to have little or no

impact on the violence in Iraq. There might be a small, temporary reduction in the chaos in Iraq, but the escalation will not solve the deep and underlying political conflicts that are preventing a long-term resolution to the violence in Iraq.

- The President desperately wants to look like he's trying something new in Iraq in response to the concerns of the American people, but really he's just repeating the same mistakes and compounding previous failures. The administration is trying to prolong the U.S. involvement in Iraq in order to perpetuate the fallacy that the President's original vision for a democratic, pro-U.S., capitalistic, pluralistic Iraq is still achievable. It is not. The American Enterprise Institute military escalation plan for Iraq, which is the basis for the President's proposals, has a timeline of 18-24 months, conveniently enough leaving the mess in Iraq for the next President, meaning President Bush would never have to admit his policies in Iraq have been a failure but at a very steep cost to our troops taxpayers.

- The administration already increased the number of U.S. troops in Baghdad this summer and has occasionally increased the number of troops throughout Iraq, yet the violence against our troops and Iraqi security forces and civilians continues to increase. Following the influx of troops this summer in Operation Forward Together, the violence in Iraq actually increased. Weekly attacks increased by 15 percent while the number of Iraqi civilian casualties increased by 51 percent.

- Based on historical analysis, counterinsurgency experts estimate it takes around 20 U.S. troops per 1,000 inhabitants to successfully fight a counterinsurgency. To achieve that ratio in Baghdad alone would require 120,000 troops. Even with the escalation proposed by the President, we'd only have around 40,000 troops in Baghdad. For all of Iraq, it would require 500,000 troops. We only have around 140,000 there today.

- General Shinseki and others based their original recommendation for several hundred thousand troops on this historical analysis. But, the time in which a large number of forces could stabilize Iraq has long since passed.

- The bottom line is that a proposal to increase U.S. troop levels in Baghdad or Iraq more generally by 30,000 troops in not a serious effort to restore stability to Iraq. Essentially, the President is proposing to put more lives at risk with little or no chance of success.

- The President and his allies justify the continuing U.S. presence in Iraq by claiming that if we don't fight there, we'll have to fight here at home. However, the Iraqi Sunni rejectionists, Saddamists, and nationalist Shias, who combined make up the vast bulk of the insurgents and militias committing violence in Iraq, have no interest in attacking the U.S.

homeland. They just want U.S. military forces out of their own country. They have no designs on our country. So it is misleading, at best, to argue that if we don't fight there, we will fight them in the streets of the United States.

- It is also misleading to pretend that if the U.S. leaves that somehow Osama bin Laden will take control of Iraq. There is no chance that the Shias and Kurds, who represent around 80 percent of the population in Iraq, will allow foreign terrorist elements to take over the country. Even the majority of the Sunnis have grown tired of foreign terrorists operating in Iraq.

- A better strategy is to announce a timeline for bringing our troops home over the next 6 months to a year. The administration has always set timelines for political developments in Iraq--for elections, for the drafting of the constitution etc. The administration argued such timelines were necessary to focus the energy of Iraq's leaders and to force compromises. We need to do the same on the military side.

- In the interim, I have also proposed that U.S. troops be removed from front line combat positions in Iraqi cities and towns, turning over daily security patrols, interactions with citizens, and any offensive security actions to the Iraqis themselves.

- The training and equipping of Iraqi security forces should be accelerated and the sectarian balance must be improved.

- The U.S. must renounce any U.S. interest in constructing permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq.

- It is also important to accelerate reconstruction spending and grant the bulk of reconstruction contracts to local companies employing Iraqis rather than multinational corporations, whom have proven inefficient, inflexible, sometimes fraudulent and have even imported workers rather than employing Iraqis.

- The U.S. embassy in Baghdad should also be reduced to normal size and authority rather than establishing one of the largest embassies in the world.

- And, the U.S. must engage in robust diplomacy with all factions in Iraq, except the foreign terrorists and domestic al-Qaeda elements, and work with Iraq's neighbors in an effort to bring about political reconciliation among Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds.

- Our troops have done all that has been asked of them in Iraq. Saddam Hussein is dead. His allies are on the run or in prison. The threat from WMDs in Iraq is nonexistent. Arguably, the war that Congress authorized has been won. Our troops should come home. Congress did not authorize U.S. troops to referee a civil war in Iraq.