

Center for American Progress Action Fund



**SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

**“IRAQ AND NATIONAL SECURITY: A MILITARY  
TRANSFORMATION”**

**INTRODUCTION BY:**

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**FEATURED SPEAKER:**

**REPRESENTATIVE JOE SESTAK (D-PA)**

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MR. LAWRENCE KORB: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Larry Korb. I'm here at the Center for American Progress and on behalf of our president, John Podesta, I'd like to welcome you all to what I think it's going to be a very interesting session this morning.

Now, recently you have heard that things are getting better in Iraq. Well, if you take a look at this morning's paper, I think one would have to basically question that. Eleven ministers have left the cabinet – about one third of the cabinet. And of course, the parliament's on vacation. In Tal Afar, which the president last year said was an example of how “clear, hold and build” works, 31 people died. Six American brave men and women were killed just yesterday, 12 more were wounded. In Basra, in the south, you have three Shiite factions fighting. And, again, this is an area where we thought we had things under control or at least the British thought that they had things under control. And in Baqubah, 30 bodies were found slain, and again another example of sectarian violence.

We at the Center here since 2005 have been very concerned about the situation in Iraq and we've put forward a number of plans. Our latest plan called “Strategic Reset” is out there. And if you haven't taken a copy on the way in, please help yourself on the way back. And in that report, we lay down a plan for not only dealing with the situation in Iraq but enhancing American security all throughout the Middle East. And my colleague, Brian Katulis, and I were helped by a great number of young men and women who really make this place go: Peter Jewel (ph), Sean Duggan, Max Bergmann. These are the people who work day and night basically to help us deal with this situation.

Now, to deal with the situation today, we're very pleased to have Congressman Joseph Sestak from Pennsylvania. For those of you that don't know it, before Congressman Sestak was elected, he was a career naval officer. And if you take a look at his career, it's incredible. In his time in the Navy, he had six operational tours, commanded everything from a frigate all the way up to a battle group. And he also had time in the midst of doing all these to get his Masters and Ph.D. from Harvard, and he also served time in the Joint Staff working for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, time in the White House working on the National Security Council staff, and working on the Navy staff.

He left the Navy. His highest position when he left as a three-star or vice admiral was a deputy chief of naval operations. And so please join me in welcoming to the podium Congressman Joseph Sestak, who will speak about “Iraq and National Security: A Military Transformation.”

(Applause.)

REP. JOE SESTAK (D-PA): Thank you. Thank you very much. I really do appreciate this. Some people are wondering why I'm in Washington when this weekend we ended our session. It's because I promised my daughter that I'd build her – she's six years old – a castle. So I was at Home Depot yesterday trying to put together a castle for her.

I'm very honored to speak today. I want to try to make four points and then I really would like to open up to the questions and answers because that would, in my mind, bear more out than just listening to me talk. I would like to talk about Iraq, what I believe, and what I believe we need to do, particularly as a Democratic Party that has majority in the Congress.

Second, I'd like to place Iraq within what I believe is a failure to have had a strategy of engagement in this world, which we must return to. And third, I'd like to talk – just touch it upon it one of the failures of Iraq, one of the tragic outcomes. And just one of them is the failure for a military to properly transform to meet future threats. And I'll touch upon a fourth one at the very end – a topic – if there's time remaining: Iraq.

I had command of a carrier battle group in the war in Afghanistan. I'd actually been on the ground in Afghanistan about two months after that conflict began. I'd seen what needed to be done. I then returned with the carrier battle group and 18 months later came back on the ground in Afghanistan and saw what hadn't been done as they diverted our attention and our resources – civil affairs units, psychological operations units, Special Forces units – to Iraq. More importantly, as mentioned, the attention of our nation and international community, all was diverted to Iraq. As Afghanistan has begun prey to terrorists and Taliban slipped into the southern provinces, and there's safe havens in Pakistan as the strategic center of gravity of terrorism has moved there.

I think that is a poster-child for the impact – the negative impact, the significant negative impact that Iraq has had upon our overall security. I am not antiwar. I am pro-security. And that's why I believe that we must have for the best type of strategy for the way forward a date that is certain by which we would redeploy from Iraq.

As I took that carrier battle group out of the Indian Ocean, I had 30 ships: ships from Japan, Greece, Italy, elsewhere throughout this world. And as we left Afghanistan, fighting there, and slipped through the Straits of Malacca into the Persian Gulf to do combat operations there as a precursor to that conflict, only two nations in those 30 ships, 20 of which were foreign ships, came with me: England – Great Britain – and Australia. Right then I knew something was wrong. We had gone into Bosnia and the first Desert Storm with over 50 percent of the coalition forces non-U.S. forces. This one we did with about 10 percent.

Everyone knows the situation in Iraq. What I honestly believe is that we have doubled down on a bad bet by believing that this surge could work. We will hear that the sun is beginning to rise when General Petraeus comes forward with his report, that there has been some improvement in Iraq. I saw, when I was there with Senator Hagel a few months ago, Anbar Province in particular has had an increase in its security environment for the better – for the significantly better aspects of what's needed to be done. But that effort began last fall, almost a year ago – a little less than a year ago – as tribal sheiks saw that their 14 or 15-year-old sons were being run over by a truck 14 or 15 times in front of their eyes as the family was forced to stand there.

What I see is the following: is that there will be some harbingers that more military security by this surge actually does improve the environment. But when General Petraeus gave us an update a few weeks ago in the Pentagon, what I heard as metrics for that increase in security harkened back to when I joined the military back during the Vietnam War days. I heard how many ammunition dumps had been captured or found; how many al Qaeda operatives had been killed or captured; how many networks had been discovered and broken up. I heard nothing about the benchmarks upon which to measure it. How many ammunition dumps are there out there? How many more terrorists have grown in the past six, seven months since we began the surge?

And so a static picture that harkens back not exactly as a body count, but as a static picture, again, with a failure to have a dynamic understanding of our intelligence is seeing out there in the growth or the decrease. And those other indicators that the general is going to bring forth, I think does not do us justice. Anecdotal information is not sufficient in the military security area. If our intelligence cannot tell us that, how can one say that our strategy is working? But more than that, I honestly believe that the only solutions to Iraq is, as General Petraeus himself has said, a political accommodation in the future.

I bemoan the day that somehow we permitted a military man, a very good four-star general, to come forward in September and set the tone of the debate for how we are doing in Iraq. Everyone from that general to the Baker-Hamilton study said the only success that can be brought out in Iraq is if we achieve success in the political sphere. So when I was there with Senator Hagel, for the best three days I've had in Congress traveling with him, what I heard when I went to the Sunni dominated Anbar Province was that its security is increasing, but as we look to the east, to Baghdad, no one is there welcoming us in.

And as we went to Baghdad and met with the Prime Minister Maliki and the senior leadership of that government, what we heard was that as they look to the west and consider the re-Ba'athification law to let the Sunnis in to that government as strong players in a future Iraq is that the de-Ba'athification law that was being considered to do that was appeasement to the Sunnis and not important.

So I step back and say that the only strategy is to have a date that is certain, to where those in that country understand, and the regional nations that surround that country, that the United States will not be there in the long term and that we will redeploy our forces. Remaining strong in the region in our bases in Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, elsewhere in that region – the UAE, carrier battle groups, amphibious ready groups. We have strong interest in that region. And sit back and understand that that redeployment must begin. It must begin for two primary reasons. One, our Army is about to unravel with acceleration come the springtime. And second, we have to be about our nation's security interests elsewhere in this world.

I honestly believe to do that the Democratic Party of which I am part has to turn from what heretofore I believe has been almost pure opposition to this war and turn to beginning to author or to be part of helping to author an implementable, comprehensive,

Middle East aftermath in terms of security, because we own this war. We, America. This is not Bush's war. When men and women wearing the cloth of this nation are out there fighting, it is our war. And the Democratic Party – the majority party in Congress – has to stop just bringing up short measures that one can vote for because they do show opposition and some concern for interests such as readiness and rest for our troops, and step back to do what a Congress is meant to do where it says it's opposed to the war, the majority does, at least in the House side, and begin to understand that it must also address the aftermath.

Ending this war is necessary, but insufficient. How and the means by which we end this war is more important because it has so much to do with the safety of our troops and the security of that region. Americans are tired of this war, but at the same time they want to salvage the best of the situation. I believe we need a bipartisan approach. As hard as that is to do, the titans of Congress need to step forward, and that may mean compromising.

But there's three elements out there that I think give one a sense that we could come together. The first dimension: it's an Army that if it doesn't begin to redeploy will unravel in terms of readiness. There's not one Army unit here at home today – active, Guard, Reserve – that is in state of readiness to deploy anywhere in this world if another contingency were to happen, for instance in Korea. When asked that during a hearing at the House Armed Services Committee, Admiral Fallon, who is departing from the Pacific to take command of the Central Command, said that we have an Air Force and a Navy that can fill in. Then why have we had war plans all this time that have depended upon an Army to deploy to South Korea, if there was a conflict, if we don't need them today?

Number two, the time that will take to do that is not short. Everybody remembers Black Hawk Down. Sixty-three hundred troops in Somalia in that October, 1993. We inserted another 19,000 service personnel into that area in order to ensure that the military, which is most vulnerable during a withdrawal, was well protected. Six months it took us before those 6,300 troops were out because the White House recognized and remembered that during the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan of 120,000 troops in nine months that it took them, ill-prepared they did it, they lost 500 troops on the way out. We have over 160,000 troops in Iraq. We have over 50,000 to 100,000 U.S. contractors there. The number jumps around.

There's one road out: Road Tampa. There's 68 just – excuse me – 64 forward operating bases. An Army plan to look at this in 2005, 2006 said that if you close four of those bases at a time, it would take 100 days to close four, assuming that they were all medium-sized forward operating bases. Work the math out and you're already up close to four years. Step back and look at Kuwait. They've got the washing facilities, two of them, that they can clean the gear up, shrink wrap the helicopters, put them on the military lift ships that are coming in. You can handle two to two and a half combat brigades through Kuwait at a time. Maybe you could increase it if you got – built or borrowed from the Kuwaitis a third or fourth facility. There is 40 combat brigade equivalents – equivalents if you take all logistical troops and add them up – that have to be gotten out of Iraq.

My point is this: we must redeploy to salvage the Army's future readiness. The time to do it will take at least – at least – a year. Now, probably safely, to do it well, 15 to 24 months. So you have a certain timeline by which third – you then can do a lot. I believe that the road out of Iraq is through Tehran. While I was there with Senator Hagel, I heard everywhere about the undue influence of Iran. It is involved destructively. You read about it all the time and you hear about it all the time. A date certain in my mind is the remaining catalyst we have, the remaining leverage we have to say to the regional nations we won't be there. And as the head of the National Intelligence Council said in a hearing, Iran does not want a fractionalized government or a failed state if we redeploy.

And so for a nation that has discussed issues with the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China's in decades past not to sit down with confidence and deal with these nations across the board on all issues, engagement with consequences, and a nation that had oil riots back in the week before July when the price went from \$0.25 to \$0.38, it must import 50 percent at least of its refinery products, how can we not believe that we don't have the ability? If you're ready to engage with a lot of toughness and diplomacy, we cannot have an approach to the Middle East in those 15 to 24 months – or excuse me, Persian Gulf – that can (wrought?) in accommodation. Because if we don't redeploy, eventually our readiness around this world will have been hurt so significantly that I believe that U.S. readiness, U.S. security will be harmed if we remain much longer than that in Iraq.

I'll quickly close, so I can take questions. I honestly do believe that I take this set piece of Iraq and put it in a larger environment where there is no strategy of engagement. We've watched what we've done as we walked away from North Korea – an agreed framework and missile moratorium that the Clinton administration handed over to the Bush administration. And because of the allegations that some now question that it was cheating on pursuing nuclear material, we have seen this administration walk away from continuing to negotiate with them. And yet several years later, it has come around to exactly where the Clinton administration left it: a framework where it'll stop and close down the nuclear reactors, but they did so after at least the material for seven more nuclear weapons has been produced. You've had a nuclear device explode and you've broken the missile moratorium.

I believe we have absented our leadership with Iran over the past six years to the European Union, and we've absented until recently where we've begun to discuss it with him. In the Middle East, I can't say who we've given leadership there. If I've learned anything in the Clinton White House while I was there as director of defense policy, is nations are less willing to take risk unless U.S. leadership is there.

I believe this type of engagement, often through international institutions, which we didn't do before World War I – World War II, the absence of the failure; that is, to have the League of Nations come about. No World Bank, no IMF. Walking away from arms control treaties, the naval arms control treaties we had with Great Britain and Japan led, in my mind, after the recession set in around the world to a failure to be able to have

the international institutions to help manage it and give rise to fascism and eventually a war that we won.

We took a different approach in the Cold War. We actually created almost 45 to 50 armed – military coalition treaties or agreements. The IMF, the World Bank, the United Nations were established. And somehow we won the Cold War. I think an approach where we go it alone at times is necessary. We have specific interest for ourselves we must always protect. But to do that time in and time out on every case, from Korea to the Middle East, to forgetting where the real strategic center of gravity is – China – over the next century for the United States, and it says it grows into a great power, in my mind has absented the United States' ability to lead this world.

I've gone on way too long. I will mention that I believe one of the failures – since I come from so many in the military – is that the failure has been for us to transform this military. Mr. Rumsfeld was right when he came in: we needed to reform. We needed to reform in particular around what he appeared to be interested in, what we call in the military the C<sup>4</sup>ISR – the command, the control, the communications, the computers that give you the knowledge, because of the intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance assets that can see and then communicate it so that we know.

Imagine if we had known that Japan was going to strike Hawaii or if we'd known North was going to go into South Korea, or we had known Saddam Hussein was going to go into Kuwait, and we had been postured to have a rapid response force. We would not be in Iraq today.

So therefore I believe that this failure to really focus upon a transformation of the military based upon knowledge so we can tell others we know today is not your day. That ability is there. It would take a shift in billions from where we are pursuing some legacy systems – some of them in numbers are still needed, but not in the quantity. We should no longer measure ourselves in how many brigades, how many ships that we have. That's an output. Let's no longer measure ourselves on capacity; that is, but capability. And we have the tools now to measure that capability, having invested millions into those tools to give us an outcome of how best to pursue that future.

My take on it is that the Pentagon responds to three types of incentives. Much like a believe in Iraq, we need to change the behavior of Iran and other nations by changing the incentives by saying we won't be there. I think we need to also make attractive, by a different set of incentives, the ability to start pursuing this transformation. We are motivated in the Pentagon by patriotism, by promotion, and by who controls the money.

The first one, thank the Lord, we have men and women today even in war signing up to serve our nation. The second, the Goldwater-Nichols Act showed that we are actually move by promotion. No one wanted to go to Joint Staff before the Goldwater-Nichols Act in late '80s until we said you won't go promoted unless you go there. I'll tell you, it was – you couldn't get though the door.

And third, who controls the money – the greatest area of commonality. As people want to say what's the right roles and missions and differentiate the military, they're forgetting, let's look for what's common. In the past, Truman's era, we said roles and missions. Now we look for what's common. And the great global commons is no longer the seas. It's cyber space, where C4ISR has so much to do. That money should no longer belong to the services. It should be moved to the joint. Who has the money means when not just the requirements are established, but actually the money is put there to make sure the established requirements are met in a timely joint way.

And as I end, I just said there'll be a fourth one, but I doubt we have time to get into it, so just let me mention it. As I look back at 31 wonderful years in the military, I think the right question that can be posed is did the Joint Chiefs of Staff protect the armed services from bad judgment, from questionable orders as they've – as we've – gotten ourselves into a strategic position of vulnerability? How have we, after General Shinseki, raised our military leaders who now run our military? As they've looked at where we are today and put a mirror upon ourselves, much like that book that General Shelton used to hand out, *Dereliction of Duty*, and look back to see how well we as military men and women actually took care and stood up for the right judgments to be made on how, or how we ventured forth to say we should use our armed services in the pursuit of our common defense.

Larry, I went on a bit too long –

MR. KORB: No, that was great.

REP. SESTAK: – and I apologize, but I'd be happy to take questions.

MR. KORB: Thank you very, very much for that very thoughtful (inaudible).

(Applause.)

We're now ready for your question. Two things: one, wait for the microphone so we can all hear you, and the other is if you would identify yourself, who you are and the organization you're from, I would appreciate it. And please make them questions. We've already had a great speech here.

So who would like the first question? Yes, sir? Over there.

Q: Thank you very much. My name is Steve Trynosky. I'm a presidential management fellow here in D.C.

Congressman, thank you so much for the wonderful talk. You've really touched a lot of things that are in my mind as I sit here and stew in frustration sometimes in my living room watching C-SPAN. I just wanted to touch on, quickly, the Army crisis and then ask a question about your fourth point. I think you're absolutely right and I think we're unraveling even quicker as an Army before the spring's coming. I don't know if I personally want to see, as a reserve officer, anything get worse than it is right now.

But moving on to your fourth point about the types of leaders that we're bringing into the military and where we're going, I'm a little distressed because we're getting into an era right now where our two and three-star admirals and generals are late '70s guys who came in after the all volunteer force began. So we're seeing the beginning of a truly self-selecting officer class. And the question right now is, as we learn from these mistakes, how do we engage and make sure that we have the broadest representation possible in the officer corps of future leaders?

I mean you're old service, the Navy, has no ROTC in New Jersey, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Rhode Island. Great naval states, all with Ivy League universities, but yet we've written off these entire states as sources of ensigns, let alone admirals. Thank you.

REP. SESTAK: You bring up a different aspect of what I was talking about, but an important one. How do we best represent America? Tom Ricks in the *Wall Street Journal* – I think it must have been eight, 10 years ago – wrote a wonderful series that I may have read too much into, but is reflective upon what you said for our volunteer military writ large. He talked and focused upon the Marine Corps – that they brought these young men – and he focused on men at that time – into the Marine Corps, put them through boot camp, where they teach them as the Marines do so well, that you truly are the best and give them that ethos.

He then tracked them as they went back to their hometowns and in their views saw their peers in a different light. Maybe working at a job that they didn't love, and walking through and going through life and coming to grips with life. They came back and he interviewed them again. And there was this sense that we are better than they that Tom Ricks brought out, as I remember those articles. That's not healthy.

And it's absolutely not healthy for what you're saying as you talk about officer leadership. Do we need more diversity? You bet we do. Take my own example: when I went up – I wanted to go to Harvard for graduate school that you had mentioned. Harvard was blacklisted when I applied for it because they have kicked out the ROTC unit. I still wanted to go and I fought it and got through, which showed me that if you want anything in life you've got to fight for it. Don't take the rules.

But my point is this: in a volunteer service it is easy to be, as you said, self-generating and two bad things happen. One – and by the way, I'm for volunteer services because it takes us about a year to train an individual in this new C4ISR cyberspace era to really be ready. And you need to get a return on that investment. But that said, society understands the military less. And so when someone stands up and they want out tomorrow in Iraq, we say wait a moment. Do you remember how long it took us to get out of Somalia? It takes a while for that reality to seep through the practicality and the values our military gives.

On the other hand, I'm worried at times that our military should never ever be in danger of setting itself above or different than the society for which it serves. Am I

concerned? You bet. You look at where we recruit our people today. Take a (unintelligible) from Baltimore all the way to the South, to L.A., just north of L.A., and that's where the vast majority come from. Yes, I am concerned. And I don't know how to do it except to get out and be on the stump. And the last on that issue and if I could I'll end with a quick story, and Larry will be upset I went on so long. Can I –

MR. KORB: No, go ahead.

REP. SESTAK: But the story I'd like to say is George Washington, in my mind and what we have to remember, those who are in the military, is ultimately that we serve our country, not a man who we elect – or a woman in the future – every four years. So that when he was called into that famous meeting by his Army officers at the end of the Revolutionary War, where we adrift under the Articles of Confederation and these men who have sacrificed so much wanted to now install a monarchy because democracy wasn't working, incredulous as it seems, they asked him to be the king.

He demurred – unsuccessful. In that meeting he took out his glasses and a letter to read. He put on his bifocals and then he looked at those men and said, not only have I grown old in the service of my country, but I've grown blind in the service of my country. The coup stopped there. Historians say it's because of his human touch, his leadership. No. He reminded them that we in the military serve our country. And I think your point is so well taken. Although my point I was trying to make was a little bit more – those leaders up here, did they, in taking care of the armed services, best suit and stand forth upon serving our country best? Is that all right?

Q: Carl Leubsdorf for the *Dallas Morning News*.

REP. SESTAK: Yes, sir?

Q: You're very persuasive in your discussion of some of the (substance?) as I suspect most people in the room here would agree with you, but let's return to the real world, or if you can use that term loosely for the Congress. You're going to be faced with the situation next month and the rest of the year where these reports are going to come in. We can already see what the shape of those are going to be: military progress, yes; political progress, well, we wish for more, but if you just keep at it a little more we'll create the opportunity. And the fact is that you can't do anything in Congress unless you get enough Republicans in the Senate to go beyond what they've been willing to do so far.

The administration, on the other hand, all they want to do is keep delaying any action in Congress so that their policy can stay in effect. Is there any real possibility, do you think, that anything is really going to change at the end of this round of reevaluation or is it going to take the fact that next spring, I guess, they're going to run out of troops and they're going to have to bring some home because they won't have anymore? Is that going to be the only way that anything happens over there?

REP. SESTAK: I think the only way that would be successful in pursuing what I recommend is if the actual leaders of the respective caucuses – the leaders come together and recognize that it is not about politics, it is not about even trying to say we just want to make sure we force the other party; let's say, the Republicans, into changing their vote so that we eventually do have a veto-proof majority. I don't think that strategy we can deal with any longer.

Will it be successful? I've tried over the past six to eight weeks to take a lot of time out to present that we should have – and I was unsuccessful – had an updated Baker-Hamilton study ready, because I've talked to Dr. Perry and Congressman Lee Hamilton, to have a general's input come when – have the context of the Iraqi Study Group politically – and the political aspects of it to consider a general's military security situation report.

I don't think you're right that we will be successful, because I can't change it except keep pushing. But I do see elements, talking with congressmen such as Congressmen Frank Wolf, Walter Jones and others and reaching out slowly that I think two things: one, in the national aspect only if the leaders of our caucus will reach across and recognize that this country – they own the aftermath with this country. Will we be successful? And the aftermath is so great in its consequences, it has to do it for our country. I can't guarantee you they will.

But second, the Democratic Party should step back and look at itself and say, there has been a deficit for 40 years of national security credentials in the Democratic Party. And it has taken pains over the past year, year and a half, to try to resurrect its ability to lead on this issue. And it may very much, soon by – as the dog will catch the car. And if it is not talking about the aftermath, this Democratic Party for its own self-interest, which is less important than this country's, but nevertheless is going to be seen as we said get out, but we never said how we'd deal with the aftermath. Even if their strategy were not to work, we should be talking about the aftermath because Americans want to salvage the best of it.

So to answer your questions, now is when we need titans to step forward to do it. And there are – they have to come forward for the good of this country. And it's all I keep pressing for, unsuccessfully thus far.

Q: (Off mike.)

REP. SESTAK: I've seen a lot of people who could be titans. For instance, Senator Hagel. I'm very taken. As I said, the best three days I had. And I think we need to be reaching out across the aisle. If I've learned anything in the military it's that a change comes from the top, if you want it. Whether it's Admiral Zumwalt and how he changed the Navy for not – being a race – a discriminatory service, you need leadership at the top. And I think this is where we have to change. Right here: from pure opposition to maybe compromising that it's a goal, not a certain end date, and we have the time to do this and do what we must for the country.

Q: Good morning, Congressman. I'm Paul Marino, I work with the EIR. I want to follow up on the titan question. There are 18, maybe titans, who have joined Congressman Kucinich in signing his bill for the impeachment of the vice president. Now there are some that are just thinking that you have to remove the author of the policy before changing the policy. I want to know what your thought about that. Would that be helpful? And further, it strikes me that just signing the impeachment resolution is not enough. We might have to redefine our relationship to China, Russia, and India where great projects are the other of the day so that we can begin to figure out how to stabilize Iraq or the neighboring states.

REP. SESTAK: In the first half of that, I am against impeachment because I served for President Clinton. I saw how impeachment can just stop the American process. If this nation needs anything, it needs to move forward. It's like Yogi Berra says: when you come to a fork in a road, take it. We've got to go down of some fork in this road. And delaying this entire process because of the rightful concern about accountability – you have to weigh the ability to move forward on dubious chances of success versus getting this country going.

This last election, I think most importantly was about change, but change in “come on, Congress. Get it together and affect something good for this nation.” So that's where I put impeachment. Do I think they should be held accountable? You bet. But let's do it through the committee way, where if something comes come up as Henry Waxman is doing, it comes.

The second one, if I understood the answer to your question – do I think we need a different approach to China and other nations? I backpacked through China, back in 1986, the first year that independent travel was permitted in that country – '86 or '85 – for about 40-some days. Flew into Beijing, backpacked out, grabbed trains, came out in Hong Kong and said, whoa, this country's going to be something. I have to tell you, that's my concern politically, economically.

We'll just take one small aspect. Right now, when let's say it's Germany buys some oil from Saudi Arabia. The currency is exchanged, eventually has to come back to United States because they do it in American currency or equivalence. And it goes to the Federal Reserve and we give them money. China is about to embark because of its clout upon – and we know every single transaction that is done. We have very good transparency of all the transactions in the world so that we're able to say, whoa, where is some of that bad money happening? The bad money that the terrorists use or the others – or criminal gangs. So we have transparency.

Now China is embarked within the next year to try to say no, no, no. Because of our clout, we will come back to the U.S. to change dollars into Yuan or whatever, but we're going to bundle it all, give you a big wad of it. You're not going to be able to see the individual transactions. And you what? Our bankers, understandably because they want to lose out on the action, are flocking to help be in control of that. That's just a small way that the emergence of this China is so important for us to deal with in a

positive way. Not as the old Soviet Union, but being the honest broker in a region that's rightfully wondering what will this emergence mean.

And I hope I'm answering your questions, but my mind, that's the tragedy of Iraq. We went to where terrorism wasn't, left it from where we were, and now we aren't engaged in this war, because we don't have the time of effort as our men and women are at war.

Q: Admiral, last week – Richard Sisk, *New York Daily News*. Last week, Secretary Gates was in Kuwait, looked at a couple of the ports, a couple of the facilities that might possibly be used if withdrawal ever comes about. But you've said, even after a date certain – a year, 15 month, 20 months for significant withdrawals. I think everybody has a problem understanding why this is so – last weekend we moved 220,000 people up to the Bronx for a couple of ballgames at Yankee Stadium, got them all fed, got them all a bunch of beer, got them back out of there on the IRT. Why is this so difficult? As someone who's spent his life loading ships, why is it such a problem?

REP. SESTAK: I've got to tell you. This is the question for six months when I voted – I voted and took heat for it, but I voted to support the resolutions that would have – the appropriations to keep the money funding to our troops that would have voted out in July and I've been talking about it ever since. First off, as they went up to the Bronx, they weren't under fire.

Q: (Off mike, laughter.)

REP. SESTAK: Brilliant you say? So you step back and look at it. Let me just go into a few details. This is so important to understand. Because when said that redeployment has to do in the aftermath with the safety of our troops as well as our post (unintelligible) security is you have X amount of time now because the reality is you can't do it in a short period of time – that we have time to work other issues, which means we should become (unintelligible) to be able to work with Republicans because it isn't tomorrow. It's probably 15, 18 to 24 months at best.

Here's why. Let me – in Kuwait, they have two washing facilities. They take the tanks, break them apart clean them up, because there's bugs in there that you don't want to come back to the United States. And the Navy does the customs work there. Then they shrink wrap the helicopters, put them on the ships. There's seven berths there. The U.S. gets two. We could probably get a third. That's okay, there's enough berths there that ships can pull in.

Then you can only handle, as I mentioned, two to two and a half brigades at a time – brigade combat teams. There's 20 brigade combat teams, there's 40 brigade combat teams equivalent, two – let's say conservatively two into 20, 40 is 20 months. Now you could built a third facility or borrow one from the Kuwaitis, because I think they have a third one we could do and you could speed that up down to 15 or 18 months.

Second, that's not the long pole in the tent. The long pole in the tent is this: there's 64 forward operating bases – and I've touched upon this. You could tell everyone to jump into your Humvee, jump in your tank and drive down Road Tampa. The military rightfully, understandably doesn't want to that. Because more men and women on the road, more casualties in what they expect to be a non-permissive environment if we begin the redeployment soon.

What we're going to have to do is take those Humvees, put them on what are called HETs – heavy equipment transporters. So you put three of four – or two or three tanks on these and you only have two drivers with security around them, rather than having all the tank crews and everyone else there line this road, because this road has 2,000 vehicles a day going north to feed our troops – 2,000 a day to feed our troops and take care of them. All of a sudden you're going to try to take these HETs from 64 different locations and you're going to get them all together, you're going to coordinate which ones you close down, because you can't close them all at first – at once. You've got to get these Humvees and other vehicles onto these HETs, put them there; get the men and women over to the airport and fly them out in C130s that have about 50 per C130 and I've forgotten how many a C17 can take out. That's not the long pole in the tent.

And then you've got to slip them into this security line going down, have the security around it, also the overhead flights to look down upon it and to get them the road just in time to get cleaned up as the other two to two and a half are done, slip them into that, and get them onto a ship – very complicated. As we say in the military, amateurs do tactics, experts do logistics.

And so the issue here is how many of those forward operating bases do you close? If you close them all up and clean up environmentally, probably 100 days per an average FOB – forward operating base. If you do four at a time, figure it out how long. If you do eight at a time or do you turn them over to the Iraqis. Remember, this is billions of dollars. The British just turned them over and they got ransacked. How do we want to do it? Could turn around and just have them all drive out? Yes. Is that what we want to do as the Soviet Union did leaving Afghanistan? So as you work your way through coordinating airlift safely, coordinating all the HETs that have to be – that are there, that we need to drive them out. How many FOBs you close at a time? And how many brigades you can get through Kuwait?

Now, they say you can get through Jordan and Turkey. They don't have washing stations there, and the political environment is such that, as I asked in the hearing yesterday, the tendency would be to go down road Tampa to Kuwait, because we have the facilities, we have the port there, but to do it in a way – and approximately 15 months is probably pushing it to do it safely, unless you just walked away from these FOBs. By the way, when you're done that – those 40 brigade combat equivalents – the Army says that you'd still leave behind 70,000 20-foot TEU containers. If you want them out, add on another eight or so months. We have billions sitting there.

So it's how well and how you want to do it. And, sir, it isn't just going up to Bronx for a Sunday afternoon. It isn't if you care about our troops and doing it well.

Q: Colonel Dick Class, Air Force retired, from VetPAC. I understand that the reports – the Petraeus report and the Crocker report – have gone through a couple of drafts already and are currently being vetted both in Baghdad and perhaps soon in Washington. So the question is, how can you tell whether the report that is finally presented to you is really a military document, a military dispatch, or a carefully crafted political report that the vice president and the secretary of defense and the National Security Council have basically ghost-written and does not represent the facts on the ground that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker would like to present?

REP. SESTAK: I believe three things. First, I do believe that military men and women do try to give their best judgment. Number two, however, military men and women, particularly in what is by and large an operational command, although his is at a senior operational command, have a tendency – as we want our military men and women to do – to think it's going to work well, if given the right resources. You want your men and women to really believe that. And third, that's my concern – is who gave the metrics and are they the right metrics upon which General Petraeus' report will report upon?

And number two, what the context within which it will be present on the political level in two regards: political level of saying, wait a moment, you may have some increases in security, but measured against what trends? And politically has there really been any improvement that even improving the military situation really indicates it's not going to permit the political (side?) to improve, because they are on the downward side. Who's going to give us that?

And number two is, how do you present facts? I saw it all the time. It's what's not on the slides that come across the Congress at times that's almost more important. I don't think anyone lies, but how you present questionable facts – that is the sphere of the elected officials for better or for worse. That's what disturbs me. This is supposed to be a president's report and somehow we have let a general become the determinant of the tone of this debate come September. A general? We didn't do that even during General MacArthur's time. This should be a president's report.

And men and women who aren't as familiar with the military, I believe, are unable to see that the military doesn't fix problems. It stops them. Our policy eventually fixes problems. And that's my concern with Afghanistan, as we diverted out attention and resources and not leaving the ability for a framework of stability there – security – to let the other elements of national and international power come in.

So my belief is, and the indications I've seen, from the report I've – the VTC we had with General Petraeus at the Pentagon is we're going to see that there's indications of success. Fine. At a minimum, let's place the in the correct political context and that's what Congress would be doing, by either co-authoring some bipartisan way or at least have gotten the ISG to do a quick update so that this report arrives in some sort of bipartisan framework for consideration.

MR. KORB: We've got time for one more question. Ma'am?

REP. SESTAK: Hi. Good to see you again.

MR. KORB: Wait for the mike, if you would.

Q: Thank you for your remarks and the ideas that you've put forward. I realize that the violence in Iraq is very complex, but Iraqis have said just announcing a timetable for withdrawal could drastically reduce the violence. And we know we've been talking to leader of the Sunni insurgency – the U.S. military has. And so my question is, could we combine the announcement for withdrawal with a negotiated settlement with the insurgency and resistance? If we could – we have to stop the violence because none of the things that we're asking the Iraqi government for – political reconciliation – is going to happen with the violence. And if we can reduce it, we can begin reconstruction, diplomacy, and reconciliation in a true sense.

REP. SESTAK: You see, I believe they are inextricably linked. Much like an educated workforce, a healthy workforce, gives you a strong economy, they're all inextricably linked. Much as you can no longer look at foreign policy and domestic policy, because in a globalized world there's only security policy, so to speak. You know, (unintelligible) that you need to look at these elements of a withdrawal, and I believe a date certain, although I'd work with Republicans to come up with a goal if need be to get us started down the road, but with beginning to redeploy over this length of time. I believe that that announcement absolutely brings the people who have influence there, not just within Iraq, but outside – Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia – to the realization that the United States is no longer going to provide the military and political cover that keeps at least some lid on the simmering pot. They are going to have to step up.

That has to be done simultaneously as we begin the redeployment. The announcement in my mind of the strong goal, or date certain is my preference, actually says we're not kidding. I mean, it's a harsh way to say it, but when Samuel Johnson said there's nothing like the prospect of a hanging to focus your mind (laughter) – you know, you really do have to understand that that wonderful saying I heard for so many years as I traveled through the Middle East in the military in the Persian Gulf: Insha'allah – God willing tomorrow. Tomorrow's not good enough for our security any longer. I see that this is a change in strategy using the leverage of a date certain to have this recognition come forward.

Look, Iran is not going to be loved as you can see right now in today's (even?) paper by all the Shi'a down there in the south. It's being used by them. In other places, it does have pervasive influence. It doesn't want to have the 2 million of the 4 million refugees that have been dislocated in this country come over more of the borders. It doesn't want a proxy war between it and Syria, allied against us, to come here.

Are we going to remain strong in the region? Absolutely. We have strong interest there. And for us to say we're not dealing from a position of strength? I

understand what we've done the past four years or so to harm that position, but no. There's such depth of strength in America still that we should be sitting down and inextricably using this date for redeployment – not keeping bases that (are to?) remain there, because have plenty of bases in the region. We do. We had them there before and deal was strength with Iran and all. Because I strongly believe that we will reach some accommodation. More probable a year ago if we had done it than today as more sectarian violence ensued, but we have to be about our overall national security.

To my mind, that strategic approach is what's needed today before we do some at least – if not irreparable, at least some significant harm that will take us years to repair from our Army to our interests in dealing with other countries forthright like China and others.

I think I went on. Sometime's my answer's too long and my wife will criticize me this evening, but I very much appreciated, sir, the opportunity to talk here. To your question, sir, you're right. Everybody has their idea, but right now I honestly believe that Congress, since it is the one that is saying it was voted for a change – a change that I believe the public has said, look, come together and work.

And yes, we do need titans to come forward and do it. In the meantime, I'm just one representative. One man can make a difference, every man should try and (unintelligible), but I believe the importance of today is to try to continue to get out the message that I think that's what this country needs: to have continuing credibility in its government and to actually bring about an aftermath that may not be out tomorrow, not should it be for the safety of our troops, but one that can facilitate some accommodation so we can go about our greater security interests in this world as we keep our eye on it, but now our whole focus.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. KORB: Thank you. Congressman Sestak may be only one voice, but he's a hell of a voice. So thank you all very much for coming; Congressman Sestak, for your terrific remarks. And I might say that our next project here at the Center is going to be how to get out of Iraq. We're going to go through all of those forward operating bases and everything like that that the Congressman talked about. So thank you all for coming. We hope to see you again in the future.

(END)