

April 2, 2008

TO: Interested Parties
FROM: Matt Bennett and Jon Cowan
RE: The Blunted Spear III: The Iraq War and US War-Fighting Ability

As General Petraeus Returns, the Army's Crisis Mounts

As Third Way has been arguing for more than a year, one of the most serious consequences of the Iraq War is the extraordinary impact it is having on the war-fighting capacity of the United States Army (and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the Marine Corps). As General David Petraeus prepares to return to Congress to report on the results of the surge, we believe that it is important for lawmakers to focus intensely on the overall state of the force and on the ability of the United States to confront global threats.

In the Petraeus hearings, the General will no doubt resist a discussion about the overall impact of Iraq and the surge on US national security. At the last round of hearings, he offered a candid answer to Senator Warner's question about whether Iraq is making America safer: "Sir, I don't know." And in fairness, it is not his job to know. General Petraeus' responsibility is exclusively over Iraq—his job is to stabilize that country, not to worry about the state of the Army or US national security. He will argue, appropriately for someone in his position, that he needs more troops to get his job done.

But the responsibility of Congress is far broader. Members must focus mainly on the overall security of the United States, not just on the situation in one theater of war. Unfortunately, the answer to Senator Warner's question is now overwhelmingly clear: Iraq is making America less safe, mostly by the devastating impact it has had on our ability to fight our enemies elsewhere in the world. We believe that Members should make that the focus of their public comments in and about the Petraeus hearings.

Generals Ring the Alarm with Increasing Urgency

As we have noted before, it is no longer just retired military leaders and other outside experts who are sounding the alarm about this monumental national crisis. Indeed, active duty military commanders at the highest levels have gone all the way up to the line of insubordination in their frantic attempts to alert Congress and the nation about the crisis in their force that is the direct and proximate result

of the Iraq War and the abysmal stewardship by the civilians in the Bush administration.

Just yesterday, Army Vice-Chief of Staff Richard Cody testified at a Senate Subcommittee hearing on Readiness, and his testimony was shocking in its frankness and level of alarm. General Cody reiterated the oft-repeated testimony of Army Chief George Casey, noting that "today our Army is out of balance. The current demand for forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds our sustainable supply of soldiers, of units and equipment, and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies. Our readiness, quite frankly, is being consumed as fast as we can build it."

When asked about the impact of the surge in Iraq on the overall force, General Cody warned of problems with the number and readiness of the personnel, the extent of the training and the state of their equipment:

"The brigades that we have today that are getting ready to deploy are all going back to either Afghanistan or Iraq. They will all have 12 months dwell time. Many of them are at a readiness rate in terms of equipment, in an unclassified setting, of not where they need to be.

"They are training solely for counterinsurgency operations and focusing on the mission of the brigade they're replacing in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and they're not training to full spectrum for other operations.

"In terms of their equipment, in many cases we will not be able to get them fully up for equipment just prior to their major training exercise before they deploy."

It is important to emphasize that Generals Cody and Casey are not saying that this situation is grave simply because our troops are overworked or at risk, though they obviously believe both to be the case. Their main concern is not troop morale, it is that the security of the United States is at risk because the Army is unable to function as it should.

A Crisis in Troops, Training and Tools

As Generals Cody, Casey and others have noted, the Army faces a three-pronged crisis in troops, training and tools that has degraded its war-fighting capacity and put the United States at risk.

- **Troops:** The Army cannot recruit or retain the high-quality officers, NCOs and enlisted personnel it needs for the fight.
- **Training:** A serious lack of training and rest are impacting the effectiveness of the force, particularly for a counterinsurgency.
- **Tools:** The Army lacks the armor, weapons or supplies it needs in Iraq and Afghanistan, at home and elsewhere.

As Members of Congress prepare to face questions about Iraq in the wake of the Petraeus/Crocker hearings, we recommend that they cite the testimony of

Generals Cody and Casey as the central pieces of their argument that Iraq has made America less safe. Bringing it all together, the message we recommend is this:

The Army is the biggest spear in this nation's arsenal, and right now, that spear is blunted—by the war in Iraq and by the mismanagement of the Bush administration. The Army's leaders have come to Congress and issued a chilling warning, saying that as a consequence of Iraq, the Army simply doesn't have the troops, training or tools it needs to fight.

We must get the US Army out of Iraq so that we can re-sharpen the spear, confront global threats and fight terror more effectively.