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**Byrd: Clock Is Running on Misadventure in Iraq**  
*White House Plan Heads in the Wrong Direction*

WASHINGTON, D.C.... As the Bush Administration moved into high gear to promote its plan to increase the number of American forces in Iraq by at least 20,000 troops, U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., warned the nation that the White House plan will likely only serve to escalate the violence and chaos in Iraq.

Senator Byrd's remarks, delivered in the Senate on Thursday afternoon, are below.

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Last night in his address to the nation, the President called for a "surge" of 20,000 additional U.S. troops to help secure Baghdad against the violence that has consumed it. Unfortunately, such a plan is not the outline of a brave new course, as we were told, but a tragic commitment to a failed policy; not a bold new strategy, but a rededication to a course that has proven to be a colossal blunder on every count. The President never spoke truer words than when he said, "the situation in Iraq is unacceptable to the American people." But he once again failed to offer a realistic way forward, instead giving us more of his stale and tired "stay the course" prescriptions.

He espoused a strategy of "clear, hold, and build" -- a doctrine of counterinsurgency that one of our top commanders, General David Petraeus, helped to formulate. Clear, hold, and build involves bringing to bear a large number of troops in an area, clearing it of insurgents, and holding it secure for long enough for reconstruction to take place. But what the President did not say last night is that, according to General Petraeus and his own military experts, this strategy of "clear, hold, build" requires a huge number of troops -- a minimum of 20 combat troops for every 1,000 civilians in the area. Applying this doctrine to Baghdad's six million people means that at least 120,000 troops will be needed to secure Baghdad alone. Right now, we have about 70,000 combat troops stationed throughout Iraq; even if they all were concentrated in the city of Baghdad, along with the 20,000 new troops the President is calling for, we would still fall well short of what is needed.

But let us assume that the brave men and women of the U.S. military are able to carry out this Herculean task, and secure Baghdad against the forces that are spiraling it into violence; what is to keep those forces from regrouping in another town, another province, even another country, strengthening, festering, and waiting until the American soldiers leave to launch their bloody attacks again?

It brings to mind the ancient figure of Sisyphus, who was doomed to push a boulder up a mountainside for all eternity, only to have it roll back down as soon as he reached the top. As soon as he would accomplish his task it would begin again, endlessly. I fear that we are condemning our soldiers to a similar fate, hunting down insurgents in one city or province only to watch them pop up in another. For how long will U.S. troops be asked to shoulder this burden?

Over 3,000 American soldiers have now been killed in Iraq, and over 22,000 have been wounded. Staggering. And President Bush now proposes to send 20,000 more Americans into the line of fire, beyond the 70,000 already there. The cost of this war of choice to American taxpayers is now estimated to be over \$400 billion, and the number continues to rise. One wonders how much progress we could have made in improving education, or resolving our health care crisis, or strengthening our borders, or reducing our national debt, or any number of pressing issues, with that amount of money. And the President proposes sending more money down that drain.

On every count, an escalation of 20,000 troops is a misguided, costly, unwise course of action. This is not a solution. This is not a march toward "victory." The President's own military advisors have indicated that we do not have enough troops for this strategy to be successful. It will put more Americans in harm's way than there already are. It will cost more in U.S. taxpayer money. It will further stretch an army that many commanders have already said is at its breaking point. It is a dangerous idea.

Why, then, is the President advocating it? This decision has the cynical smell of politics to me. Suggesting that an additional 20,000 troops will alter the balance of this war is a way for the President to look forceful, to appear to be taking bold action. But it is only the appearance of bold action, not the reality -- much like the image of a cocky President in a flight suit declaring "mission accomplished" from the deck of a battleship. This is not a new course, but a continuation of the tragically costly course we have been on for almost five years now. It is simply a policy that buys the President more time: more time to equivocate, more time to continue to resist any suggestion that he was wrong to enter us into this war in this place, in this time, in this manner. And importantly, calling for more troops gives the President more time to hand the Iraq situation off to his successor in the White House. The President apparently believes that he can wait this out, that he

can continue to make small adjustments to a misguided policy while he maintains the same trajectory -- until he leaves office and it becomes someone else's problem.

But if you are driving in the wrong direction, anyone knows you will not get to your destination by going south when you should be going north. You turn around. You get better directions. This President is asking us to step on the gas in Iraq -- full throttle, while he has not even clearly articulated where we are going. What is our goal? What is our end game? How much progress will we need to see from the Iraqi government before our men and women come home? How long will American troops be stationed in Iraq to be maimed and killed in sectarian bloodshed?

The ultimate solution to the situation in Iraq is political, and will have to come from the Iraqis themselves. The Iraqi government will have to address the causes of the insurgency, by creating a sustainable power-sharing agreement between Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds -- and it is far from clear that the government has the power or the willingness to do that at this point. But as long as American troops are there to bear the brunt of the blame and the fire, the Iraqi government will not shoulder the responsibility itself. And Iraq's neighbors -- especially Iran and Syria -- won't commit to helping to stabilize the country as long as they see America bogged down, and losing credibility and strength. Keeping the U.S. army tied up in a bloody, endless battle in Iraq plays perfectly into Iran's hands, and it has little incentive to cease its assistance to the insurgency as long as America is there. America's presence in Iraq is inhibiting a lasting solution, not contributing to one. The President has, once again, gotten it backwards.

What I had hoped to hear from the President last night were specific benchmarks of progress that he expects from the Iraqi government, and a plan for the withdrawal of American troops conditioned on those benchmarks. Instead, we were given a vague admonition that "the responsibility for security will rest with the Iraqi government by November" -- with no suggestion of what that responsibility will mean, or how to measure the government's capacity to handle it. The President is asking us, once again, to trust him while he keeps our troops mired in Iraq. But that trust was long ago squandered.

I weep for the waste that we have already seen. Lives, treasure, time, goodwill, credibility, opportunity. Wasted. Wasted. And this President is calling for us to waste more.

I say, enough. If he will not provide leadership and statesmanship, if he does not have the strength of vision to recognize a failed policy and chart a new course, then leadership will have to come from somewhere else. Enough waste. Enough lives lost on this President's

misguided venture in Iraq. Enough time and energy spent on a civil war far from our shores, while the problems Americans face are ignored, while we wallow in debt and mortgage our children's future to foreigners. Enough. It is time to truly change course, and start talking about how we rebalance our foreign policy and bring our sons and daughters home.

There are a lot of people making political calculations about the war in Iraq, turning this debate into an exercise of political grandstanding and point-scoring. But this is not a political game. This is life and death. This is asking thousands more Americans to make the ultimate sacrifice for a war that we now know beyond a shadow of a doubt was a mistake. There were those of us who cautioned against the hasty rush to war in Iraq. And unfortunately, our cries, like Cassandra's, went unheeded. And like Cassandra, our warnings and our fears proved prophetic.

But we are not doomed to repeat our mistakes. We must learn from the past. We must understand that more money and more troops are not the answer. The clock is running on our misadventure in Iraq.

Enough time has been wasted, Mr. President. Enough!

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