



U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

PRESS RELEASE

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Statement by U.S. Senator Robert C. Byrd "Moving Forward with a Smart, Responsible Plan in Iraq"

WASHINGTON, D.C.... The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday will consider legislation that calls on President Bush to begin to redeploy U.S. forces from Iraq, with a goal of having only a limited number of troops remaining in the country on March 31, 2008. A small number of American forces would remain in Iraq for force protection, training and equipping Iraqi troops, and targeted counterterrorism options.

Importantly, the legislation contains critical improvements from the Iraq resolution recently considered by the Senate. Unlike that resolution, the supplemental legislation includes a series of benchmarks for the Iraqis to meet and also the inclusion of regular progress reports to Congress from the U.S. commander in Iraq. Neither of those measures was in the resolution considered by the Senate last week.

Overall, the supplemental legislation will provide more than \$96 billion to the Department of Defense (\$500 million more than the President requested), primarily for continued military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Committee Chairman Robert C. Byrd, D-W.Va., issued the following statement previewing the committee's legislation.

We should not leave our military caught in the middle of an Iraqi civil war. We should refocus our efforts toward confronting Osama bin Laden, his organization that attacked us on 9/11, and destroying his base of operations in Afghanistan.

It is time for the United States Congress to push forward with a smart, responsible policy in Iraq. The men and women of our Armed Forces have carried out their duties with honor. It is time to refocus our efforts on Afghanistan and Osama bin Laden.

We have entered the fifth year of this misbegotten war, and President Bush has failed to articulate a plan and to give a clear reason as to why we remain in Iraq and to outline a strategy for bringing our troops home. The White House has abdicated its leadership on this issue, and so it is left to Congress to speak for the people. This is not micromanagement; this is management, period. This is not tying the hands of our military commanders; this is returning the foreign policy of the United States to a strong, responsible path.

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