

Washington, DC - Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement in response to the testimony delivered this morning by General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker at a House Armed Services Committee hearing on the war in Iraq:

"At a time when we desperately need a new direction, this morning's testimony only reinforced and renewed the President's open-ended commitment to a flawed Iraq strategy. While it is obvious that the Iraqis' self-inflicted sectarian differences are preventing them from building off of the successes of our troops, the Bush Administration has still yet to lay out a sound strategy that will result in the types of political and diplomatic solutions that are needed in Iraq."

"Over the past five years, more than four thousand American lives have been lost in Iraq. Close to half a trillion American dollars have been spent on this effort and our economy is suffering the consequences. The war has diverted resources away from fighting terrorism in Afghanistan and homeland security efforts here in the United States."

"At the same time, our reputation around the world has diminished drastically over the past five years, leaving American troops to fight the war alone without a broad international coalition and commitment that is necessary to be successful. Less than 12,000 troops in Iraq are from nations other than the United States, down from 47,200 in 2003. The loss of international support has also made it difficult to engage in much needed diplomacy that will ultimately help us fight terrorism."

"We can not misrepresent a reduction in troop presence to "pre-surge levels" as a change in strategy. That plan only signals a regression to the ways of a policy that was flawed since its inception. Political and diplomatic solutions are needed in Iraq and they cannot be delivered by our military, regardless of whether we send additional 1,000 or 100,000 troops to war. The open-ended strategy and commitment to the war in Iraq must come to an end."

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