

UNITED STATES CONGRESS  
ANNOUNCEMENT  
OF  
IRAQ STUDY GROUP

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TO BE FACILITATED BY THE  
UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE  
CENTER FOR STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE PRESIDENCY  
AND THE  
JAMES BAKER III INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC POLICY,  
RICE UNIVERSITY

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WEDNESDAY,  
MARCH 15, 2006  
8:50 A.M.

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SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE HEARING ROOM  
RUSSELL BUILDING, ROOM 236  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

**UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT**

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1  
2 DR. SOLOMON: -- President of the U.S.  
3 Institute of Peace, one of four organizations  
4 facilitating this Iraq Study Group that you'll be  
5 hearing. I want to thank Senator Warner for making  
6 this room available to us and for his support --  
7 this enterprise. You'll be hearing in a moment  
8 from a number of Senators and Representatives of  
9 the House and then from James A. Baker and Lee  
10 Hamilton who are co-chairing the Iraq Study Group.  
11 So Senator Warner, please.

12 SENATOR WARNER: Very briefly, I thank  
13 all who attended here this morning. There is no  
14 issue more confronting of our nation and the  
15 coalition of nations working with us -- then to try  
16 and bring back measures of stability and peace in  
17 this troubled region of the world of Iraq. We are  
18 fortunate that each of these individuals in the  
19 room has stepped forward because each of them in  
20 their period of public service have faced various  
21 situations and bring forth to mind some experience.  
22 To bear on this today is essential for this country  
23 and the people.

24 SENATOR BIDEN: I'm here to thank  
25 Chairman Warner for allowing me in this room. We  
26 don't -- (Laughter.) as members of the Foreign

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1 Relations Committee we don't -- Folks, I think this  
2 is a very, very important enterprise that has begun  
3 in this room. We have some of the most respected  
4 people in the United States who have vast  
5 experience in foreign policy, Former Secretary and  
6 Former Chairman of the House -- and, folks, we have  
7 an enduring interest in the Middle East and we have  
8 a clear and -- in Iraq. And it may very well be  
9 that over the next three months to six or seven  
10 months that we may be in a difficult season hold  
11 together this -- and hold together the country the  
12 coherent plan as to how we could pursue it.

13 No one knows what's going to happen on  
14 the ground for certain and who knows what we're  
15 going to be faced with, except one thing is certain  
16 that our interests are real and it may very well be  
17 as I said earlier that this study group is required  
18 not only to look at the situation as it exists now  
19 but look at potential alternatives based on a Plan  
20 B and Plan C depending on what happens -- and I  
21 think if that occurs, we're going to need some  
22 respected force outside of the Congress and outside  
23 of the Administration to hold our interests  
24 together.

25 So I'm happy to play a very, very small  
26 part in this. This is not a Congressional

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1 commission. It's not an Administration study  
2 group. It's an independent study group and as was  
3 explained to us, many of us here, all the  
4 Congressmen and Senators who are here are going to  
5 be called upon to give our input as to how we see  
6 things and what we have learned or observed -- So I  
7 am thankful to the Secretary and thankful to the  
8 Representative Hamilton for putting together such a  
9 significant group, outside group, to take a fresh  
10 look at how we proceed in Iraq because we're going  
11 to be proceeding for some time one way or another.  
12 It's my honor now to introduce Congressman Wolf to  
13 give a few words.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: Thank you,  
15 Senator. Let me thank Senator Warner for the room.  
16 I appreciate the opportunity and all the members of  
17 the House who stand in support of this effort. The  
18 -- of fresh eyes on the target that men and women  
19 of character and honesty and integrity and  
20 confidence who love their country more than they  
21 love their political party to take a look and so I  
22 want to thank Secretary Baker for agreeing to do  
23 this and Congressman Hamilton and also Bob Gates  
24 and Senator Robb and the other members for doing  
25 this.

26 This is important for the country. The

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1 country is divided but as Senator Warner said and  
2 Senator Biden, a group of men and women of  
3 integrity and character came together to take a  
4 fresh eye, a fresh approach. So I want to again  
5 thank the institutes, the U.S. Institute of Peace,  
6 CSIS, Center for the Study of the Presidency, and  
7 the Baker Institute for also pulling together and  
8 working on this. With that, I'll turn it over to  
9 Secretary Baker.

10 SECRETARY BAKER: Thank you,  
11 Congressman. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all  
12 for attending this press conference. We are  
13 delighted to be here. We are here at the urging of  
14 members of Congress as you have heard. You have a  
15 handout before you that gives a lot of the details  
16 regarding our group.

17 Let me simply say that our purpose is  
18 to undertake a bipartisan, forward-looking  
19 assessment of the current and prospective situation  
20 on the ground in Iraq, its impact on the  
21 surrounding region and its consequences for United  
22 States' interests. One of the earlier speakers  
23 made the point that this is something we do for our  
24 nation, our objective. I know Chairman Hamilton  
25 and I have the same objective in this regard, that  
26 is to make an honest assessment of where we are and

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1           how we go forward and take this issue to the extent  
2           that we can out of politics.

3                         We may indeed have an important  
4           opportunity here to help resolve some difficult  
5           questions through bipartisan collaboration, but I  
6           want to underscore that we are under no illusions  
7           whatsoever about the difficulty of this task. It  
8           is going to be difficult. I'm hopeful that we have  
9           assembled the talent and expertise that can provide  
10          some useful insights and advice for the  
11          Administration and the Congress about where we go  
12          from here.

13                        I will outline for you very briefly the  
14          names of the members of our study group. We are  
15          equally balanced in Republicans and Democrats. I  
16          am Co-Chairman on the Republican side. Lee  
17          Hamilton is Co-Chairman on the Democrat side. It's  
18          a real pleasure, I might add, for me to have the  
19          opportunity to work once again with Lee Hamilton.

20                        When I was in government and he was in  
21          government, we worked very closely together even  
22          though we came from opposite sides of aisle. We  
23          have recently worked very closely together as well  
24          in the Commission on Federal Election Reform which  
25          I co-chaired with President Jimmy Carter.

26                        Frank Wolf indicated to you that we are

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1 being assisted in our effort by some very fine  
2 think tanks and policy institutes. An additional  
3 one that I need to mention is CSIS under the  
4 leadership of John Hamre. We have here Dick  
5 Solomon who heads the Institute of Peace. You  
6 heard from Dick earlier. Edward Djerejian who is  
7 the Founding Director of the Baker Institute for  
8 Public Policy at Rice University in Houston and  
9 David Abshire who is President of the Center for  
10 the Study of Presidency.

11 The Republican members of this study  
12 group, in addition to myself, are Bob Gates who is  
13 here with us today. Bob was former Director of  
14 Central Intelligence under President George H. W.  
15 Bush; Rudy Giuliani, whom you all know, a former  
16 Mayor of New York and Associate Attorney General in  
17 the Reagan Administration; Alan Simpson, former  
18 Senator from Wyoming; and one other Republican  
19 whose name we cannot release but will be released  
20 shortly who has agreed to serve, one very  
21 distinguished former Republican official.

22 The Democratic members that Lee will be  
23 Chairman of are Leon Panetta who was, of course,  
24 Chief of Staff for President Bill Clinton and then  
25 served as an OMB Director; Vernon Jordan, a member  
26 of the Transition Team for the Clinton/Gore

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1 Administration and currently Senior Managing  
2 Director with the Investment Banking Firm of Lazar  
3 and Frere; Bill Perry who was Secretary of Defense  
4 under President Clinton and Chuck Robb, former U.S.  
5 Senator from Virginia who is also with us here  
6 today.

7 Our efforts as I indicated earlier will  
8 be supported by the four think tanks and we have a  
9 number of expert working groups in various areas  
10 which I think my Co-Chairman Lee Hamilton will  
11 speak to you a little bit about and will also have  
12 a few other observations. Lee.

13 REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: Good morning  
14 to all of you. Thank you, Secretary Baker. First,  
15 let me just say what a privilege it is to work with  
16 Jim Baker. By any measure, he's one of the  
17 outstanding public servants of this generation and  
18 it's a high privilege for me to be with him and to  
19 work with him. I cannot think of a better person  
20 to work with and to lead this group.

21 Like Jim, I want to thank the four  
22 think tanks that are involved here. Dick Solomon,  
23 John Hamre, Edward Djerejian and David Abshire have  
24 already done a tremendous amount of work up to this  
25 point that Jim and I very, very much appreciate.  
26 We are, of course, especially appreciative of the

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1 support of these members of the United States  
2 Senate and the United States House of  
3 Representatives. Without their initiative, with  
4 their support, this simply would not be possible.  
5 We're very grateful to each one of them.

6 We've been in touch with a large number  
7 of members, 30 or more, and the significant point  
8 to make about that is that not a single one of them  
9 has indicated that they are opposed to this  
10 project. They all indicate quite to the contrary  
11 that they are very supportive of it and Jim and I  
12 are especially appreciative of those members who  
13 come here this morning with a very, very heavy  
14 schedule on Wednesday as is usually the case on the  
15 Hill to be with us.

16 We do not presuppose Congressional  
17 support of our recommendations. What these  
18 gentlemen are doing today is to support the  
19 process, to let them know of the need for this kind  
20 of a group if they see that it might be helpful to  
21 the work that they're engaged in and we welcome, of  
22 course, that support.

23 Now let me share a few thoughts with  
24 you about how we will proceed in the Iraq Study  
25 Group. As Jim has said, we're going to take as  
26 best we can a fresh bipartisan look at the

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1 situation in Iraq which has to be the great  
2 national security challenge of our day and we want  
3 to try to make a contribution to that dialogue with  
4 our observations and our recommendations. We have  
5 no illusion at all as to the difficulty of the  
6 past, but we know that the country needs help now  
7 in working through this and we will add whatever we  
8 can by way of a constructive contribution.

9 We will not be visiting past debates  
10 about Iraq. We will leave that to the historians.  
11 We obviously have to understand where we are at  
12 this point, but our whole effort will be to look  
13 forward and to try to answer the question of what's  
14 next in Iraq. We will do our very best to get a  
15 bipartisan agreement. We don't have any illusions  
16 about that either. We know that's going to be very  
17 tough to do, but we recognize that we have a group  
18 of members of goodwill who put the national  
19 interest above all else and they and Jim and I will  
20 do our very best to try to come together on this  
21 hugely important issue for the country.

22 I want to make it quite clear to the  
23 members of Congress here that we will consult with  
24 them carefully. Several of them have been to Iraq  
25 not a few times but many times and almost all of  
26 them, I think, have been to Iraq once or twice.

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1       There's a lot of expertise standing around me here  
2       now in the members of the Congress, the Senate and  
3       the House, about Iraq and we want to make sure that  
4       we draw on that experience and the wisdom. We are  
5       as open as I think you can be to diverse views  
6       about what to do there and different ideas of how  
7       to move forward.

8                 We will organize our work in the  
9       following manner. Jim and I will co-chair the  
10      study group made up of the ten members. Our work  
11      will be supported by a senior panel of military  
12      advisors, retired four star generals and for the  
13      most part, I think, one retired two star general.

14                In addition to the military advisory  
15      group, we will have four working groups made up of  
16      experts, eight to ten experts in each group. We  
17      will not be announcing those names today. I think  
18      all have been contacted. We have not heard back  
19      from all of them at this point.

20                These expert working groups will  
21      support our work on four topics: first, the  
22      strategic environment in Iraq and the region;  
23      second, the military and security situation in  
24      Iraq; third, the political development in Iraq; and  
25      fourth, the economic reconstruction of Iraq.  
26      Details of a trip to Iraq are now being worked out.

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1                   Let me conclude by saying that each of  
2                   us today is here because we recognize the  
3                   importance of Iraq to the United States. We should  
4                   say that we honor the sacrifice of the Americans  
5                   who have served in Iraq and continue to serve very  
6                   bravely today. We enter this exercise with open  
7                   minds and a firm commitment to help this country  
8                   deal with one of its most difficult challenges.  
9                   Thank you.

10                   SECRETARY BAKER: We would ponder a few  
11                   questions if the press has any or duck them as the  
12                   case may be. Yes.

13                   PRESS: -- To what extent do you plan  
14                   to engage the Administration in your work? Have  
15                   you heard from them about this group and having  
16                   support of it?

17                   SECRETARY BAKER: The Administration as  
18                   we understand it will welcome the effort. That's a  
19                   question of course you would better direct  
20                   downtown, but I suggest you do so. We have been  
21                   told that the Administration will cooperate with  
22                   our effort in terms of travel. It's not easy to go  
23                   to Iraq unless you go military air. They will  
24                   cooperate with our effort in terms of access to  
25                   people and to documents. Yes sir.

26                   REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: Jim, may I

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1 say that Senator Lieberman has joined us. We're  
2 are delighted to have him.

3 SECRETARY BAKER: Welcome.

4 REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: And John  
5 Hamre from the CSIS is here as well.

6 SECRETARY BAKER: Welcome Senator and  
7 John. Yes sir.

8 PRESS: Excuse me if you have this in  
9 the documents, but do you have a sense of the time  
10 frame for accomplishing this --

11 SECRETARY BAKER: There is no time  
12 frame stated in the documents and we have not set  
13 a time frame. Our view is that we're going to do  
14 this as expeditiously as we can considering the  
15 fact that we want to be correct, we want to be  
16 efficient and we want to be accurate. But we're  
17 not going to set a time frame on it. We may come  
18 forward with some interim reports if we think it  
19 necessary.

20 PRESS: Chairman Hamilton, based on  
21 your experience with the 9/11 Commission, what sort  
22 of weight do you expect the Iraq study to -- and  
23 carry with the Administration and the Congress?

24 SECRETARY BAKER: Well, since we have  
25 the Chairman and I on the Committee here, I'm going  
26 to let Lee Hamilton answer that question for you.

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1                   REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: I don't think  
2 any study group has immediately credibility. I  
3 think you have to earn it and we'll do our best to  
4 earn that. That's for certain. The history of the  
5 9/11 Commission, we have very distinguished  
6 officials, former officials, on the group. Jim and  
7 I have a lot of confidence in them, but neither do  
8 we expect that just because we say something  
9 everybody's going to immediately fall in line and  
10 support it. We'll do our best to give this an  
11 objective analysis and make the best  
12 recommendations we can and we will be prepared to  
13 support and defend those recommendations. But they  
14 will have to stand on their own merits and like  
15 everything else in this town, they will be  
16 scrutinized and criticized and that's all a part of  
17 the process.

18                   PRESS: May I ask a quick follow-up?  
19 With Giuliani on the Commission, is there any  
20 question as to whether it might lose some  
21 credibility if he considers a presidential bid?

22                   (Reply off microphone.)

23                   SECRETARY BAKER: I don't think that's  
24 going to affect the quality of his service on the  
25 Commission.

26                   PRESS: Secretary Baker, could you or

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1 Mr. Hamilton comment on how dire you think the  
2 situation is in Iraq right now and, Secretary  
3 Baker, in particular, do you think fresh blood at  
4 the White House would help the situation?

5 SECRETARY BAKER: That's not within the  
6 purview of our Iraq Study Group, the question of  
7 fresh blood in the White House and I didn't  
8 understand Congressman Hamilton to say that the  
9 danger is extraordinarily dire. One of the first  
10 things we are going to have to do and will do is  
11 satisfy ourselves with respect to exactly what are  
12 the facts and circumstances with respect to Iraq  
13 today.

14 PRESS: Secretary Baker, you mentioned  
15 that there's a need at this point in time for an  
16 honest assessment of the situation in Iraq. What  
17 kind of a commentary on the Administration might it  
18 be seen to be that such an honest assessment is  
19 needed at this point?

20 SECRETARY BAKER: What kind of a  
21 commentary on the Administration is it that an  
22 assessment of where we go from here? I think the  
23 commentary is that you have a pretty broad-engaged  
24 Administration who is willing to accept and look  
25 for suggestions and advice that might benefit the  
26 nation with respect to this particularly difficult

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1 national security question. Again, I have to refer  
2 you downtown. I'm not the person that speaks for  
3 the White House. You should ask them what their  
4 view is with respect to this mission and this  
5 effort.

6 PRESS: Mr. Secretary, Representative  
7 Hamilton, so you have no assessment, no feel, right  
8 now whether Iraq is in the midst of a civil war?

9 REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: No, we do  
10 not.

11 PRESS: If you do not think things are  
12 not going well there, then why are you forming this  
13 group?

14 REPRESENTATIVE HAMILTON: Look. We have  
15 made it very clear. I guess this is very obvious  
16 to all of us that this is a formidable challenge  
17 for the country. Where do you go next? What are  
18 the next steps in Iraq? We have not tried to make  
19 a judgment at this point as where we are right now.  
20 The very first thing probably the group will have  
21 to do is to try to understand where we are right  
22 now, but Jim and I do not make any judgment about  
23 that at the present time and certainly make no  
24 judgment about the future.

25 REPRESENTATIVE WOLF: If I could just.  
26 The Congress as to this asked a group of us who

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1 have been in Iraq a number of times, Republicans  
2 and Democrats, came back in a bipartisan basis to  
3 ask for the good of the country to take fresh eyes  
4 on the target. Also there was \$1.3 million in a  
5 supplemental which will pass the House today or  
6 tomorrow and Mr. Molloham and I support it in a  
7 bipartisan way.

8 So the request for this really came out  
9 of members of Congress of both parties who have  
10 been to Iraq in the past and feel fresh eyes is a  
11 very good approach. And it's not a secret to know  
12 that. I think people have been desirous of coming  
13 together to find a common ground and quite frankly,  
14 I have been so appreciative of the members on both  
15 sides, Republicans and Democrats, who have agreed  
16 to come forward and do this. But this is really an  
17 initiative that has come from the Congress by the  
18 members of Congress who have actually been there.

19 PRESS: Excuse me. So when you have to  
20 look at a range of alternatives, can you just flesh  
21 that out? Is that timetables for withdrawal? What  
22 do you mean?

23 SECRETARY BAKER: As Congressman  
24 Hamilton indicated to you, we're going to be  
25 looking in four broad areas. We're going to be  
26 looking in terms of the strategic environment, what

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1 the situation is there now and it's possible impact  
2 on the environment in the region. We're going to  
3 looking at politics and the formation of the  
4 government, where does that stand today and what's  
5 the best way to move that forward. We're going to  
6 be looking at economic and reconstruction issues  
7 and we're going to be looking at the military  
8 situation. That's the best way I know to answer  
9 your question. We're going to take a look in all  
10 four of those broad areas.

11 MR. SOLOMON: A number of our Senators  
12 and Congressman have a 9:30 a.m. meeting. But we  
13 certainly appreciate them all coming here today,  
14 Senator Warner, in particular for making this  
15 facility available. Thank you all for coming.

16 (Whereupon, the above-entitled press  
17 conference concluded.)

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