

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Reps. David Price (D-NC) and Mike Thompson (D-CA) will introduce legislation today calling for a "diplomatic surge" in Iraq, which, the Representatives said, must go hand-in-hand with any plan for a responsible redeployment of American combat forces from Iraq.

The legislation calls for a regional diplomatic initiative that would bring together Iraq's neighbors and the international community to address the key challenges facing Iraq and the region. Such an initiative would seek to ease the threat of the Iraq war sparking a broader regional conflagration, promote cooperation on addressing critical issues like border security and refugees, and seek to involve the international community in support of economic and political development in Iraq. This bill builds upon previous efforts by Price and Thompson to encourage the more aggressive use of America's diplomatic assets to address the many challenges in Iraq.

"Iraq, her neighbors, and the entire international community have a stake in a peaceful and stable future for Iraq, and neither Iraq's nor our interests are served by the continuation of our military's involvement in the sectarian conflict," Price said. "The focus of the debate in Congress has been on ending the war, and rightly so. But no matter what else happens, there is a great need for intensive diplomatic efforts to protect our interests in the region and give Iraqis the best chance to succeed as our troops begin to come home."

"Our troops in Iraq have done an outstanding job. However, military and foreign policy experts repeatedly confirm that keeping our troops mired in Iraq's civil war will not lead the Iraqi government to take control of its country," Thompson said. "It's time to bring our troops home and initiate a diplomatic strategy for controlling the violence and turmoil in Iraq. We have a responsibility to assemble the international support that the Iraqi people so desperately need. And we have a responsibility to work with the international community to keep Iraq's civil war from spilling over into neighboring countries, which would have catastrophic consequences for the entire world."

Although President Bush has vetoed Congress's efforts to force a change of course in Iraq, Price and Thompson hope their bill will garner the bipartisan support needed for enactment into law.

The bipartisan Iraq Study Group last year acknowledged the reality that "there is no action the

American military can take that, by itself, can bring about success in Iraq," and strongly recommended regional engagement "to establish an international support structure intended to stabilize Iraq and ease tensions in other countries in the region." Experts from both sides of the political spectrum have come out in support of aggressive international engagement as a way to responsibly draw down America's military involvement in Iraq.

For more information on the bill, see the following background information...

NEW DIPLOMATIC OFFENSIVE FOR IRAQ ACT

"The United States must build a new international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region. In order to foster such consensus, the United States should embark on a robust diplomatic effort to establish an international support structure intended to stabilize Iraq and ease tensions in other countries in the region." – Iraq Study Group

The "New Diplomatic Offensive for Iraq Act," introduced by Rep. Price and Rep. Thompson, would implement the Iraq Study Group's first recommendation – to launch a new diplomatic offensive- by requiring the President to institute a regional diplomatic plan that would prevent the spread of violence from Iraq into neighboring countries and require the President to engage in robust regional diplomacy. In brief, the legislation would do the following:

Containment and Diplomatic Plan: Requires the President to institute a regional diplomatic plan in conjunction with the United Nations Security Council, and to regularly report to Congress on the plan's progress. The plan would include strategies to:

prevent the spread of violence from Iraq into neighboring countries;

curtail the ongoing civil war in Iraq;

prevent the establishment of terrorist safe havens;

engage Iraq's neighbors and international organizations such as the UN and the Arab League to take a more active role in working for stability in Iraq;

prevent genocide and other crimes against humanity; and

promote a national process of reconciliation within Iraq.

Presidential Special Envoy for Iraq Regional Security: Requires the President to appoint a Presidential Special Envoy for Iraq Regional Security to spearhead regional diplomatic efforts, work with the Iraqi government and neighboring countries on efforts to achieve peace and stability (including by organizing an Iraq Support Group, as recommended by the Iraq Study Group), and organize a forum for negotiations on national reconciliation.

Cooperation with International Partners: Requires the Administration to work to enhance the participation of neighboring nations and the international community by: (1) organizing an international donors conference to solicit additional commitments from the international community for reconstruction and economic development activities in Iraq; (2) seeking a new U.N. Security Council resolution that supports regional and international cooperation in promoting stability and development in Iraq, encourages increased participation in efforts to rebuild and expand Iraq's economy, and authorizes renewed U.N. assistance to promote security and political reconciliation in Iraq; and (3) continuing direct bilateral negotiations with Iraq's neighbors to produce increased commitments to securing Iraq's borders and working for stability in Iraq.

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR A DIPLOMATIC SURGE

Iraq Study Group: "The United States must build a new international consensus for stability in Iraq and the region. In order to foster such consensus, the United States should embark on a robust diplomatic effort to establish an international support structure intended to stabilize Iraq and ease tensions in other countries in the region." (Final report, December 2006)

The Brookings Institution: "An urgent and energetic international political effort with focused mediation is required to complement military deployments to Iraq. Both need to advance together to create the basis for sustainable peace. This mediation should be an intensive and well-coordinated joint effort of the United States, the United Nations, and the European Union." (Policy Brief #162, Carlos Pascual and Larry Diamond, June 2007)

Senator Sam Brownback: "...we need a diplomatic solution. The key is for the Sunnis, the Shi'a and the Kurds to reach some type of political equilibrium. That will allow the Iraqis to drive out the terrorists, build their country and survive in a very tough region of the world. And, of course, a diplomatic solution is the key to reducing threats to our forces, and bringing about stability that will allow us to bring our forces home." (Speech, 8/1/07)

The Financial Times: "Americans, Europeans and Arabs need to forge a compact among all Iraq's neighbours, including Iran, on stabilising Iraq and regional security. Time to unleash a politico-diplomatic surge." (Editorial, 9/14/07)

Center for American Progress: "Increased U.S. diplomacy with key countries in the region is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough...The United States needs a full-time high-level envoy engaged full-time on the monumental tasks tied to diplomacy needed to stabilize Iraq and the region." (Brian Katulis, 8/9/07)

Senator Norm Coleman: "We must also implement a diplomatic surge, particularly with Sunni Arab nations in the region who can work with Iraqi Sunni areas to aid our efforts in fighting al-Qaeda. The United Nations must also play a greater role in order to curb Iran's efforts to destabilize Iraq." (Press Release, 9/10/07)

Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger: "Today the United States is bearing the major burden for regional security militarily, politically and economically while countries that will also suffer the consequences remain passive. Yet many other nations know that their internal security and, in some cases, their survival will be affected by the outcome in Iraq and are bound to be concerned that they may all face unpredictable risks if the situation gets out of control. That passivity cannot last. The best way for other countries to give effect to their concerns is to participate in the construction of a civil society. The best way for us to foster it is to turn reconstruction step-by-step into a cooperative international effort under multilateral management. Such a strategy is the best road to reduce America's military presence in the long run; an abrupt reduction of American forces will impede diplomacy and set the stage for more

intense military crises further down the road." (Washington Post op-ed, 9/16/07)

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