

**Washington, D.C.** - Congressman David Price (NC-04) spoke today on the floor of the House of Representatives in support of a resolution opposing the President's plan to escalate troop levels in Iraq. The resolution, H.Con.Res. 63, can be found [here](#). The text of Price's speech, as delivered, follows below.

Last month, Price was joined by Rep. Brad Miller (NC-13) in introducing a bill that would terminate the authority Congress gave the President to wage war in Iraq by year's end, and would require the President to submit exit strategy to bring American troops home by that date. More information on the bill can be found [here](#).

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### ON THE FUTURE OF U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN IRAQ

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to oppose the escalation of troop levels, call for an end to the American occupation of Iraq, and support the resolution before the House.

The two clauses of the resolution go hand-in-hand. There should be no doubt about the support from this Congress and, indeed, from the American people for those who risk their lives to defend our nation. As a nation, we have learned to sincerely honor the warrior, even when we disagree with the war.

I have personally been moved by my own interactions with our troops. I have been honored to meet with them here at home, in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Kosovo, and in numerous other locations where they are serving honorably. And I have mourned with their families when their service has led to the ultimate sacrifice. No one who spends time with the members of our Armed Forces can fail to be impressed by the dedication and valor with which they carry out their duty.

In addition to guaranteeing that they have the resources, equipment, and compensation they

need, supporting our troops also means ensuring that the missions we ask them to perform are viable and well-designed in terms of our national objectives. The President's surge plan does not meet these criteria, and Congress should oppose it.

The question before us today is whether an escalation of as many as 48,000 American troops is the best way to turn things around in Iraq. However, this question is part of a much larger debate that this country, and this chamber, must conduct: a debate on the future of the U.S. military mission.

There cannot be a simply military solution to the challenges we, and the Iraqi people, face in Iraq. The size of our military presence will not make the difference, because any solution to Iraq's problems will be political, not military.

The recent National Intelligence Estimate, or NIE, on Iraq confirms this conclusion. The unclassified report noted that, even the term "civil war" is not grave enough to convey the complexity of the security challenges in Iraq. More to the point, the NIE noted three "identifiable elements [that] could help to reverse negative trends": broader Sunni acceptance of the federalist political structure, Shi'a and Kurdish concessions to Sunnis, and "a bottom-up approach...to help mend frayed relationships between tribal and religious groups." Note that none of these elements can be achieved by military force.

Outgoing Commander of Multi-National Forces Iraq, Lt. General Peter Chiarelli, recently stated, "We need to get out of thinking this is solely a military conflict...All our nation's strengths -- diplomatic, economic, political -- must be leveraged to help the Iraqis find their way through this process." Other military leaders have echoed this sentiment.

My colleague from North Carolina, Brad Miller, and I have proposed such an approach in our bill H.R. 645. Our bill would dramatically strengthen U.S. political and diplomatic efforts.

It would send Special Envoys to the region to encourage Iraq's neighbors to play a more productive role in resolving the conflict and to facilitate a national reconciliation process in Iraq. It would also authorize a program to get would-be insurgents off the streets and into the workforce. And it would provide ongoing support for development of democratic institutions, especially at the local level.

While enhancing our political and diplomatic efforts, the bill would de-escalate our military commitment. It would terminate the authorization for the war at the end of this year, and require President Bush to develop an exit strategy for bringing our troops home by that date. We can no longer continue to ask our troops in Iraq to do the impossible. In fact, their presence is fueling the insurgency and is a magnet for international terrorism. It is time for the American occupation of Iraq to end, and for Iraqi leaders to assume responsibility their nation's future, for better or worse.

Some have argued that our troops must remain in Iraq to prevent intolerable outcomes. But the outcomes we most feared – a civil war, a training ground for terrorists, an ascendant Iran – have already become reality, despite the continuing presence of our troops. While a military presence may delay even worse outcomes, it cannot prevent them. If we are to avoid a regional war or an exponential increase in Iraq's carnage, our best hope is the increased political and diplomatic effort I have proposed.

How we leave Iraq does matter. A well-planned withdrawal can enhance our ability to protect our troops and prepare Iraqis to assume control. We must not make the same mistake ending the war that we did in beginning it, pursuing a strategy without adequate planning. But we should not hide behind this imperative, allowing an exit strategy to prevent or postpone an exit.

I urge my colleagues to consider H.R. 645, which I believe offers the best way to pursue American national security interests in Iraq.

Let me close on a note of caution. The resolution we are debating here today is necessary, but it is not sufficient. The President should hear our message, which expresses the conviction of the majority of the American people: the time to end our occupation of Iraq has come. However, if he does not take steps to bring our troops home, the President should be under no illusion that this non-binding resolution exhausts Congress's role. Rather, it is a first step in holding him accountable and reversing a failed policy that has made our nation less safe, and cost us so dearly in blood and treasure.

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