

A Surge of More Lies

by Congressman Robert Wexler - *January 8, 2008*

A new troubling myth has taken hold in Washington and it is critical that the record is set straight. According to the mainstream media, Republicans, and unfortunately even some Democrats, the President's surge in Iraq has been a resounding success. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

This assertion is disingenuous, factually incorrect, and negatively impacts America's national security. The Surge had a clear and defined objective - to create stability and security - enabling the Iraqi government to enact lasting political solutions and foster genuine reconciliation and cooperation between Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds.

This has not happened.

There has been negligible political progress in Iraq, and we are no closer to solving the complex problems - including a power sharing government, oil revenue agreement and new constitution - than we were before the Administration upped the ante and sent 30,000 more troops to Iraq.

Too many Democrats in Congress are again surrendering to General Petraeus and have failed to challenge the Bush Administration's claims that the surge has been successful. In fact -- it is just the opposite.

The reduction in violence in Iraq has exposed the continuing failure of Iraqi officials to solve their substantial political rifts. By President Bush's own stated goal of political progress, the Surge has failed.

Of course raising troop levels has increased security - a strategy the Bush administration ignored when presented by General Shinseki before the war in Iraq began - but the fundamental internal Iraqi problems remain and the factors that were accelerating the civil war in 2007 have simply been put on hold.

The military progress is a testament to the patience and dedication of our brave troops - even in the face of 15 month-long deployments followed by insufficient Veteran's health services when they return home. They have performed brilliantly - despite the insult of having President Bush recently veto a military spending bill that enhanced funding and benefits, and increased care.

Despite the efforts of American soldiers, the surge alone cannot bring about the political solutions needed to end centuries of sectarian divide.

As it stands, little on the ground supports the assertion that Iraqis are ready to stand up and govern themselves. Too few Iraqi troops are trained, equipped and combat ready, and they cannot yet provide adequate security. Loyalty is also an issue in the Iraqi army as Al Qaeda and Sunni insurgents infiltrate their defense forces. The consequences turned deadly just recently when an Iraqi soldier purposely killed two U.S. troops.

On the streets of Baghdad and Mosul, the Sunni and Shia factions have paused their fighting, awaiting guarantees and protections that have not yet been delivered. As Iraqi refugees return,

there is no mechanism to help them rebuild their lives, nor recover their now-occupied homes. Neighborhoods once mixed are now segregated.

In Northern Iraq, Kurdish terrorists conducting nefarious operations across the border into Turkey have compelled our NATO ally to strike at bases, inflaming tensions between Baghdad and Ankara.

The surge is working? We suffered more U.S. casualties in 2007 than in any other year of the war. We can't afford any more of this type of success.

How can we create the situation that is most likely to deliver political progress in Iraq? Not by continuing the surge and occupation. Our best chance (there is no guarantee) is by putting real pressure on the Iraqi government to force action. Telling the national and local Iraqi leaders that we are withdrawing our troops can help accomplish this goal. Today, the majority Iraqi Shia government led by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has little incentive to act when American troops remain in the country to provide security and stability.

Based on the Administration's plan, John McCain's proposal of a 100-year US occupation could be a reality!

The Democratic Congress must act aggressively to first cut off funding for the surge and then the entire war. Many of my colleagues avoided a showdown with the administration because they mistakenly believed such a fight would endanger the safety of the troops.

In fact, we must accept that every soldier killed or injured in the coming months should have already been home. Every billion dollars of war-appropriations we spend from here on should have been spent on genuine priorities here at home such as children's health care.

Enough is enough: While the Administration over-commits American forces in Iraq, we see Al Qaeda-regrouping and Osama Bin Laden still at large. We remain seriously bogged down in Afghanistan, and are witnessing a crisis in Pakistan that has left a nuclear country on the brink of a meltdown. America's resources and attention are desperately needed elsewhere and our soldiers must no longer be needlessly sacrificed as we wait for Iraqis to stand up.

The Surge has failed. If my colleagues gullibly accept the moving rationale for the Surge, just as so many have for the war itself, we will have failed as well.