HON. RON PAUL OF TEXAS BEFORE THE US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES June 21, 2005

Rebutting the Critics of the Iraq Withdrawal Resolution

Last week HJ Res 55 was introduced. This resolution requires the President to develop and implement a plan for the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. The plan would be announced before December 31, 2005, with the withdrawal to commence no later than October 1, 2006. The media and opponents of this plan immediately-- and incorrectly-- claimed it would set a date certain for a total withdrawal. The resolution, hardly radical in nature, simply restates the policy announced by the administration. We've been told repeatedly that there will be no permanent occupation of Iraq, and the management will be turned over to the Iraqis as soon as possible.

The resolution merely pressures the administration to be more precise in its stated goals, and make plans to achieve them in a time frame that negates the perception we are involved in a permanent occupation of Iraq. The sharpest criticism of this resolution is that it would, if implemented, give insurgents in Iraq information that is helpful to their cause and harmful to our troops. This is a reasonable concern, which we addressed by not setting a precise time for exiting Iraq. The critics inferred that the enemy should never have any hint as to our intentions.

Yet as we prepared to invade Iraq, the administration generously informed the Iraqis exactly about our plans to use "shock and awe" military force. With this information many Iraqi fighters, anticipating immediate military defeat, disappeared into the slums and hills to survive to fight another day-- which they have.

One could argue that this information made available to the enemy was clearly used against us. This argument used to criticize HJ Res 55, that it might reveal our intentions, is not automatically valid. It could just as easily be argued that conveying to the enemy that we do not plan an indefinite occupation-- as is the stated policy-- will save many American lives.

But what we convey or do not convey to the Iraqi people is not the most crucial issue. The

more important issues are: Do the American people deserve to know more about our goals, the length of time we can expect to be in Iraq, and how many more Americans are likely to be killed and wounded; will there be a military draft; what is the likelihood of lingering diseases that our veterans may suffer (remember Agent Orange and Persian Gulf War Syndrome?); and how many more tax dollars are required to fight this war indefinitely?

The message insurgents need to hear and believe is that we are serious when we say we have no desire for a permanent occupation of Iraq. We must stick to this policy announced by the administration.

A plausible argument can be made that the guerillas are inspired by our presence in Iraq, which to them seems endless. Iraqi deaths, whether through direct U.S. military action, collateral damage, or Iraqis killing Iraqis, serve to inspire an even greater number of Iraqis to join the insurgency. Because we are in charge, we are blamed for all the deaths.

Continuing to justify our presence in Iraq because we must punish those responsible for 9/11 is disingenuous to say the least. We are sadly now at greater risk than before 9/11. We refuse to deal with our own borders while chastising the Syrians for not securing their borders with Iraq. An end game needs to be in place, and the American people deserve to know exactly what that plan is. They are the ones who must send their sons and daughters off to war and pay the bills when they come due.