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Joe Courtney

Congress of the United States

2nd District, Connecticut

January 23, 2008

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President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

I write today to express my deep concern with reports of a long-term military or security agreement between the United States and Iraq that both keeps our troops deployed in a prolonged military commitment there and is implemented without Congressional consultation or approval.

In November 2007, you signed a "Declaration of Principles for Friendship and Cooperation" with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki.¹ This agreement laid out the broad tenants of a long term economic, political, diplomatic, and security agreement between our two nations. It is my understanding that since signing this declaration, your Administration has been working with representatives of Iraq to formalize the details of this declaration later this year prior to the end of your term in office.

It is clear that your administration envisions the kind of agreement with Iraq that the United States made with Europe, Japan and South Korea. In fact, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has specifically expressed his support for a "long and enduring presence" in Iraq that borrows from the "Korea model" and the "security relationship that we have with Japan."² However, mutual cooperation and security agreements such as those with Japan and South Korea came as a result of treaties which, under the Constitution, required the advice and consent of two thirds of the Senate.³

Therefore, I am deeply troubled by the prospect that an agreement between the US and Iraq, which General Douglas Lute has clearly said will not "lead to the status of a formal treaty which would then bring us to formal negotiations or formal inputs from the

¹ Fact Sheet: U.S.-Iraq Declaration of Principles for Friendship and Cooperation, November 26, 2007, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071126-1.html>

² Press Conference with Secretary Gates and Adm. Keating from Camp Smith, Honolulu, Hawaii, June 1, 2007, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=3974>

³ Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, 5 UST 2368, entered into force Nov. 17, 1954; Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States of America and Japan, 11 UST 1632, entered into force Jun. 23, 1960 (replacing Security Treaty Between the United States of America and Japan, 3 UST 3329, entered into force Apr. 28, 1952).

Congress,”⁴ will commit the Congress, the next President and the American people to a long and enduring military presence in Iraq.

Even more troubling is the fact in expert testimony before the House Armed Services Committee, on which I serve, the most optimistic assessments of the Iraq Security Force do not anticipate that they will gain the ability to provide effective, non-sectarian security capabilities for several years. In addition, Iraq’s own defense minister, Abdul Qadir, believes that Iraq will not be able to take full responsibility for its internal security until 2012 or be able to defend its own borders from external threat at least until 2018.⁵

Taken together, this leads me to the conclusion that any agreement entered into between your administration and Iraq will commit our military to security operations there for another decade or more without the input, consultation or approval of Congress.

As you well know, the American people remain divided about our continued presence in Iraq. While our troops have served bravely and sacrificed on behalf of the Iraqi people, the Iraqi government continues to fail to meet the political benchmarks for progress and reconciliation laid out by both our nation and the Iraqis themselves. I strongly believe that any agreement that lays out our future relationship with Iraq must include clear measures to require the Iraqi government to dramatically accelerate their political reconciliation.

To this end, I strongly encourage you pursue negotiations on a long term military and strategic agreement between our nation and Iraq in an open and transparent manner that will be presented to Congress for approval.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

⁴ Press Gaggle by Dana Perino and General Douglas Lute, Assistant to the President for Iraq and Afghanistan, November 26, 2007, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/11/20071126-6.html>

⁵ “Iraq Minister Sees Need for US Security Help until 2018,” New York Times, January 15, 2008.