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LARRY CRAIG

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NEWS RELEASE

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Susan Irby (202) 224-8078
Will Hart (208) 342-7985

CRAIG REACTS TO PETRAEUS, CROCKER REPORT ON IRAQ

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Idaho Senator Larry Craig today issued the following reaction to the testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee by General David Petraeus, the top U.S. military commander in Iraq, and Ambassador Ryan Crocker on the status of the security situation in Iraq:

“I think we heard a very frank discussion with General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker,” Craig said. “General Petraeus has the reputation of: ‘Here are the facts. Here are the details. Here’s what I’ve been able to do. Here’s what left to do.’ And I think that’s what we heard (today).

“All of us want out as quickly as we can get there. At the same time, leaving and how we leave, and what it results in are critical. If everything were to collapse at this moment, then all of the last years of effort and lives lost would be to no value, to no gain. At the same time, is there a way of measuring our successes? We heard that this morning. There are a lot of successes, but there’s still work to be done.

“We’ve heard repeatedly over the last good many months, and we’ve also heard it from General Petraeus: You don’t win Iraq militarily; you win Iraq politically. That means a government standing up and doing what it’s supposed to do, and you see that effort well under way now.

“Democracies and democracy itself and representative republics are not easy tasks. They take cooperation. They take giving and sharing. Sharing of the oil revenues between the sects – the different sets of people and interests in Iraq – is going to be very important. They’ve not accomplished that yet. Sharing power in a way that you trust the other side will give and take with you, is going to be awfully important. Establishing their own military in a way that they can stand up and work and defend themselves, and through that kind of security, be able to create political stability, is awfully important. They’re not quite there.

“I don’t think this Congress will force this President to change course. You heard from General Petraeus today a clear portrayal of what needs to be done in the coming months. They’re going to stop troop withdrawals. They’re going to stabilize that factor. We saw the problem in Basrah when the British left. Then the Sadr militia moved into the void. The Iraqi military tried to go in and oust them. If we were to leave – boom – you would expect the Iranians and the Iranian special forces to be right in the middle of this, along with the Sadr militants.

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“I would hope this Congress, looking at the successes, would now not walk away. But then again, the ability of 535 generals here in this Congress – House and Senate alike – is almost a force irresistible to the political pressures of today, not to speak out or try to do something.

“I think Congress will support the president in the end, and I think we will stay the course, at least through the balance of the year and next year, as these successes become more evident.”

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