

In United States as in Iraq, Political Solution is Essential

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San Jose
Mercury News

Article
Launched:06/13/2007 01:32:56 AM PDT

In
October 2002, the House of Representatives voted by an overwhelming majority to give the president the authorization to use force in Iraq to "defend the national security of the United States against the continuing threat posed by Iraq" and "enforce all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Iraq."

Given
what the world has learned since that day, the text of that congressional authorization can only be considered anachronistic and flawed. Not only did President Bush ignore all requirements to exhaust diplomacy while rushing to "shock and awe," it is now clear that the case the president made to Congress and the American people was built on manipulated intelligence, poor judgment and tragic miscalculations.

Revoking
the congressional authorization for the war is a responsible way to make crystal clear to the president that Congress and the people have had enough. It is Congress' statement to Bush that we share his commitment to the safety and security of the United States and our armed forces, but that we can no longer trust his judgment.

The
mission in
Iraq
no longer bears any resemblance to what Congress authorized four years ago. It is time to lift the veil of legitimacy that Congress gave the president's decision to send our troops into harm's way.

Just
as our own generals say there is only a political solution to the war
in
Iraq
, there is also only a political solution here at home.

Even
with all we know today - May was the third-deadliest month for American
troops in Iraq since the 2003 invasion, and insurgents there are using
increasingly sophisticated and lethal attacks on our military - Bush
continues to ignore the will of the American people and sound
bipartisan advice for a better course in Iraq.

The
president's obstinacy has created a vacuum of leadership that Congress
is now filling. Over the past five months, Congress has been producing
new ideas about how to best protect the men and women of our armed
forces fighting abroad, bring them home sooner and safer, and leave
behind an Iraq that has a prayer for stability.

In
March, I introduced the Change the Course in Iraq Act (H.R.1460) with a
group of key moderates in the House. The legislation repeals the
Authorization for Use of Military Force against
Iraq
resolution of 2002 and institutes the oversight that has been sorely
missing from White House management of the war. Momentum is growing.
Speaker Nancy Pelosi has promised the House will vote on this
legislation in the coming weeks.

Repealing
the president's authority to wage war in
Iraq
will not undermine the troops, nor will it cut off funds for the war.
But it is not without consequence. It is simply the clearest vote of no
confidence in Bush's management of the war.

Furthermore,
it is not without precedent. In 1970, Congress repealed the
Gulf
of

Tonkin

resolution. It did not immediately bring our troops home - only the commander in chief can do that - but it did continue to increase the pressure to end our involvement.

We

need a coalition of the willing in Congress to end the war. As someone working to build that coalition of progressives, moderates and even Republicans, I understand the frustration that it cannot be achieved overnight. With each vote to redeploy our troops out of Iraq, with each member who stands up and votes "no" on future blank checks for the president, and with this vote to repeal the authority that has been so badly misused, we get one step closer to finally ending America's involvement in Iraq's civil war