

TODD RUSSELL PLATTS

19TH DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

1032 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-5836
FAX: (202) 226-1000
www.house.gov/platts



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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

February 8, 2007

Ms. Patricia F. Long
2310 Seneca Drive
York, Pennsylvania 17404

*Written response to visit
we made to DC office in
Jan. 2007.*

Dear Ms. Long:

As requested, I am writing to follow-up on your meeting with my Chief of Staff, Scott Miller. I am sorry that my duties in the York Office that day precluded me from being able to meet with you personally in Washington, D.C.

With respect to the specific legislation you cited, I do not support cutting-off funds for any United States reinforcements to Iraq (H.R. 353) nor do I support cutting-off funds for all United States troops after an arbitrary deadline of six months (H.R. 508). While I believe talks with Iran and Syria should be part of a comprehensive approach to this issue, I believe it is unlikely to be productive by itself (H. Con. Res. 43). Significantly, while pursuing any talks, we must also be mindful of Iran and Syria using our engagement with them to buy time while they continue to pursue policies hostile to our national security interests. Finally, while I believe the use of force against Iran should certainly be a last resort, I also believe deterrence against the Iranian regime would be substantially undermined by declaring the Administration may not use force against them without a prior act of Congress (H.J. Res. 14).

Rather than the aforementioned legislation, I support establishing benchmarks for progress in Iraq and creating a bipartisan committee to measure progress towards these benchmarks. Specifically, the benchmarks should include:

- The level of Iraqi government cooperation with United States military actions;
- The level of training and combat experience of Iraqi Army battalions;
- The effectiveness of the Iraqi Police Force in controlling crime;
- The degree of progress by the Iraqi government on promoting co-existence and sharing resources;
- The degree of progress by the Iraqi government on ensuring financial accountability.

Finally, in answer to your question as to whether I would have voted differently on authorizing the use of force in Iraq if I had known Iraq no longer possessed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD): It is not a helpful part of the discourse to address hypotheticals rather than what was in front of Congress and known at the time. What was known was that Saddam Hussein had used chemical weapons in the past, against Iranians and against Kurds. After the

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Gulf War, U.N. inspectors uncovered chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs in Iraq, but these inspectors were also denied access to many suspected sites. The inspectors were subsequently barred from the country in December 1998, and the Clinton Administration launched air strikes against suspected WMD sites. When inspections resumed in 2002-2003, the U.N. inspectors asserted that Saddam Hussein was not in compliance with U.N. resolutions requiring open access for inspections and a full declaration of Iraq's WMD capabilities. At the time the final decision was made to launch military action, U.S. and most European intelligence agencies believed that the former Iraqi regime continued to possess chemical and biological weapons, and may have been pursuing nuclear weapons.

Multiple investigations into the intelligence failures leading up to the war have been conducted. In particular, the Senate Intelligence Committee concluded that the chief problem was the failure to clearly distinguish between inferences and proven facts, not the result of any political pressure on the intelligence community. In addition, the Iraq Survey Group—which was responsible for the search for WMD after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime—concluded that: the former regime had probably destroyed its WMD in an attempt to get international sanctions lifted, but had given a purposefully ambiguous impression about whether Iraq still had WMD in order to deter Iran; Saddam Hussein ordered the regime to maintain its WMD capabilities; and, Saddam Hussein planned to restart Iraq's WMD programs upon the ending of sanctions.

Thank you for this opportunity to address your concerns. Best wishes.

Sincerely,



TODD RUSSELL PLATTS

Member of Congress

19th District, Pennsylvania