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Statement

MILITARY FAMILIES CHALLENGE IRAQ STUDY GROUP REPORT AS “THE WAY SIDEWAYS,” PAVING THE WAY FOR LONG-TERM U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN IRAQ

Washington D.C., December 6, 2006 – Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), a nonpartisan organization of over 3,100 military families who are opposed to the war in Iraq, faults the Iraq Study Group report released today as being about "The Way Sideways," rather than "The Way Forward." The three basic recommendations of the report - step up diplomatic efforts with other nations in the region, talk tough to the Iraq government to get them to 'step up to the plate', and withdraw some U.S. combat troops but leave a significant number of troops in Iraq to provide training, logistical and rapid response capabilities - will not end the war in Iraq.

- **The Iraq Study Group report calls for diplomatic efforts with other countries in the region.** No attempt at diplomacy can succeed without the recognition that the real problem in Iraq is the U.S. occupation. As long as the U.S. is militarily occupying Iraq, diplomatic efforts will be tainted and will fail. The U.S. has little or no credibility in the region because of the invasion of Iraq, and reaching our hands out to others while continuing the military occupation will not build trust and communication.
- **The Iraq Study Group report suggests that we need to “talk tough” to the Iraqi government and calls on the Iraqi government to take more responsibility.** The Iraqi government is not the problem. The problem is the U.S. occupation. As long as the U.S. is occupying the country, the chaos and violence will continue and escalate. The Iraqi government will not be able to “step up to the plate” and will be unable to pull together an effective ruling coalition. The real problem in Iraq is the Bush administration that started this war based on lies and the Congress that has been ducking and covering since the beginning of the war and that refuses to do its job and represent the real interests of the nation by bringing our troops home now. The tough talk should be directed at the administration and at Congress.
- **The Iraq Study Group report calls for the gradual withdrawal of some “combat troops”.** Partial withdrawal of troops that is not part of a concerted effort to safely and quickly remove *all* of the troops from Iraq will not only continue the occupation of Iraq, but will leave those who remain in Iraq at greater risk. The safest thing for our troops, the best thing for our nation, and the best thing for the people of Iraq is to get U.S. troops out of Iraq as quickly as possible.

The Iraq Study Group report will not move forward the discussion of getting out of Iraq but instead will be used by the administration as cover to continue the occupation and by Congress as yet another excuse for failing to act to end the war. Should the administration and Congress heed the advice of this Iraq Study Group report, U.S. troops and Iraqis will continue to die. We can expect that in the year 2007 (based on yearly deaths in Iraq since March, 2003), 800 U.S. troops and perhaps 180,000 Iraqis will be killed. If the U.S. military occupation of Iraq continues through 2008, we can expect another 800 U.S. troops and another 180,000 Iraqis to die. Not one more U.S. service man or woman, and not one more Iraqi child, woman or man should die in a war that should never have happened. The Iraq Study Group has already taken 9 months to study the situation in Iraq, as our troops and Iraqis continued to die.

In the November, 2006 elections, the people of the United States made it clear that they want the war in Iraq to end. Military Families Speak Out calls on Congress to take action to end the war in Iraq by using the power it has -- the power of the purse. The real way forward is for Congress to end the U.S. military occupation of Iraq by cutting off funding for the war, and by bringing our troops home now.

To arrange interviews with members of Military Families Speak Out -- including those with loved ones in Iraq or loved ones soon to deploy or redeploy, and those whose loved ones died as a result of this war -- who can comment on the Iraq Study Group report, contact Ateqah Khaki, Riptide Communications, at 212-260-5000 or Nancy Lessin, Military Families Speak Out, at 617-320-5301.

For more information about *Military Families Speak Out*, please visit: <http://www.mfso.org>