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## **Webb to DoD: What has been learned strategically from Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya?**

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### **Says Administration must clearly define vital national interests for operations in Afghanistan before public loses patience**

Washington, DC—At a Senate Committee on Armed Services hearing, Senator Jim Webb (D-VA) questioned senior Department of Defense officials about past and future strategic models for addressing threats to the United States and how military force is applied. He also warned that the Administration should clearly define America's vital national interests in Afghanistan before the public loses patience.

"If we look at the models of the past 10 years, we ought to have a better idea of how we're going to move into the future," said Senator Webb.

On the Iraq Model: "We ended up as an occupying force in the middle of sectarian violence that followed our invasion. We've spent well over a trillion dollars and...have seen the empowerment of Iran in the process."

On the Afghanistan Model: "We have assumed the risk and the expense of nation building. It's costly, it's casualty producing, and I, quite frankly, don't know what the outcome is going to be."

On the Libya Model: "We have seen unbridled presidential discretion in terms of the decision when to use military power beyond all normal historical precedent."

"So what I come back to is what have we learned from this?" asked Senator Webb. "What is the model now in terms of how we define the existential threats to the United States and how we apply military force to them?"

In response, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta responded, "Senator, you have raised some very important issues and this is really a very appropriate time to raise those questions. As we're in the process of trying to trim over \$450 billion from the defense budget, we have to look at larger strategies here as to what kind of defense system we need to build as we confront those challenges and as we look to the future... That's something clearly I need your advice and guidance on as we try to structure the future in the Defense Department."

Senator Webb concluded, "If you want the country to have the patience with respect to fighting a long war, it is going to be even more important to define very clearly what is the vital national interest in terms of our current operations in Afghanistan."