

As Chair of the Select Intelligence Oversight Panel, a member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and a leader on human rights, Rep. Holt has taken an active role on foreign affairs issues facing Congress, including situations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Middle East.

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Iraq

Rep. Holt has been a consistent opponent of the misguided war in Iraq. In 2002, he voted against the resolution authorizing President Bush to go to war, saying on the House floor that the Bush Administration failed to prove that Saddam Hussein's regime was an immediate threat to American security and it failed to "explain to the American people what would be the costs and what would be our responsibilities in a post-Saddam Iraq." Since then, he has opposed efforts to allow the U.S. engagement in Iraq to continue indefinitely.

During a visit to Iraq in early May 2009, Rep. Holt met with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and reaffirmed the commitment to the Status of Forces Agreement. The agreement underpins the responsible withdrawal strategy, and specifically calls for the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraqi cities by June 30, 2009 and the eventual withdrawal from Iraq by 2011. These plans coincide with President Obama's announcement on August 2, 2010 of the end of combat operations in Iraq, as well as commanding General Odierno's assertion that the Iraqis are ready to take over their country's security. Rep. Holt understands that America still needs to help Iraq rebuild, but he believes that a secure and sustainable democracy will only be achieved by the Iraqis themselves.

Afghanistan

Rep. Holt believes the U.S. involvement in Iraq has prevented the development of a strong, coherent security strategy in Afghanistan aimed at combating those groups that perpetrated the attacks of September 11. Rep. Holt recognizes the importance of improving stability in Afghanistan in order to improve American security, but he does not believe we can solve the conflict in Afghanistan, and the emerging conflict in Pakistan, primarily through military means—those conflicts can only be solved politically through a joint effort with our allies.

After a visit to Afghanistan on November 23, 2008, Rep. Holt recognized the need to reengage local constituencies through economic and developmental aid as well as other trust building initiatives. Rep. Holt believes that a greater emphasis on development would erode local support for Taliban extremists, strengthen Afghanistan's developing government, and improve regional stability and American security.

Rep. Holt believes the United States should wind down its combat operations in Afghanistan and focus our security priorities closer to home. Because the previous administration did not put enough troops on the ground, Osama bin Laden escaped, and nearly nine years later, the whereabouts of he and his key lieutenants remain a mystery to the intelligence community. In other words, the original rationale for going to Afghanistan is gone.

As Rep. Holt has said, "As has become clear, the Taliban insurgency cannot be defeated through purely military means, and the corrupt and ineffective government of Hamid Karzai is only fueling support for the insurgency. Moreover, the cost of the war is directly imperiling the hometown security of communities across this nation and the economic security of our children and grandchildren. Every month, we squander on the war in Afghanistan enough money to put an additional 38,000 police on our streets for a full year, or to prevent massive teacher layoffs in every state, particularly New Jersey. Ending our combat involvement in Afghanistan is the first step towards reorienting our security priorities back on the threats of greatest concern to the American people."

To read Rep. Holt's statement made on the House floor, click [here](#) .

Peace Between Israel and Her Neighbors

Rep. Holt is a lifelong supporter of the State of Israel who has had the opportunity to visit the country on a number of occasions. He believes that a strong relationship with Israel is necessary both for ensuring that Israel remains a democratic outpost in the Middle East and for ensuring stability in the region. Like all nations in the world, Israel has the right and responsibility to respond in self-defense. The United States has a responsibility to stand with Israel, and Rep. Holt continues to support military and foreign assistance for Israel.

Rep. Holt also believes that the United States has a vital role to play in brokering an enduring and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The United States must recommit itself to bringing Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. This includes the need to create a viable representative of the Palestinians that can negotiate in good faith. And it includes the need to get the Israelis to make the daily welfare of ordinary Palestinians one of the principal criteria for any negotiations. He recently said that “the future security of the Middle East depends on negotiating a just, permanent, and peaceful settlement between Israelis and Palestinians that both guarantees Israel's security and establishes a Palestinian state.”

Human Rights

Rep. Holt has been recognized as a leader in Congress in the fight for human rights. In 2008, he introduced a resolution on Burma – which the House passed unanimously – that condemned the Burmese regime's undemocratic constitution and the scheduled sham referendum to legitimize the constitution and their military rule. The resolution demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as those Buddhist monks and political prisoners detained during the 2007 anti-government protests.

As a supporter of the plight of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people, Rep. Holt sponsored a House-passed resolution that urged the government of the People's Republic of China to “respond to the Dalai Lama's initiatives to find a lasting solution to the Tibetan issue,” and called upon the Obama Administration to recommit a sustained effort to press the People's Republic of China to respect the Tibetans' human rights.

Rep. Holt also has worked to bring about a peaceful resolution to the current conflict in Sri Lanka. He led a Congressional effort to urge President Bush to increase U.S. efforts to bring about peace.

To lift millions around the world out of poverty, Rep. Holt has led efforts in Congress to support Microfinance programs. Microfinance programs have the power to transform the lives of the world's poorest by providing access to small amounts of money (often less than \$150) to start self-sustaining businesses. Microfinance programs are having a very positive effect around the globe.

As the global financial and economic crisis affecting the world's poor badly, Rep. Holt has urged the World Bank to expand microfinance efforts. In December 2008, he wrote a letter, signed by 92 Members of Congress to encourage the World Bank to create a \$200 million grant program to reach the very poor with microfinance loans and to establish regionally-focused Centers of Excellence.

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