

## Rothman Visits War Zones Before Vote on Iraq Spending Bill | Photos

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Pictured: Rep. Rothman discusses Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) with a military expert during his trip. IEDs are widely considered the signature weapon of the Iraq War, causing more than 70 percent of U.S. casualties. View more photos.

(Washington, DC)- Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) returned this week from an eight-day trip to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey, Kuwait, and Germany, where he visited with heads of state, U.S. military commanders, diplomats, intelligence officers, troops, wounded soldiers and their doctors. Rothman, a member of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, took the trip in anticipation of the upcoming vote on the "emergency supplemental," a spending bill to fund the Iraq War.

"I return from Iraq with an even more profound respect for our troops and commanders in harm's way. These brave individuals all told me that they will do everything in their power to accomplish the mission they are given and I have the utmost confidence in them. However, the question is not whether our troops can do the job they are given, but whether the United States government has given them the proper job to do. I do not believe that their mission should be to stand in the middle of an Iraqi civil war, where more than 70% of U.S. soldiers are killed by indiscriminate but lethal improvised explosive devices," said Rothman.

The trip left a deep impression on Rep. Rothman and he held a press conference on Tuesday morning to make it clear that he continues to oppose the President's escalation of the Iraq War and supports a redeployment of all U.S. combat troops out of Iraq within six months.

"While I will not abandon troops serving in Iraq, I will continue to oppose any efforts to give the President a blank check to prolong this war. We are still developing the supplemental spending bill and I will base my vote on the outcome of that work," says Rothman.

Over the past few months, Rothman has been appalled to learn about the difficulty soldiers have getting treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues in military hospitals. For instance, Rothman heard from one soldier that he had specifically requested counseling multiple times, but was ignored. Rothman feels strongly that mental health care should be provided immediately to every single soldier upon redeployment from a combat zone. Providing such treatment universally would potentially de-stigmatize the process and ensure that no service member is either denied or declines mental health care due to any perceived stigma.

Congressman Rothman is a member of the 15-person panel that oversees spending on the Iraq War and all military preparedness. Decorated combat veteran and renowned military expert, Rep. Jack Murtha (D-PA), chairs that Subcommittee. The Defense Appropriations Subcommittee is comprised of 9 Democrats and 6 Republicans.

Chairman Murtha, along with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, has indicated his opposition to the President's proposal to escalate the Iraq War with 21,500 additional troops. Members of the House Appropriations Committee will consider the supplemental spending bill in March, after which the bill will go to the full House of Representatives for a vote and then to the Senate.

More information about Rep. Rothman's efforts on the Iraq War is online at: [http://rothman.house.gov/topic\\_iraqwar.htm](http://rothman.house.gov/topic_iraqwar.htm) .

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