

'War czar' acknowledges lack of progress

by UPI

WASHINGTON - The general nominated to be President George W. Bush's "war czar" told a U.S. Senate panel Thursday the Iraqi government has "shown little progress."

The president named Gen. Douglas Lute to a position with the formal title of deputy national security adviser for Iraq and Afghanistan. Lute acknowledged at his confirmation hearing that he had been skeptical about the recent troop increase in Iraq, McClatchy Newspapers reported.

Bush and his supporters say the troop surge gives the Iraqi government time to make a political settlement with warring factions.

"I have reservations about just how much leverage we can apply on a system that is not very capable right now," Lute said. "I think we're in the early days and time will tell."

Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., a West Point graduate who reached the rank of Army captain, told Lute he is afraid the general will be in "an impossible situation." He noted that Lute took the job after more senior commanders turned it down because of his concern for the welfare of U.S. soldiers.

"But I am very concerned that this is not going to work," Reed said. "It's another political public relations ploy rather than a significant change in strategy."

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