



THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT  
GEORGE W. BUSH



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## Fact Sheet: The Way Forward in Iraq

*President Bush Accepts Recommendations To Assess Decreased Troop Presence On The Ground Before Making Additional Reductions To U.S. Forces*

 [President Bush Discusses Iraq](#)

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Today, President Bush announced that – after detailed discussions with the Secretaries of State and Defense and Joint Chiefs of Staff – he is accepting General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker's recommendations on the way ahead in Iraq. General Petraeus reported that security conditions have improved enough to withdraw all five surge brigades by the end of July. This is a 25 percent decrease of U.S. combat brigades in Iraq from the year before. General Petraeus has explained that he then will need time to consolidate his forces and assess the reduced U.S. presence on the ground before making measured recommendations on further reductions.

- **President Bush has directed Defense Secretary Robert Gates to reduce deployment lengths for all active Army soldiers deploying to the Central Command area of operations from 15 months to 12 months.** These changes will be effective for those deploying after August 1. The President will also ensure that our Army units will have at least a year at home for every year in the field. The stress on our force is real, but the Joint Chiefs of Staff report that the all-volunteer force is strong and resilient enough to fight and win the war on terror.
- **President Bush calls on Congress to pass a bill that provides our troops the resources they need – without imposing artificial timelines or attempting to tie the hands of our commanders.** This bill must also be fiscally responsible, and not exceed the \$108 billion request the President sent to Congress months ago. President Bush will veto any bill that does not meet these requirements.
- **The costs of war have been high, but during other major conflicts in history, the relative cost has been even higher.** Today, our defense budget accounts for just over four percent of our economy, less than our commitment during four decades of the Cold War. During the Truman and Eisenhower Administrations, our defense budget rose as high as 13 percent of our total economy. Even during the Reagan Administration, when our economy expanded significantly, the defense budget accounted for about six percent of GDP.

**To Assume More Responsibility For The Welfare Of Their People And The Fate Of Their Country, Iraqis Are Stepping Forward On The Security, Economic, Political, And Diplomatic Fronts**

**Iraq's economy will increasingly move away from American assistance, rely on private investment, and stand on its own.** In their recent budget, Iraqis would outspend the United States on reconstruction by more than 10 to one, and American funding for large-scale reconstruction projects is approaching zero. The U.S. share of Iraq's security costs will drop as well, as Iraqis pay for the vast majority of their own Army and Police. Ultimately, we expect Iraq to shoulder the full burden of these costs.

**The U.S. will help Iraqis build on the security gains made during the surge.** Currently, U.S. Special Forces are launching multiple operations every night to capture or kill al Qaeda's remaining leaders in Iraq. Coalition and Iraqi forces are also stepping up conventional operations against al Qaeda in northern Iraq, where terrorists have concentrated after being largely pushed from central and western Iraq.

- **The Iraqi Army and Police are increasingly capable, and leading in the fight to secure their country.** As Iraqis assume the primary role in providing security, American forces will increasingly focus on targeted raids against terrorists and extremists, continue training Iraqi forces, and be available to help Iraq's security forces if required. In the period ahead, the U.S. will:
  - Continue to train, equip, and support the Iraqi security forces;
  - Continue to transfer security responsibilities to them as provinces become ready; and
  - Move over time into an overwatch role.

**On the political front, Iraq has seen bottom-up progress.** Tribes and other groups in the provinces who fought terror are now turning to rebuilding local political structures and taking charge of their own affairs. Progress in the provinces is leading to progress in Baghdad, as Iraqi leaders increasingly act together, share power, and forge compromises on behalf of the nation. Upcoming elections will consolidate this progress and provide a way for Iraqis to settle disputes through the political process instead of through violence. Iraqis plan to hold provincial elections later this year, and these will be followed by national elections in 2009.

**Iraq will increase its engagement in the world and the world must increase its engagement with Iraq.** A stable, successful, and independent Iraq is in the strategic interests of Arab nations and all who want peace in the Middle East, and we will urge them to increase their support this year.

- **President Bush is directing our Nation's senior diplomats to meet with leaders in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, and Egypt.** In each capital, they will brief them on the situation in Iraq and encourage these nations to re-open embassies in Baghdad, and to increase their overall support for Iraq. This engagement effort will be followed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's trip to the Third Expanded Neighbors Conference in Kuwait City and the second International Compact with Iraq meeting in Stockholm.

**Improvements In Security Have Helped Clear The Way For Political And Economic Developments In Iraq**

**U.S. and Iraqi forces have made significant progress bringing down sectarian violence, restoring basic security to Iraqi communities and driving terrorists out of their safe havens.**

Neighborhoods once controlled by al Qaeda have been liberated. Sectarian violence is down dramatically, and civilian and military deaths are also down. Cooperation from Iraqis is stronger than ever – they are providing more tips, more Iraqis are joining their security forces, and there is a growing movement against al-Qaeda called the "Sons of Iraq."

**Improvements in security have helped clear the way for the political and economic**

**developments.** At the local level, businesses are re-opening and provincial councils are meeting. At the national level, there is much work ahead, but the Iraqi government has passed a budget and three major "benchmark" laws. The national government is sharing oil revenues with provinces, and many economic indicators in Iraq – from oil production to inflation – are now pointed in the right direction.

**Our National Interests Require Success In Iraq**

**Success in Iraq would bring us closer to our most important goal – making the American**

**people safer here at home.** Success in Iraq would give the U.S. a new partner with a growing economy and a democratic political system in which Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds all work together for the good of their country. It would demonstrate to a watching world that mainstream Arabs reject the ideology of al Qaeda, and mainstream Shia reject the ideology of Iran's radical regime, and deliver a historic blow to the global terrorist movement and a severe setback for Iran.

**Failure in Iraq would diminish our Nation's standing, undermine national security, lead to massive humanitarian casualties, and increase the threat of another terrorist attack on our**

**homeland.** If we fail in Iraq, al Qaeda would claim a propaganda victory of colossal proportions, and they could gain safe havens in Iraq from which to attack the United States and our friends and allies. Iran would seek to fill the vacuum in Iraq, which would embolden Tehran's radical leaders and fuel their ambitions to dominate the region. The Taliban in Afghanistan and al Qaeda in Pakistan would grow in confidence and boldness.

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