



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
July 18, 2008

Statement by the Press Secretary on Iraq

 [In Focus: Iraq](#)

 [White House News](#)

President Bush and Prime Minister Maliki spoke yesterday in their regularly scheduled secure video conference, about a range of matters including the improving security situation and the performance of Iraqi Security Forces across Iraq, from Basra, to Maysan, Baghdad and Sadr City, and Mosul. The two leaders welcomed the recent visit of Prime Minister Erdogan to Baghdad and the successful visit of Prime Minister Maliki to the UAE. They also discussed ongoing initiatives to follow security gains with Iraqi investment in its people, infrastructure, cities, and towns, which will be aided by a \$21 billion supplemental budget now before the Iraqi parliament.

In the context of these improving political, economic, and security conditions, the President and the Prime Minister discussed the ongoing negotiations to establish a normalized bilateral relationship between Iraq and the United States. The leaders agreed on a common way forward to conclude these negotiations as soon as possible, and noted in particular the progress made toward completing a broad strategic framework agreement that will build on the Declaration of Principles signed last November, and include areas of cooperation across many fields, including economics, diplomacy, health, culture, education, and security.

In the area of security cooperation, the President and the Prime Minister agreed that improving conditions should allow for the agreements now under negotiation to include a general time horizon for meeting aspirational goals -- such as the resumption of Iraqi security control in their cities and provinces and the further reduction of U.S. combat forces from Iraq. The President and Prime Minister agreed that the goals would be based on continued improving conditions on the ground and not an arbitrary date for withdrawal. The two leaders welcomed in this regard the return of the final surge brigade to the United States this month, and the ongoing transition from a primary combat role for U.S. forces to an overwatch role, which focuses on training and advising Iraqi forces, and conducting counter-terror operations in support of those forces.

This transition and the subsequent reduction in U.S. forces from Iraq is a testament to the improving capacity of Iraq's Security Forces and the success of joint operations that were initiated under the new strategy put in place by the President and the Prime Minister in January 2007.

#

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/07/20080718.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT