



Report on the State of Our Union

Iraq



Senate Democratic Communications Center
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The State of Our Union

Iraq

In his previous State of the Union addresses, President Bush has “stayed the course” with a failed Iraq strategy. America needs a new direction that begins to bring to a close our open-ended commitment in Iraq. After nearly four years of war, tens of thousands of U.S. casualties, and over \$300 billion in costs, Democrats believe that it is time to provide a blueprint for success and reduce the U.S. combat presence. Instead of outlining a plan for victory, however, the Bush Administration has called for an escalation of its failing strategy, against the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, the advice of our top military leaders, and the will of the American people. This course would only delay the day when the Iraqi government would reach the political settlement necessary to ensure their own future. As he delivers the 2007 State of the Union address, Democrats will hold the President accountable to ensure a change of course that turns Iraq over to the Iraqis and allows for our troops to come home. We will work to transition our military mission, responsibly redeploy our troops, and end our open-ended commitment in Iraq.

Broken State of the Union Promises

2006: President Bush Continues to Stay the Course Behind a Failed Strategy. In 2006, President Bush said, “...our coalition has been relentless in shutting off terrorist infiltration, clearing out insurgent strongholds, and turning over territory to Iraqi security forces. I am confident in our plan for victory; I am confident in the will of the Iraqi people; I am confident in the skill and spirit of our military. Fellow citizens, we are in this fight to win, and we are winning. ...We’re on the offensive in Iraq, with a clear plan for victory.” [[State of the Union, 2006](#)]

2005: President Bush Claims His Policies in Iraq Will Bring Democracy to the Middle East. In 2005, President Bush said, “Our men and women in uniform are fighting terrorists in Iraq, so we do not have to face them here at home. And the victory of freedom in Iraq will strengthen a new ally in the war on terror, inspire democratic reformers from Damascus to Tehran, bring more hope and progress to a troubled region, and thereby lift a terrible threat from the lives of our children and grandchildren.” [[State of the Union, 2005](#)]

2004: President Bush’s Misguided Policies Undermine the Reconstruction Effort and the Development of an Inclusive Political Process. In 2004, President Bush said, “The work of building a new Iraq is hard, and it is right. And America has always been willing to do what it takes for what is right. Last January, Iraq’s only law was the whim of one brutal man. Today our coalition is working with the Iraqi Governing Council to draft a basic law, with a bill of rights. We’re working with Iraqis and the United Nations to prepare for a transition to full Iraqi sovereignty by the end of June. As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread

violence and fear. They are trying to shake the will of our country and our friends, but the United States of America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins. The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom. Month by month, Iraqis are assuming more responsibility for their own security and their own future. [[State of the Union, 2004](#)]

2003: President Bush Pursues a Weak Commitment to Diplomacy Choosing Instead to Embrace a ‘Go-It Alone’ Strategy. In 2003, President Bush said, “If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm, for the safety of our people and for the peace of the world, we will lead a coalition to disarm him. ...We seek peace. We strive for peace. And sometimes peace must be defended. A future lived at the mercy of terrible threats is no peace at all. If war is forced upon us, we will fight in a just cause and by just means – sparing, in every way we can, the innocent. And if war is forced upon us, we will fight with the full force and might of the United States military – and we will prevail. And as we and our coalition partners are doing in Afghanistan, we will bring to the Iraqi people food and medicines and supplies – and freedom. [[State of the Union, 2003](#)]

2002: President Bush Launches a Pre-emptive War Based On An Exaggerated Threat And Manipulated Intelligence. In 2002, President Bush said, “We will work closely with our coalition to deny terrorists and their state sponsors the materials, technology, and expertise to make and deliver weapons of mass destruction. We will develop and deploy effective missile defenses to protect America and our allies from sudden attack. And all nations should know: America will do what is necessary to ensure our nation’s security. We’ll be deliberate, yet time is not on our side. I will not wait on events, while dangers gather. I will not stand by, as peril draws closer and closer. The United States of America will not permit the world’s most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world’s most destructive weapons.” [[State of the Union, 2002](#)]

Reality: The Security Strategy is Failing and the Political Process and Reconstruction Efforts Are Faltering

The Bush Administration’s Security Strategy is Failing to Achieve Progress toward Peace and Stability. The Bush plan of standing up Iraqi forces so that American troops can stand down has neither led to improvements in Iraq’s security nor has it allowed for a reduction in U.S. troop levels. Although an increasing number of Iraqi security forces has been trained and equipped – 322,600, according to the Pentagon – violence levels in Iraq have been escalating dramatically. The number of daily attacks has increased fivefold over the past two years, with nearly 200 violent incidents reported each day. At the same time, U.S. troop levels remain high at 132,000 and, if the President’s surge strategy moves forward, the number of American forces in Iraq could grow to 153,500 – not far from their December 2005 peak levels.

(Department of Defense, *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq*, 11/30/06; Michael O'Hanlon Testimony, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1/10/07)

Iraqi Police and National Security Forces Have Not Effectively Assumed Control of Security and, Increasingly, Have Become a Destabilizing Force In Iraq.

Misguided recruitment and training policies advanced by the Bush Administration, coupled with the al-Maliki government's failure to rein in militias or reverse the politicization of security ministries, have led to the rise of security forces that not only are unable to protect the Iraqi people or defend the Iraqi state, but actually are contributing to the current instability and sectarian violence in Iraq. As Human Rights Watch reports, sectarian militia groups have been operating "under the protection of the Ministry of Interior, abducting, torturing and killing hundreds of people every month." While Iraq's leadership has begun to acknowledge the problem of militia infiltration into its security forces and government, it has not taken the necessary action to effectively disarm and eliminate these groups. According to the Pentagon, militias continue to maintain influence within key ministries and also many "operate openly, often with popular support, but outside formal public security structures." (*Reuters*, 1/10/07; Department of Defense, *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq*, 11/30/06)

Security Forces Undermined. Beyond the challenge of militias, the effectiveness of the Iraqi security forces is being undermined by poor retention rates, lack of discipline and professionalism, and the growing strength of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal groups. The Pentagon's most recent quarterly report notes that, while the target force size of the national police and security forces has nearly been reached, their "present-for-duty strength" actually "is much lower, due to scheduled leave, absence without leave, and attrition." Director of the DIA Lt. Gen. Maples recently testified that the Iraqi security forces "are presently unable to stand alone against Sunni insurgents, al-Qaida in Iraq and Shi'a militias" and "remain generally dependent on Coalition support." (Department of Defense, *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq*, 11/30/06; Lt. Gen. Maples Testimony, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1/11/07)

The Viability of the Iraqi State and Its National Unity Government Remains Uncertain. As a recent Department of Defense report details, the al-Maliki government has made minimal progress in implementing its national reconciliation strategy and has failed to take concrete action on vital domestic issues, including reforming de-Baathification laws, oil distribution legislation, and de-mobilization of sectarian militias. Its lack of resolve for addressing these critical issues raises real concerns about the government's ability to consolidate its rule, effectively represent the key segments of Iraqi society, and secure popular legitimacy. According to a September 2006 poll, the majority of Iraqis now see the country as heading in the wrong direction and 85 percent of all Sunni Iraqis hold an unfavorable view of the al-Maliki government. (Department of Defense, *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq*, 11/30/06)

In the Absence of Security, or a Viable Political Process, Iraq Has Deteriorated into Civil War. Iraqis are increasingly resorting to violence as a means for advancing

their interests and redressing their grievances. Since the February 2006 attack on the al-Sammara mosque, violence in Iraq has escalated dramatically, while also assuming a progressively sectarian character. The U.N. reports that more than 34,000 Iraqi civilians were killed in the violence last year, while data from the Brookings Institute shows that the number of daily attacks by insurgents and militias has more than doubled in that time. With more than 30 daily sectarian attacks, nearly 100 civilians being killed in the violence each day, and an estimated 100,000 Iraqis forced from their homes each month, there is a growing consensus among the media, military officials, and political leaders that Iraq has deteriorated into civil war. Director of National Intelligence Negroponte recently testified that the current struggle “among and within Iraqi communities over national identity and the distribution of power” is “the greatest impediment to Iraq’s future as a peaceful, democratic, and unified state.” (*New York Times*, 1/16/07; Brookings Institute, *Iraq Index*, 1/8/07; Michael O’Hanlon Testimony, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 1/10/07; John Negroponte Testimony, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1/11/07)

Despite the Dedication of \$18.4 Billion in Taxpayer Funds, Reconstruction Efforts in Iraq Have Failed to Put the Economy on the Road to Recovery or Improve the Lives of the Iraqi People. Projects to promote Iraq’s economic development and rebuild Iraq’s critical infrastructure have been severely undermined by the lack of security in Iraq, as well as contractor mismanagement, corruption and criminal activity. According to the most recent data published by the Special Inspector for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), oil production and exports remain below prewar levels, at 2.3 million barrels per day and 1.6 million barrels per day, respectively. Similarly, electricity production is below prewar averages and significantly below national demand, while access to potable water is failing to meet the population’s needs. The slow pace of reconstruction together with the declining security environment, pose significant challenges to the Maliki government’s goals of achieving national unity and gaining the popular legitimacy necessary to secure its rule. While the majority of Iraqis had remained hopeful about the future throughout the first two years of the war, a September 2006 poll conducted by World Public Opinion found that Iraqis are increasingly pessimistic about the future. A June 2006 poll conducted by the International Republican Institute found that 75 percent of Iraqis consider the security environment to be poor and nearly 60 percent rated economic conditions as poor. (SIGIR Quarterly Report to Congress, October 2006; Brookings Institute, *Iraq Index*, 1/8/07)

Reality: Less Security at Home, Greater Global and Regional Instability

Bush Policies in Iraq Have Pushed Our Military Forces to a Breaking Point. A report prepared for the Pentagon one year ago concluded that the Army cannot maintain its current level of operations without risking permanent damage to the quality of its force. In testimony before Congress in July, Army chief of staff General Schoomaker reported funding shortfalls and voiced significant concerns about the

Army's readiness. He stated that the Army will need \$17 billion in 2007 and as much as \$13 billion annually until two years after the end of the Iraq war to reset equipment and ensure readiness. (Andrew Krepinevich, *Thin Green Line*, 1/06, *USA Today*, 7/27/06)

Bush Administration Mismanagement Has Left Our Country Without a Strategic Reserve. Currently there are no active or reserve Army combat units outside of Iraq and Afghanistan that are rated as "combat ready." According to an August letter from the National Security Advisory Group, "Two thirds of the Army's operating force, active and reserve, is now reporting in as unready" and "There is not a single non-deployed Army Brigade Combat Team in the United States that is ready to deploy," statements confirmed by senior military officials and other experts. (National Security Advisory Group, 8/1/06)

The Administration's Strategy in Iraq Is Threatening to Undermine Regional Stability in the Middle East. Experts say that the war and the Administration's failure to quell the violence and stabilize the country have effectively empowered hardliners in the Middle East and could potentially destabilize the region. In recent testimony before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Director of National Intelligence Negroponte described the role of Syria and Iran in exacerbating the conflict in Iraq and warned of "an emboldened Iran," seeking to secure greater influence in the region and posing a real threat to U.S. interests. (John Negroponte Testimony, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, 1/11/07)

Flawed Bush Policies Have Opened Up a New Front in the War on Terrorism. According to the April 2006 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on global terrorism, the war in Iraq has created more terrorists worldwide and has served to elevate extremist ideologies. The estimate states that, "The Iraq conflict has become the 'cause celebre' for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of US involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement." The Brookings Institute reports that there are more than 20,000 insurgents in Iraq and as many as 2,000 foreign fighters inside the country. (National Intelligence Estimate, 4/2006; Brookings Institute, *Iraq Index*, 1/16/07)

The Bush Administration's Failed Iraq Strategy Has Diverted Vital Resources From the Fight Against Al Qaeda and Global Terrorism. While the Bush Administration has been focused on Iraq where our troops are busy policing a civil war, it has left Afghanistan vulnerable to a Taliban resurgence and has allowed terrorist threats to go unchecked in other parts of the globe.

President Bush Should Join the Growing Bipartisan Consensus Working toward a Change Of Course and Bringing to a Close Our Open-Ended Commitment in Iraq.

Democrats Are United in Viewing the President's Escalation of the War as the Wrong Direction. Prior to the President's formal announcement that he will escalate American involvement in Iraq, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid urged the President to reject this approach: "We want to do everything we can to help Iraq succeed in the future but, like many of our senior military leaders, we do not believe that adding more U.S. combat troops contributes to success. They, like us, believe there is no purely military solution in Iraq. There is only a political solution...Adding more combat troops will only endanger more Americans and stretch our military to the breaking point for no strategic gain." Following the President's announcement, a bipartisan group of Senators has begun to work on a bipartisan, non-binding resolution opposing the President's planned troop increase in Iraq and saying the plan is not in the national interest of the United States. (Reid/Pelosi letter to the President, 1/5/07, S.Con.Res. 2)

United Democrats Have Consistently Called For A Change of Course in Iraq.

- November 15, 2005: Senate Democrats offer an amendment to call for a change of course in Iraq, to ensure that 2006 is a year of "significant transition" to full Iraqi sovereignty. (S.Amdt. 2518 to S. 1042)
- June 19, 2006: Senate Democrats offer an amendment calling for a change of strategy in Iraq including a focus on political reconciliation and the beginning of a phased redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq by the end of the year. (S.Amdt. 4320 to S. 2766)
- July 30, 2006: United Democrats call for an end to the Bush Administration's open-ended commitment in Iraq.
- September 4, 2006: United Democrats write a letter to the President demanding changes to Iraq policy and to the civilian leadership at the Department of Defense.
- October 20, 2006: Senate and House Democratic leaders write to President Bush to call for a change of course in Iraq. In this third letter to the President, House and Senate Democratic leaders strongly encourage the President to act more urgently to forge a political solution in Iraq and to more clearly inform the Iraqis that our commitment is not unlimited.

Democrats Offer A Comprehensive Strategy for Victory in Iraq.

Rather than continuing with a failing strategy or escalating our involvement in Iraq by sending additional troops, Democrats believe that a plan for the way forward in Iraq requires these elements:

- Shifting greater responsibility to the Iraqis for their security and transitioning the principal mission of our forces from combat to training, logistics, force protection, and counter terrorism operations;
- Beginning the phased redeployment of our forces in the next four to six months; and

- Implementing an aggressive diplomatic strategy, both within the region and beyond, which reflects the continuing obligation of the international community to help stabilize Iraq and which assists the Iraqis in achieving a sustainable political settlement, including by amending their constitution.

This strategy was a core part of the Democratic plan for Real Security, introduced in March 2006. Six months later, Senate Democrats introduced the *Real Security Act of 2006*, which incorporated these principles. Specifically, this legislation calls for a change of course in Iraq by:

- Transitioning the mission and beginning the phased redeployment.
- Engaging in more robust diplomacy to help resolve sectarian differences.
- Internationalizing and regionalizing the effort.
- Holding the Bush Administration accountable for contractor waste, fraud and abuse in Iraq.