



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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President's Radio Address

THE PRESIDENT: Good morning. On Wednesday night, I addressed the Nation from the White House to lay out a new strategy that will help Iraq's democratic government succeed.

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America's new strategy comes after a difficult year in Iraq. In 2006, the terrorists and insurgents fought to reverse the extraordinary democratic gains the Iraqis have made. In February, the extremists bombed a holy Shia mosque in a deliberate effort to provoke reprisals that would set off a sectarian conflict. They succeeded, and the ongoing sectarian violence, especially in Baghdad, is making all other progress difficult.

Only the Iraqis can end the sectarian violence and secure their people. Their leaders understand this, and they are stepping forward to do it. But they need our help, and it is in our interests to provide that help. The changes in our strategy will help the Iraqis in four main areas:

First, we will help the Iraqis execute their aggressive plan to secure their capital. Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence occurs within 30 miles of Baghdad. The new plan to secure Baghdad fixes the problems that prevented previous operations from succeeding. This time, there will be adequate Iraqi and U.S. forces to hold the areas that have been cleared, including more Iraqi forces and five additional brigades of American troops committed to Baghdad. This time, Iraqi and American forces will have a green light to enter neighborhoods that are home to those fueling sectarian violence. Prime Minister Maliki has pledged that political or sectarian interference with security operations will not be tolerated.

Second, America will step up the fight against al Qaeda in its home base in Iraq -- Anbar province. Our military forces in Anbar are killing and capturing al Qaeda leaders, and protecting the local population. Recently, local tribal leaders have begun to show their willingness to take on al Qaeda. And as a result, our commanders believe we have an opportunity to deal a serious blow to the terrorists, so I've given orders to increase American forces in Anbar province by 4,000 troops. These troops will work with Iraqi and tribal

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forces to increase the pressure on the terrorists. America's men and women in uniform took away al Qaeda's safe haven in Afghanistan, and we will not allow them to reestablish it in Iraq.

Third, America will hold the Iraqi government to benchmarks it has announced. These include taking responsibility for security in all of Iraq's provinces by November, passing legislation to share oil revenues among all Iraqis, and spending \$10 billion of its own money on reconstruction projects that will create new jobs. These are strong commitments. And the Iraqi government knows that it must meet them, or lose the support of the Iraqi and the American people.

Fourth, America will expand our military and diplomatic efforts to bolster the security of Iraq and protect American interests in the Middle East. We will address the problem of Iran and Syria allowing terrorists and insurgents to use their territory to move in and out of Iraq. We will encourage countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf states to increase their economic assistance to Iraq. Secretary Rice has gone to the region to continue the urgent diplomacy required to help bring peace to the Middle East.

My national security team is now making our case on Capitol Hill. We recognize that many members of Congress are skeptical. Some say our approach is really just more troops for the same strategy. In fact, we have a new strategy with a new mission: helping secure the population, especially in Baghdad. Our plan puts Iraqis in the lead.

Others worry that we are pursuing a purely military solution that makes a political solution less likely. In fact, the sectarian violence is the main obstacle to a political solution, and the best way to help the Iraqis reach this solution is to help them put down this violence.

Members of Congress have a right to express their views, and express them forcefully. But those who refuse to give this plan a chance to work have an obligation to offer an alternative that has a better chance for success. To oppose everything while proposing nothing is irresponsible.

Whatever our differences on strategy and tactics, we all have a duty to ensure that our troops have what they need to succeed. Thousands of young men and women are preparing to join an important mission that will in large part determine the outcome in Iraq. Our brave troops should not have to wonder if their leaders in Washington will give them what they need. I urge members of Congress to fulfill their responsibilities, make their views known, and to always support our men and women in harm's way.

Thank you for listening.

END

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