



For Immediate Release
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Fact Sheet: "Return On Success" Guiding Principle For Troop Levels In Iraq

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*President Bush Accepts Recommendations To Maintain Security
Gains With Fewer U.S. Forces*

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Tonight, President Bush Will Announce That He Has Accepted General David Petraeus' Recommendations To Reduce The American Presence In Iraq And Begin Transitioning In December To The Next Phase Of Our Strategy. Before reaching this decision, the President consulted with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, other members of his national security team, Iraqi officials, and leaders of both parties in Congress. The principle guiding his decisions on troop levels in Iraq is "return on success" – the more successful we are, the more American troops can return home.

- **The Way Forward The President Will Describe Will Make It Possible For People Who Have Been On Opposite Sides Of The Difficult Debate About Iraq To Come Together.** Americans want our country to be safe and our troops to begin coming home from Iraq. Yet those of us who believe success in Iraq is essential to our security, and those who believe we should bring our troops home, have been at odds. Now, because of the measure of success we are seeing in Iraq, we can begin seeing troops come home.
- **General Petraeus Believes We Have Now Reached The Point Where We Can Maintain Our Security Gains With Fewer American Forces.** He has recommended that we not replace about 2,200 Marines scheduled to leave Anbar Province later this month. In addition, he says it will soon be possible to bring home an Army combat brigade – for a total force reduction of 5,700 troops by Christmas. And he expects that by July, we will be able to reduce our troop levels in Iraq from 20 combat brigades to 15.
- **General Petraeus Recommends That In December, We Begin Transitioning To The Next Phase Of Our Strategy In Iraq.** As terrorists are defeated, civil society takes root, and the Iraqis assume more control over their own security, our mission in Iraq will evolve. Over time, our troops will shift from leading operations to partnering with Iraqi forces, and eventually to overwatching those forces. As this transition in our mission takes place, our troops will focus on a more limited set of tasks, including counterterrorism operations and training, equipping, and supporting Iraqi forces.
- **The President Has Directed General Petraeus And Ambassador Crocker To Update Their Joint Campaign Plan For Iraq, So We Can Adjust Our Military And Civilian Resources**

Accordingly. President Bush has directed them to report to Congress in March. At that time, they will provide a fresh assessment of the situation in Iraq and of the troop levels and resources we need to meet our national security objectives.

Our Nation's Moral And Strategic Imperatives In Iraq Are One: We Must Help Iraq Defeat Those Who Threaten Its Future – And Also Threaten Ours

The Success Of A Free Iraq Is Critical To The Security Of The United States – If We Withdraw Prematurely, Violent Extremists Would Be Emboldened, And We Would Leave To Our Children A Far More Dangerous World. Al Qaeda could gain new recruits and sanctuaries. Iran would benefit from the chaos and be encouraged in its efforts to gain nuclear weapons and dominate the region. Extremists could control a key part of the global energy supply. Iraq, an ally that has placed its trust in the United States, could face a humanitarian nightmare, and democracy movements throughout the region would be violently reversed.

- **Realizing The Vision Of A Free Iraq That Is A Partner In The Fight Against Terror Will Be Difficult – But It Is Achievable.** Our military commanders believe we can succeed. Our diplomats believe we can succeed. And for the safety of future generations of Americans, we must succeed.
- **Congress Should Come Together On A Policy Of Strength In The Middle East.** The President thanks members of Congress for providing crucial funds and resources for our military, and asks them to join him in supporting the recommendation General Petraeus has made – and the troop levels General Petraeus has asked for.

The Principle Guiding The President's Decision Is "Return On Success"

Our Success In Meeting Surge Objectives Allows Us To Begin Bringing Some Of Our Troops Home. The premise of our strategy is that securing the Iraqi population is the foundation for all other progress. This week, General Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker testified before Congress and made clear that our challenge in Iraq is formidable. Yet they concluded that conditions in Iraq are improving, that we are seizing the initiative from the enemy, and that the troop surge is working.

- **Anbar Province Is A Good Example Of How Our Strategy Is Working.** Last year, an intelligence report concluded that Anbar had been lost to al Qaeda. Some cited this report as evidence that we should cut our losses and pull out of Iraq. Instead, we kept the pressure on the terrorists. The local population was tired of suffering under the Taliban-like rule of al Qaeda and asked for help. So the President sent an additional 4,000 Marines to Anbar as part of the surge.
 - **Today, A City Al Qaeda Once Considered A Stronghold Is Beginning To Return To Normal.** Anbar citizens who once feared beheading for talking to an American or Iraqi soldier now come forward to tell us where the terrorists are hiding. Young Sunnis who once joined the insurgency are now joining the army and police. And with the help of our Provincial Reconstruction Teams, new jobs are being created and local governments are meeting again.

- **For Most Iraqis, The Quality Of Life Is Far From Where It Should Be – Yet General Petraeus And Ambassador Crocker Report That The Success In Anbar Is Beginning To Be Replicated In Other Parts Of The Country.** These gains are a tribute to our military, to the courage of the Iraqi Security Forces, and to an Iraqi government that has decided to take on the extremists.
 - **Baghdad:** One year ago, much of Baghdad was under siege. Today, most of Baghdad's neighborhoods are being patrolled by Coalition and Iraqi forces who live among the people they protect. Many schools and markets are reopening, citizens are coming forward with vital intelligence, sectarian killings are down, and ordinary life is beginning to return.
 - **Diyala Province:** One year ago, much of Diyala Province was a sanctuary for al Qaeda and other extremist groups, and its capital of Baqubah was emerging as an al Qaeda stronghold. Today, Baqubah is cleared, Diyala Province is the site of a growing popular uprising against the extremists, and some local tribes are working alongside Coalition and Iraqi forces to clear out the enemy and reclaim their communities.
 - **Shia Extremists And Militants:** One year ago, Shia extremists and Iranian-backed militants were gaining strength and targeting Sunnis for assassination. Today, these groups are being broken up, and many of their leaders are being captured or killed.
- **Ultimately, The Way Forward Depends On The Ability Of Iraqis To Maintain Security Gains.** According to General Petraeus and a panel chaired by retired General Jim Jones, the Iraqi army is becoming more capable, although there is still a great deal of work to be done to improve the National Police. Iraqi forces are receiving increased cooperation from local populations, and this is improving their ability to hold areas that have been cleared.

The Iraqi Government Must Now Bring The Same Determination It Has Demonstrated Taking On Extremists To Achieving Reconciliation

Iraq's Government Has Not Yet Met Its Own Legislative Benchmarks – And President Bush Has Made It Clear That It Must – But Iraq's National Leaders Are Making Political Progress. For example, they have passed a budget, they are sharing oil revenues with the provinces, and they are allowing former Ba'athists to rejoin Iraq's military or receive government pensions. In addition, local reconciliation is taking place, and the key now is to link this progress in the provinces to progress in Baghdad. As local politics change, so will national politics.

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