



For Immediate Release  
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## Fact Sheet: The Way Forward in Iraq: Successes and Challenges

*President Bush Says "Return On Success" Plan Is Putting Us On The Right Track To Win In Iraq*

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**Today, President Bush gave an update to soldiers at Fort Jackson, S.C., on his September "Return on Success" speech and discussed some of the results of America's new strategy to win the fight in Iraq.** Our new strategy in Iraq, including a surge in U.S. forces, has been fully operational for four months. This new strategy emphasizes securing the Iraqi population as the foundation for all other progress in the country; recognizes that once Iraqis feel safe they can begin to create jobs and opportunities; and builds on the idea that improvements in security will help the Iraqis achieve national reconciliation. The President discussed challenges and successes we are seeing in each of these areas.

- **Our strategy in Iraq is guided by the principle of "return on success" – and as we are seeing more success in Iraq, we are slowly beginning to bring some of our forces home.**
- **By taking the fight to the enemy in Iraq, we will defeat the terrorists there so we do not have to face them here at home.** In Iraq, a democratic ally has been fighting for its survival. In addition, our enemies have sought to build safe havens there to plot attacks against our people.

### Securing The Iraqi Population As The Foundation For All Other Progress In The Country

#### **Successes:**

- **We have sent our forces into neighborhoods where Iraqis live to root out the extremists and gain the trust and confidence of the people – and we are seeing encouraging results.**
  - Since the surge of operations began in June, the number of IED attacks per week has declined by half.
  - U.S. military deaths have fallen to their lowest level in 19 months.
  - One year ago, Anbar was thought lost to the enemy. At the time, al Qaeda staged a parade in the city streets to flaunt its control. Last week, there was another parade in Anbar, only this time it was a parade of Iraqi citizens and Iraqi forces, who had reclaimed

- their homes and driven the terrorists out.
- Iraqi forces now have assumed responsibility for security in eight of 18 Iraqi provinces.
- Across the country, brave Iraqis are increasingly taking on responsibility for their own safety and security.
- **Our enemies see the changes underway and increasingly fear they are on the wrong side of events. Day by day, our forces are seizing the initiative from the enemy.**
  - Osama bin Laden, who is in hiding out of fear of U.S. forces, has publicly expressed concern about al Qaeda's recent setback in Iraq. In an audiotape, he talks about the "mistakes" that al Qaeda has made, urges the terrorists to overcome what he says are growing divisions in their ranks.
- **The return on our success means that we are slowly beginning to bring some of our forces home – and we are doing it from a position of strength.** The military did not replace 2,200 Marines who came home from Anbar Province in September, and we will also bring home an Army combat brigade for a total force reduction of 5,700 troops by Christmas.

### ***Remaining Challenges:***

- Parts of Iraq continue to be violent and difficult.
- The terrorists are still capable of carrying out attacks that will dominate headlines.
- Iraqi Security Forces require continued U.S. support.

### **Bringing Economic Improvements With Improvements In Security**

#### ***Successes***

- **With improvements in security, we are also seeing improvements in important economic indicators.**
  - Inflation has been cut in half since last year.
  - Electricity production in September reached its highest levels since the war began – and is higher than it was under Saddam.
- **When Iraqis do not have to fear the terrorists, they can build a better life for themselves.**
  - In Baqubah, the historic market has been reopened in a city that had been in a virtual lockdown a few months ago.
  - In Fallujah, workers have turned an artillery factory into a civilian machine shop employing 600 people.
  - In the Baghdad neighborhood of Ameriya, an al Qaeda stronghold until a few months ago, locals have returned and are reopening their shops.
  - In Arab Jabour, another former al Qaeda stronghold, a local butcher said that as recently as last June he was selling only one or two sheep per week. Now, with the terrorists cleaned out and residents returning home, he is selling one or two sheep per day.

### ***Remaining Challenges***

- Corruption remains a serious problem.

- Unemployment remains high.
- Improvements we are seeing in the Iraqi economy are not uniform.

## **Improving Security To Help The Iraqis Achieve National Reconciliation**

### ***Successes***

- **Reconciliation is taking place at the local level.** Many Iraqis are seeing growing cooperation between Shia and Sunnis – who are tired of al Qaeda and Iranian-backed extremists, weary of fighting, and determined to give their families a better life.
  - In one of the most divided neighborhoods in Baghdad, Sunni and Shia leaders recently signed an agreement to halt sectarian violence and end attacks on Coalition forces.
  - In Anbar, Sunni sheikhs hosted Shia sheikhs from Karbala province to discuss security and express their unity, an event that would have been unthinkable only a year ago.
  - In Diyala Province, tribal groups came together for the first time to foster reconciliation.

### ***Remaining Challenges***

- **Reconciliation at the national level has not been what we hoped.**
  - While the central government has passed a budget, reached out to its neighbors, and begun to share oil revenues with the provinces, the Iraqi parliament still lags in passing key legislation.
  - Political factions are still failing to make necessary compromises.

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