

Q&A: THE NEW WAY FORWARD IN IRAQ

Q: What is new about the strategy that President Bush is announcing tonight?

- The new strategy that the President is announcing tonight represents a change in course that will help us succeed in the War on Terror and protect Americans at home. The President's new plan is the result of extensive deliberation and consultation with military leaders, members of Congress, and outside experts.
- The President's new plan includes diplomatic, economic, and political elements. The plan includes:
 - More Iraqi troops in the lead;
 - New rules of engagement that will enable us to prevent extremists from having safe havens in Baghdad;
 - Political and economic benchmarks that Iraqis have established; and
 - Intensified efforts to counter Iranian and Syrian action that threatens coalition forces.

Q: Why will more troops lead to success in Iraq?

- More troops are required because this will be a different operation, yielding different results.
- Securing Baghdad is a top priority. The President is charting a new course because previous Baghdad security operations had two fundamental flaws.
 1. In previous efforts, the Iraqis did not fulfill their commitments on troop numbers. There were not enough Iraqi or U.S. troops to help hold the neighborhoods we had cleared throughout Baghdad. This time, the Iraqis are going to have more boots on the ground. They're going to be the ones knocking on doors. American troops will be there in a key support role embedded with Iraqi troops as trainers, making sure they have the necessary backup combat power.
 2. Just as importantly, the rules of engagement governing where troops could and couldn't go were severely restricted by politics in Baghdad during previous operations. Prime Minister Maliki has made clear that this is going to change. The extremists will no longer have safe havens in Baghdad where U.S. and Iraqi troops cannot enter.
- President Bush would not make this commitment if he did not think the preconditions set by the Iraqis would correct previous failures. The President is increasing the number of troops to support this new course.
- We are adding troops because success in Iraq is vital to keeping America safe.

Q: What are the consequences of failure in Iraq?

- The consequences of failure in Iraq could not be graver for our children and grandchildren. The War on Terror cannot be won if we fail in Iraq.

- If we step back now, the problems in Iraq will become more lethal, and make our troops fight an uglier battle than we are seeing today. Increasing troops now will actually hasten the day our troops begin coming home.
- Our enemies throughout the Middle East are trying to defeat us in Iraq. Al Qaeda is fighting us in Iraq. Iran has interests in Iraq.
- A failed Iraq would make America less secure. A failed Iraq in the heart of the Middle East will provide safe haven for terrorists and extremists. It will embolden those who are trying to thwart the ambitions of reformers. It will also give the terrorists and extremists an additional tool besides safe haven – revenues from oil sales.

Q. Is the President acknowledging that we never had enough forces in Iraq?

- We had enough forces in Iraq to accomplish the primary mission of training and transitioning control to the Iraq, but events and trends of the past year have shown that the primary security focus must equally emphasize our supporting the Iraqis to secure their population.
- That mission will require a strong Iraqi and Coalition presence in key strategic areas – and it is a mission that will require more U.S. forces in Iraq.

Q: How is the President going to get the Iraqis to do what he suggests, especially on the steps needed to secure Baghdad?

- The President and Administration officials have had very frank conversations with Prime Minister Maliki and the Iraqi government.
- Tonight, the President will make clear that America's commitment is not open-ended and he will be unequivocal that the Iraqis have to step up. The President will hold the Iraqis to clear security, political, and economic benchmarks and milestones.
- The President's new plan will be different from previous efforts because Prime Minister Maliki has made clear not only to President Bush, but also to the Iraqi people in a speech last week, that the Iraqi Army's operations in Baghdad will make no distinction between Shia, Sunni, or other types of illegal militia or illegal activity. Murder is murder, and terrorists will be held accountable.

Q: Why should Americans have faith in the President's new plan?

- The criticism or skepticism we are hearing from Congress and the American people is exactly what the President himself has expressed during this policy review process. President Bush is in the same camp as the vast majority of Americans who are dissatisfied with progress in Iraq.

- Tonight, the President is going to acknowledge that our previous strategy was not working and announce his change in course to fix our strategy.
- There is no magic formula for success in Iraq, but the President believes his new plan is the best way to succeed. It's important for our country to come together in this hour of war and to give the President's new plan an opportunity to proceed.
- All Americans and members of Congress should recognize that the stakes in Iraq are consequential to the security of American people.

Q: How does the President respond to the members of Congress and former government officials who oppose his new plan? Was this plan originally opposed by the military leadership?

- Military leaders helped devise this plan and support this plan.
- Military leaders support this plan because they understand that more troops – with a specific mission and Iraqi partners who step up – can yield the political breathing room that Iraqis need to move their country forward. Without security, Iraqis are unable to make political and economic progress.
- The President will continue his ongoing dialogue with members of Congress as this plan progresses. The President will continue seeking input and making changes as needed.

Q: Is America involving itself in the middle of a civil war?

- We are not taking sides in a civil war; we are supporting the Iraqi government and the vast majority of Iraqis who wish to live free and peaceful lives. The fight in Iraq – and through much of the greater Middle East – is a fight between moderates and extremists. America has a direct stake in the outcome.
- The President will make clear tonight that the sectarian violence in Iraq can only be solved by Iraqis. It will be Iraqis that are knocking on doors and leading military missions.
- At the same time, the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Security Forces need our support at this critical moment.
- Eighty percent of sectarian violence is occurring within an approximately 30-mile radius around Baghdad.

Q: When will the additional forces come home?

- The fastest way home for U.S. forces in Iraq is to ensure a bolder commitment to victory now. We need to muscle up to step back. It may be counterintuitive, but an increase now as part of this new strategy will hasten the day when we can bring troops home.

- By providing security to the capital, Iraqi and Coalition forces will provide the space political leaders need to seal political accommodations that are necessary to sustain the security gains over the long term.
- As General Odierno has said, the intention is to partner with Iraqi forces and ensure a successful "hold" period as "build" projects move in and political progress unfolds.
 - This time will also be used to enhance and improve the capabilities of the Iraqi forces. Over time, our forces will be able to step back as Iraqis are able to maintain security. And eventually, our forces will no longer be needed and can come home.

Q: Why an addition of 20,000 troops? Where did this number come from?

- General Pace has explained that the number reflects the "troop-to-task" analysis of what it will take to help the Iraqis secure Baghdad and build on recent successes in Anbar.
- Under the new Iraqi security plan, our commanders assessed that in the near term at least three Iraqi Army brigades and two U.S. brigades will be required to clear and begin to hold the nine districts of the capital.
 - Three additional U.S. brigades now in the pipeline, together with additional Iraqi forces, will reinforce success in the capital or correct for weaknesses where necessary.
- In Anbar, commanders found that two additional Marine regiments would help build on successes and consolidate recent gains against al Qaeda – to ensure they cannot return to cleared areas or establish a safe haven.
- Force levels are also based on our experience and the assumption that the enemy will prove unpredictable. We must be ready to face contingencies.

Q: How much will the President's new plan cost?

- For this year, the total cost of the troop increase will be \$5.6 billion. Commanders Emergency Relief Program (CERP) funds will cost an additional \$350 million, Quick Response funds will cost an additional \$400 million, and expanding Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will cost an additional \$414 million.

Q: What are the President's metrics for success?

- Operations to secure Baghdad will not yield an immediate end to suicide bombings, assassinations, or IED attacks.
- Our enemies will make every effort to ensure that American television screens are filled with images of death and suffering.

- Yet over time, we can expect to see fewer brazen acts of terror, perpetrators brought to justice, and more trust and cooperation from Baghdad's residents. General Odierno has said he hopes to see these trends and be able to pull U.S. forces to the periphery of Baghdad by the end of this summer.

Q: Is the President's new strategy cast in stone? If it fails, what is the Plan B?

- No. As the President said, if improvements can be made, we will make them; and as circumstances change, we will adjust.
- It is premature to talk about Plan B as soon as Plan A is announced. We are focused on making this new plan work.

Q: Why didn't the President implement this strategy sooner?

- Before the Samarra Mosque bombing, the strategy set forth in the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq was the right course.
- Sunnis had voted overwhelmingly in the December 2005 elections (2 percent in Anbar in January versus nearly 80 percent in December) and by February had fully joined the political process.
- The Samarra Mosque attack changed the nature of the fight and created levels of violence beyond the capacity of Iraqi forces alone to diminish.
- We still believed as late as this fall that the new Iraqi government would be able to stabilize the situation – but the violence further entrenched hedging behavior and it became clear that a change of course was needed.

Q: Has the President rejected the Baker-Hamilton Commission recommendations?

- No. The President's new plan incorporates all essential elements of Baker-Hamilton – with the exception of a few specific recommendations.
- We would not support what the Baker-Hamilton report seems to have in mind with respect to direct engagement between Iran and the United States.
 - Iran is supplying sophisticated IED material to militant groups who are attacking Coalition forces and killing innocent Iraqis. We do not need to tell Iran to stop this activity. Iran needs to stop.
 - We are in line with Baker-Hamilton, however, in supporting Iranian participation in regional conferences and in the International Compact. We want Iraq and all of its neighbors to have friendly and peaceful relations.
 - As for a direct dialogue, the door is open. As Secretary Rice has said: "I'd meet my counterpart anyplace, anytime. All they have to do is suspend uranium enrichment [which is a demand of the international system]."