



BARACK OBAMA: TURNING THE PAGE IN IRAQ

"My plan for ending the war would turn the page in Iraq by removing our combat troops from Iraq's civil war; by taking a new approach to press for a new accord on reconciliation within Iraq; by talking to all of Iraq's neighbors to press for a compact in the region; and by confronting the human costs of this war."

[Speech in Clinton County, IA, 09/12/07]

OBAMA'S PLAN TO RESPONSIBLY END THE WAR IN IRAQ

Barack Obama opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. In 2002, as the conventional thinking in Washington lined up for war, Obama had the judgment and courage to speak out against the war. He said the war would lead to "an occupation of undetermined length, with undetermined costs and undetermined consequences." In January 2007, Obama introduced legislation to responsibly end the war in Iraq, with a phased withdrawal of troops engaged in combat operations.

As the nation debates how to move forward in Iraq, Obama laid out his plan to end the war, as well as his vision for what America can achieve once we turn the page in Iraq.

Obama would immediately begin to pull out troops engaged in combat operations at a pace of one or two brigades every month, to be completed by the end of next year. He would call for a new constitutional convention in Iraq, convened with the United Nations, which would not adjourn until Iraq's leaders reach a new accord on reconciliation. He would use presidential leadership to surge our diplomacy with all of the nations of the region on behalf of a new regional security compact. And he would take immediate steps to confront the humanitarian disaster in Iraq, and to hold accountable any perpetrators of potential war crimes.

THE SURGE IS NOT WORKING

"The stated purpose of the surge was to enable Iraq's political leaders to reconcile. They have not done so. . . . Our troops fight and die in the 120 degree heat to give Iraq's leaders space to agree, but they are not filling it. . . . The bar for success is so low that it is almost buried in the sand."

Iraqi Government Not Stepping Up: The goal of the troop surge was to create space for Iraq's political leaders to reach agreement to end Iraq's civil war. In January 2007, President Bush said the goal of the surge was to contain violence so that "Iraqis will gain confidence in their leaders, and the government will have the breathing space it needs to make progress in other critical areas." Since then, more than 700 American troops have died, but the Iraqi government has not stepped up. In early September, the United States Government Accountability Office found the Iraqi government has not enacted legislation to meet critical benchmarks on de-Ba'athification, oil revenue sharing, provincial elections, amnesty, and militia disarmament that are key to beginning national reconciliation.

Uneven Gains Not Sustainable Without Iraqi Action: At great cost, our troops have helped reduce violence in some areas of Baghdad, but only when measured against the record levels of violence in late 2006 and early 2007. As *The New York Times* reported in a wide-ranging investigation, violence has decreased in certain neighborhoods only because they have become more ethnically homogenous as minority groups have fled. Most importantly, as a commission headed by General Jim Jones reported, the Iraqi Security Forces must take responsibility for holding the security gains created by the surge, but they are not doing so.

Anbar Province Success Not Related to Surge: The reduced violence in Anbar Province is the result of cooperation between American forces and Sunni tribes, which started more than 18 months ago, long before the surge. The province is overwhelmingly Sunni, and the tribal leaders there made a political decision to turn against al Qaeda. This does not demonstrate the success of the surge; it demonstrates that the solutions in Iraq are political, not military.

AMERICAN MILITARY CANNOT SUSTAIN CURRENT STRATEGY IN IRAQ

"Our troops have performed brilliantly. . . . The excellence of our military is unmatched. But as a result of this war, our forces are under pressure as never before.... our troop presence cannot be sustained without crippling our military's ability to respond to other contingencies. "

Military Stretched Thin: The military is being severely strained by repeated and lengthy deployments. 1.4 million servicemen and women have served in Iraq or Afghanistan; more than 420,000 troops have deployed more than once. Army Chief of Staff General George W. Casey Jr. recently warned, "We're consumed with meeting the current demands and we're unable to provide ready forces as rapidly as we would like for other contingencies." According to the Governmental Accountability Office (GAO), 30 percent of the Marines' equipment and 25 percent of Army vehicles are engaged abroad. In addition, the Army National Guard has just a third of its required equipment on hand today in non-deployed units due to war losses and wear and tear.

A SUBSTANTIAL, IMMEDIATE REDEPLOYMENT OF AMERICAN TROOPS

"There is no military solution in Iraq. The best way to protect our security and to pressure Iraq's leaders to resolve their civil war is to begin immediately to remove our combat troops. Not in six months or one year – now."

All Combat Troops Redeployed by 2009: Barack Obama would immediately begin redeploying American troops from Iraq. The withdrawal would be strategic and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Troops would be removed from secure areas first, with troops remaining longer in more volatile areas. The drawdown would begin immediately with one to two combat brigades redeploying each month and all troops engaged in combat operations out by the end of next year.

Residual Force to Remain: Under the Obama plan, American troops may remain in Iraq or the region. These American troops will protect American diplomatic and military personnel in Iraq, and continue striking at al Qaeda in Iraq. If Iraq makes political progress and their security forces are not sectarian, we would also continue training the Iraqi Security Forces. In the event of an outbreak of genocide, we would reserve the right to intervene, with the international community, if that intervention was needed to provide civilians with a safe-haven.

Withdrawal is the Best Way to Pressure Iraqi Government: Iraq's leaders have put off reconciling and taking on greater security responsibility despite our efforts to pressure them to act. Drawing down our troop

presence is the best way to finally apply real pressure on the Iraqi government to make the political accommodations necessary to heal the nation's sectarian rifts, and to take on more responsibility for providing security to their people.

Afghanistan: Barack Obama believes that we need to begin to end the war in order to finish the fight in Afghanistan. He would redeploy at least two combat brigades (7,000 personnel) of rested, trained American troops to Afghanistan to reinforce our counter-terrorism operations and support NATO's efforts to fight the Taliban.

A NEW EFFORT TOWARDS IRAQI NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

"Removing our troops is part of applying real pressure on Iraq's leaders to end their civil war... The problems in Iraq are bigger than one man. Iraq needs a new constitutional convention that would include representatives from all levels of Iraqi society – in and out of government."

A United Nations-Led Constitutional Convention: Iraq's constitution, approved in an October 2005 referendum, is the product of a Kurdish–Shiite deal. Iraq's government was supposed to immediately revise the constitution to be more inclusive of Sunnis and to develop a more sustainable balance between Baghdad's centralized authority and provincial governments. They never did. Barack Obama would have the United Nations convene a constitutional convention in Iraq that would include representatives from all levels of Iraqi society. The convention would not adjourn until national reconciliation is reached and contentious questions such as federalism, oil revenue sharing, and de-Ba'athification are resolved.

Refuse to Provide U.S. Assistance to Sectarian Actors: The Obama plan would encourage the Iraqi government to adopt policies that give regional and local groups a sufficient stake in the center so they are deterred from attempting to overthrow the central government or completely break away. He would work to ensure local communities can protect themselves without threatening other groups. He would fight for greater transparency in local security efforts to reduce anxieties among all sects that America intends to support one sect over another. Obama also would crack down on the use of American foreign assistance to sectarian ends or by sectarian actors. This problem was made clear by two recent studies, one of which concluded the United States cannot account for 190,000 weapons provided to Iraqi Security Forces and another which found weapons issued by the United States to Iraqi Security Forces among Kurdish militants in Turkey.

A DIPLOMATIC SURGE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

"At every stage of this war, we have suffered because of disdain for diplomacy. . . . We need to launch the most aggressive diplomatic effort in recent history to reach a new compact in the region. This compact must secure Iraq's borders, keep neighbors from meddling, isolate al Qaeda, and support Iraq's unity."

Support for Iraqi Stability: Barack Obama would work with Kurdish leaders to come to an accommodation with Turkish leaders who see the Kurdish ascendance as a threat. He would press Sunni Arab states like Saudi Arabia to use their influence to encourage Iraqi Sunnis to reconcile. To combat terrorism, Obama would press Iran, Syria, and Saudi Arabia to stem the flow of foreign fighters, arms, and financial resources into Iraq. Obama also would be a tough negotiator with Syria and Iran, sending a clear message that they need to stop meddling in Iraq's affairs.

Prevent the War's Spread Beyond Iraq: To prevent spillover -- in particular, Turkish or Iranian adventurism - - the Obama plan would promote a regional compact that would ensure commitments by Iraq's neighbors to non-intervention and to Iraq's territorial integrity.

A New Cooperative Security Framework in the Gulf: As we disengage from Iraq's civil war, America needs to support regional sources of stability. This is particularly important given recent claims from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that Iran will fill any vacuum created by American withdrawal. Barack Obama would work to develop a long-term strategy of regional cooperation. This will not only improve Iraq's stabilization and regional integration, but also serve as a check against Iran's regional ambitions.

ADDRESS IRAQ'S HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

"President Bush likes to warn of the dire consequences of ending the war...he warns of huge movements of refugees and mass sectarian killing, but that has already taken place. These are not the consequences of a future withdrawal. They are the reality of Iraq's present. . . . We have a strategic interest – and a moral obligation – to act."

Iraq is Facing a Humanitarian Crisis Right Now: There are two million Iraqis displaced in their own country. There are another two million Iraqi refugees living beyond Iraq's borders. More than 1,000 Iraqi civilians die every month. Sectarian death squads roam Baghdad. The humanitarian crisis that President Bush says would accompany American troop withdrawals is occurring right now.

Take Care of Refugees: Barack Obama would establish an international working group dedicated to addressing the Iraqi refugee crisis. He would increase American investments in Iraq's refugees and internally displaced people and to the neighboring countries that house them to at least \$2 billion. He would work with Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Egypt to dramatically increase access to social services for refugees. He also would work to create safe-havens for Iraqis who remain in Iraq, but are displaced from their homes by violence.

Secure International Assistance: To improve conditions in Iraq, Barack Obama would secure greater regional contributions to humanitarian relief, refugee care and integration, and economic assistance. Obama would build on the United Nations' new willingness to expand its mission in Iraq, encouraging the European Union, the Arab League, and other regional groupings to expand their relief and assistance efforts.

Prevent Genocide: Barack Obama would work with the international community to hold the perpetrators of potential war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide accountable for their crimes. If necessary, he would work with the United Nations to establish an independent war crimes commission or a special investigator who can gather testimonies of survivors and investigate war crimes. Obama would supply armed escorts to civilians who voluntarily choose to move from religiously heterogeneous areas to communities where they feel they will be more secure. He would reserve the right to intervene militarily, with our international partners, to suppress genocidal violence within Iraq.

Fulfill America's Obligation to Accept Refugees: The State Department pledged to allow 7,000 Iraqi refugees into America, but has only let 190 into the United States. Obama would expedite the Department of Homeland Security's review of Iraqi asylum applicants. Obama also would appeal to the Coalition's original partners to expand their refugee quotas. Coalition partners such as Great Britain, Australia, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Japan have done woefully little to meet the refugee crisis, and must be encouraged to do more. Arab governments, especially American allies such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, should also be enlisted.

OBAMA OPPOSED THE WAR IN IRAQ FROM THE BEGINNING

OCT 2002: Obama Opposed To 'Dumb' And 'Rash' Iraq War. "I don't oppose all wars. What I am opposed to is a dumb war. What I am opposed to is a rash war. What I am opposed to is the cynical attempt by Richard Perle and Paul Wolfowitz and other armchair, weekend warriors in this administration to shove their own ideological agendas down our throats, irrespective of the costs in lives lost and in hardships borne." [Remarks of Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama Against Going to War with Iraq, 10/26/2002]

OCT 2002: Obama Said That Iraq War Had 'Undetermined' Cost, Length and Consequences. "I know that even a successful war against Iraq will require a U.S. occupation of undetermined length, at undetermined cost, with undetermined consequences. I know that an invasion of Iraq without a clear rationale and without strong international support will only fan the flames of the Middle East, and encourage the worst, rather than best, impulses of the Arab world, and strengthen the recruitment arm of al-Qaeda." [Remarks of Illinois State Sen. Barack Obama Against Going to War with Iraq, 10/26/2002]

DEC 2003: Obama Said Iraq And Al-Qaeda Not Connected. "On the Iraq war, Obama is strongly critical of President Bush, saying, 'We have an administration whose arrogance internationally seems to have no bounds.' The Iraq war 'is distracting us from what should be our number-one priority, the war on terrorism. There is no connection between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda.' Obama wants to bring other nations into the terrorism fight." [Rockford Register Star, 12/2/03]

FEB 2004: Obama Said Iraq War Will Not Make America Safer And Will 'Poison' Relations With The World. "I am the only candidate in this race [Illinois Senate primary] to have publicly opposed the war in Iraq before it started,' Obama said. 'Rather than reducing the threat of terrorism and making America safer, I feared that going to war unilaterally would poison our relations with other countries.'" [Chicago Daily Herald, 2/1/04]

FEB 2005: Obama Criticized Iraq War At Town Hall Meeting. The Pantagraph reported that during a town hall meeting, "Asked about the Iraq war, Obama said poor planning by the Bush administration has left Iraq woefully incapable of handling its own security. He expressed hope that more intensive training will be provided for Iraqi forces, saying such measures could allow most American troops to return home next year. While Obama said the recent Iraqi election is an encouraging sign for democracy, he questioned Bush's rationale for the Iraq invasion. 'I didn't see the weapons of mass destruction at the time, I didn't think there was an imminent threat from Saddam Hussein,' Obama said." [Pantagraph, 2/25/05]

MAY 2005: Obama Said Security In Iraq Was 'Horrible.' At a town hall meeting, "Obama described the security in Iraq as 'horrible.' He said U.S. troops should come home if the Iraqi government is functioning properly and the Iraqi troops are trained correctly. 'Our young men and women have been incredibly brave and effective in very difficult situations.'" [Chicago Daily Herald, 5/28/05]

OCT 2005: Obama Said US Needed To Get Out Of Iraq "As Soon As We Can." In 2005, Obama said, "We should start phasing out our military presence in Iraq. We have to have a very credible, specific plan to stabilize the country as soon as we can and get out as soon as we can." [Rockford Register Star, 10/30/05]

DEC 2005: Obama Said He Supported A Phased Withdrawal To Avoid Security Vacuum; Said War In Iraq To Blame For Terrorist Problems. Obama favors starting 'a phased withdrawal process' of troops next year. The process would be based on what happens with the elections, he said. 'What we're engaged in is a difficult balancing act here...Having gone in, how do we step back but ensure that there's not such a vacuum that either chaos occurs or jihadists take over critical areas that can make huge problems elsewhere? The irony,

of course, is that there really wasn't a terrorist problem before we went in. There is now.'" [State Journal-Register, 12/8/05]

JAN 2006: Obama Said It Was Important To Start Phasing Down Troops. The Sun-Times wrote, "Obama said 'if we don't see significant political progress' over the next six months or so, 'we can pour money and troops in here until the cows come home but we are not going to be successful.' It is important, Obama said, 'to start phasing down the troops' and 'to give the Iraqis more ownership.'" [Chicago Sun-Times, 1/8/06]

MAR 2006: Obama Said If Iraqis Aren't United, US "Can't Hold That Country Together. The Seattle Post-Intelligencer quoted Obama, "'We've reached a point where there are no military solutions to the problems of Iraq. They're all political....Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish leaders of the fractured country need to get together and 'decide if they're for a united Iraq...If they're not, we can't hold that country together. We need to move forward toward the beginning of a phased withdrawal.' If Iraqi leaders want to hold a united country, in Obama's opinion, they will have to shoulder the burden 'with technical assistance and some military help' coming from the United States.'" [Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 3/20/06]

APR 2006: Obama Said By the End Of The Year "Our Job As The Police And Army Of Iraq Should Be Complete." At a town hall meeting, Obama said, "'If I continue to see what seems to be the case right now--an inability and unwillingness on the part of the various factions to want to live together--we can't be in a position where we're in the middle of a civil war...If we're not seeing a government that is actually committed to working together, then I don't see how our presence there can be helpful,' Obama said. Even if a new government is formed, Obama said, by the end of the year 'our job as the police and army of Iraq should be complete. We will have done our task and we should start phasing down our troops.'" [Chicago Tribune, 4/13/06]

JUN 2006: Obama Called For an "Expeditious Yet Responsible Exit from Iraq." In 2006, Obama said, "'What is needed is a blueprint for an expeditious yet responsible exit from Iraq.'" [Obama Floor Statement On Kerry Amendment, 6/21/06]

SEP 2006: Obama Said US Must Leave Iraq Responsibly. In West Virginia, Obama said, "'We must exit Iraq, but not in a way that leaves behind a security vacuum filled with terrorism, chaos, ethnic cleansing and genocide that could engulf large swaths of the Middle East and endanger America...We have both moral and national security reasons to manage our exit in a responsible way.'" [Charleston Gazette, 9/26/06]