

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary

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**Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq**

*"The United States will pursue a new strategy to end the war in Iraq through a transition to full Iraqi responsibility...As we carry out this drawdown, my highest priority will be the safety and security of our troops and civilians in Iraq. So we will proceed carefully, and I will consult closely with my military commanders on the ground and with the Iraqi government. There will surely be difficult periods and tactical adjustments. But our enemies should be left with no doubt: This plan gives our military the forces and flexibility they need to support our Iraqi partners, and to succeed."*

*--President Barack Obama*

*February 27, 2009 at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina*

On his first day in office, President Obama ordered a comprehensive review of United States Iraq policy by military commanders on the ground, the Joint Chiefs, Secretary Gates, and his national security team. That review led to the President's February 27, 2009 announcement at Camp Lejeune of a plan to responsibly end the war in Iraq. The three-part strategy he announced will make our country more secure by transitioning to Iraqi responsibility and by allowing the United States to focus on a broader set of national priorities. The Administration will pursue broad support for this plan and other major national security priorities by consulting closely with the Congress, on a bi-partisan basis, and by working closely with friends and allies.

**Responsible Removal of Combat Brigades**

Based on the recommendations of his military commanders and national security team, the President has chosen a timeline that will remove all U.S. combat brigades from Iraq over the next 18 months. By August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end and Iraqi Security Forces will have full responsibility for major combat missions.

After August 31, 2010, the mission of United States forces in Iraq will fundamentally change. Our forces will have three tasks: train, equip, and advise the Iraqi Security Forces; conduct targeted counterterrorism operations; and provide force protection for military and civilian personnel.

The President intends to keep our commitment under the Status of Forces Agreement to remove all of our troops from Iraq by the end of 2011.

**Sustained Diplomacy**

Iraq's future is now its own responsibility and the long-term success of the Iraqi nation will depend upon decisions made by the Iraqi people. A strong political, diplomatic, and civilian effort on our part can advance progress and help lay a foundation for lasting peace and security. A new American Ambassador will be supported by the courageous and capable work of American civilian personnel, diplomats and aid workers.

We will work to support Iraqi national elections in 2010, help improve local government, serve as an honest broker for Iraqi leaders as they resolve difficult political issues, increase support for the resettlement of Iraqi refugees, and help strengthen Iraqi institutions and their capacity to protect rule of law, confront corruption, and deliver services.

### **Comprehensive Engagement Across the Region**

The future of Iraq is inseparable from the future of the broader Middle East. It is time for Iraq to be a full partner in a regional dialogue and for Iraq's neighbors to establish productive and normalized relations with Iraq. Going forward, the United States will pursue principled and sustained engagement with all nations in the region, including Iran and Syria. We have already begun to renew our diplomacy in the region, to refocus on: eliminating al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan; preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon; and actively seeking a lasting peace between Israel and the Arab world.

Finally, the President made a commitment to give our men and women in uniform the resources and clear direction they deserve and to build our civilian national security capacity so that we can use all elements of American power to achieve our objectives in the world.