



# Council for a Livable World

*To Eliminate Weapons of Mass Destruction*

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The series of recent reports on the situation in Iraq add up to only one clear conclusion: while there has been some limited success in recent months, there is little if any prospect of resolving the insurgency anytime in the next decade, if not longer.

**Therefore, it is our urgent recommendation that all U.S. forces be withdrawn from Iraq in an orderly but expeditious manner.**

Those who argue that the United States should not leave Iraq any time soon, nor set a deadline for beginning to withdraw, point to potential disasters if the United States pulls out before Iraqi forces demonstrate the ability to maintain adequate security.

In point of fact, however, the situation in Iraq already is a disaster, both for the American military and for Iraqi civilians. Moreover, continued engagement in Iraq's civil war distracts the United States from our more urgent missions in Afghanistan and enhanced homeland security, stretches the U.S. military to the breaking point, inflicts psychological scars on returning veterans and breaks up their families, causes mounting American casualties, increases the drain on the U.S. treasury, and erodes our stature in the world.

So far, the Iraq war has not served a single major U.S. foreign policy interest. The weapons of mass destruction we invaded Iraq to eliminate turned out not to exist; and while U.S. forces have been tied down in Iraq, Iran resumed enrichment of uranium and North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and detonated a plutonium device. Far from spreading democracy to the Middle East, the Iraq war has strengthened the Middle East's authoritarian regimes.

Because of Iraq, both through the flawed case for war and the bungled management of the post-war environment, American prestige and credibility in the world are at their lowest points in decades. Among the many consequences is the reluctance of other countries to credit American assertions about Iran's nuclear program or to join in effective collective action. Our invasion and continuing occupation of Iraq has undermined our moral legitimacy, undercutting our goal to marginalize and isolate Al Qaeda from its recruitment and support base.

The strategy launched earlier this year, almost four years after the invasion, to increase American forces in Iraq to provide stability by implementing classic counterinsurgency doctrine is far too little, too late. The years of flawed strategy and employment of excessive force inflicted tens of thousands of civilian casualties and caused extensive collateral damage, alienating the majority of Iraq's population.

It is not surprising that the troop increase has not resolved the conflict. Surges in American military resources providing no permanent solution have been repeated often in Iraq. Besides Operation Together Forward, which failed to secure Baghdad during fall 2006, the United States added at least 10,000 additional soldiers within a single month on three previous occasions in Iraq: March 2004 to prepare for the Iraqi Governing Council's signing the interim constitution; December 2004 to prepare for electing the National Assembly; and October 2005 to protect the constitutional referendum.

These three "surges" all turned out the same: no effect the first month, drastically increased violence the second month, and a temporary reduction in insurgent activity the third month. The data suggest that a troop surge is not a permanent fix. In layman's terms, things will get worse again in Iraq and there is no guarantee they will ever get better more than temporarily.

More than three-quarters of Iraqis believe that violence will subside once American troops leave. As most American leaders agree that Iraqis must assume control of their security situation sooner rather than later, we should not continue to ignore the wishes of the Iraqi people.

The United States must begin leaving Iraq to force both the Iraqis and the international community to step up to the plate. A diplomatic initiative, regional U.S. counterterrorism operations, and substantial economic assistance can help to mitigate the fallout.

We hope that Iraqis will discover the path to peace when they can no longer use the United States as a crutch. We also hope that the international community will feel obligated to intervene and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and instability throughout the region.

**In any event, the uncertain future of Iraq cannot be accurately addressed while the primary problem remains uncorrected. As long as the United States remains, nothing can be resolved.**

The decision to invade Iraq was one of the greatest blunders - if not the greatest blunder - in U.S. foreign policy history. It is the major reason we have lost the support of the world community, and it has diverted our attention from the legitimate target of our military force - Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations.

**To repeat, there is little if any prospect of resolving the insurgency anytime in the next decade, if not longer. It is time to put a conclusion to this sad adventure and to withdraw American forces in an orderly but expeditious manner.**

Sincerely,

Senator Gary Hart, Chairman, Council for a Livable World  
Lt. Gen. Robert Gard (USA, ret.), Board Member, Council for a Livable World  
Brig. Gen. John Johns (USA, ret.), Board Member, Council for a Livable World