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Phased Transition:
A Responsible Way Forward and Out of Iraq

By James N. Miller and Shawn W. Brimley



Center for a
New American
Security



Cover Image

U.S. Army Soldiers provide an outer cordon of the village as Iraqi police from the Emergency Services Unit lead a search of the Qarah Cham village in Iraq, March 27, 2007.

Photo by Master Sgt. Andy Dunaway

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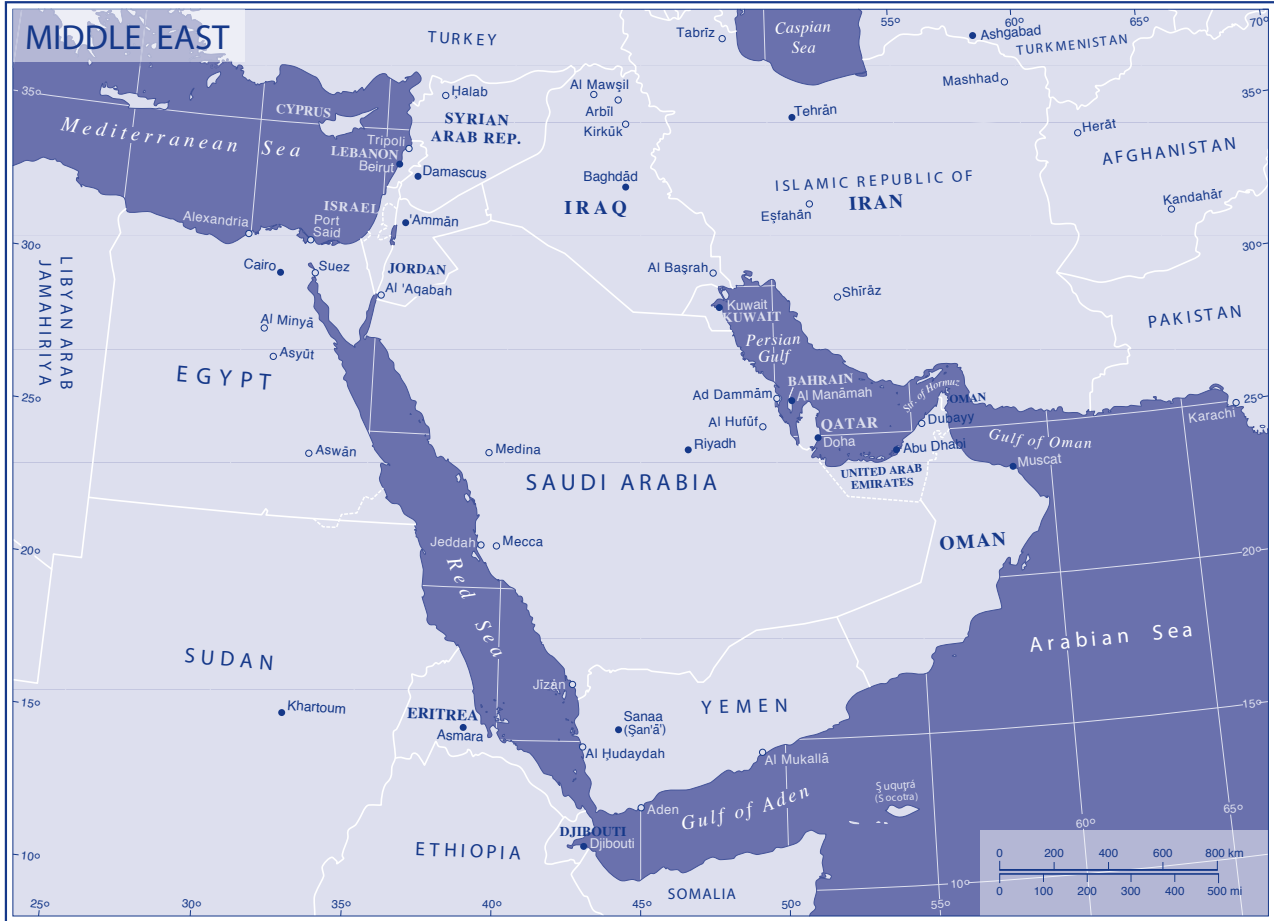
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By James N. Miller and Shawn W. Brimley

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
I. Introduction	13
II. Current Strategic Contours	15
Implications of the Surge	15
A Costly and Unpopular War	16
Inevitability and Opportunity	17
III. Enduring U.S. Interests in Iraq: The “Three No’s”	18
No al Qaeda Safe Havens	18
No Regional War	19
No Genocide	20
Other Important Interests	21
IV. Toward a Balanced Strategy	23
“Bottom-Up” Elements of a Balanced Strategy	23
“Top-Down” Elements of a Balanced Strategy	26
“Outside-In”: Regional Diplomacy in a Balanced Strategy	28
Conclusions	29
V. A Phased Transition Plan	31
Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable	33
Phase II: Enhanced Advisory Effort	34
Phase III: Deliberate Withdrawal	35
Phase IV: Over-the-Horizon Presence and Engagement	35
“Plan B” (Consolidation) and “Plan C” (Contested Withdrawal)	36
Preparing Now to Prevent Genocide	38
Why Set a Date for Military Withdrawal?	39
Getting From Here to There: Negotiating a Transitional Presence of U.S. Forces	40
VI. The Critical Enablers: American Advisors in Iraq	43
Why the U.S. Must Boost Advisory Capacity	43
What U.S. Advisors Will Do in Iraq	45
What an Expanded Advisory Mission Would Look Like	46
How to Rapidly Increase Advisory Capacity	48
VII. Conclusions and Recommendations	50
Recommendations for the Bush Administration	51
The Way Forward...and Out	54
Appendix A: Congressional Benchmarks on Iraq	56
Appendix B: U.S. Force Posture in Iraq Under a Phased Transition Plan	58



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Phased Transition plan is necessary for Iraq. The Bush administration should end its current “surge” of U.S. troops and launch a transition process that focuses U.S. forces on an advisory role and reduces our military presence in Iraq from approximately 160,000 today to about 60,000 by the end of 2008. At the same time that it implements the first phase, it should begin planning for subsequent phases and working to achieve a bipartisan consensus in the United States.

A key aspect of the proposed Phased Transition plan is that the United States, after consultation with the Iraqi government, would set a timeline for the accomplishment of political and security goals and for the ultimate withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq. Setting a timeline is essential to both accelerating the “Baghdad clock” and putting more time on the “Washington clock.” If required by changes in the strategic situation, the timing of phases including final withdrawal could be delayed or accelerated, but there would be strong incentives for both Iraq and the United States to stick by a timeline once announced.

Once it became clear that Iraq had no weapons of mass destruction, the Bush administration’s goal for Iraq shifted to transforming the Middle East by providing the “fruits of democratic governance to the region.”¹ This report proposes more realistic objectives. It recommends that the United States use what leverage it still has in Iraq to maximize the probability of securing these ends:

- Preventing the establishment of al Qaeda safe havens;
- Preventing regional war; and
- Preventing genocide.

Phased Transition builds on work of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group (ISG) and provides a specific way to implement the group’s recommendation to reduce overall U.S. military presence in Iraq while boosting the number of advisors. Although this report focuses largely on the transitions of U.S. military forces, it is written with the understanding that the most critical steps are political and must be taken by Iraqis. As the ISG noted, “There is no action the American military can take that, by itself, can bring about success in Iraq.”² The key difference with the ISG is that this report

¹ National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (November 2005): 3.

² James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward – A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006): 48.

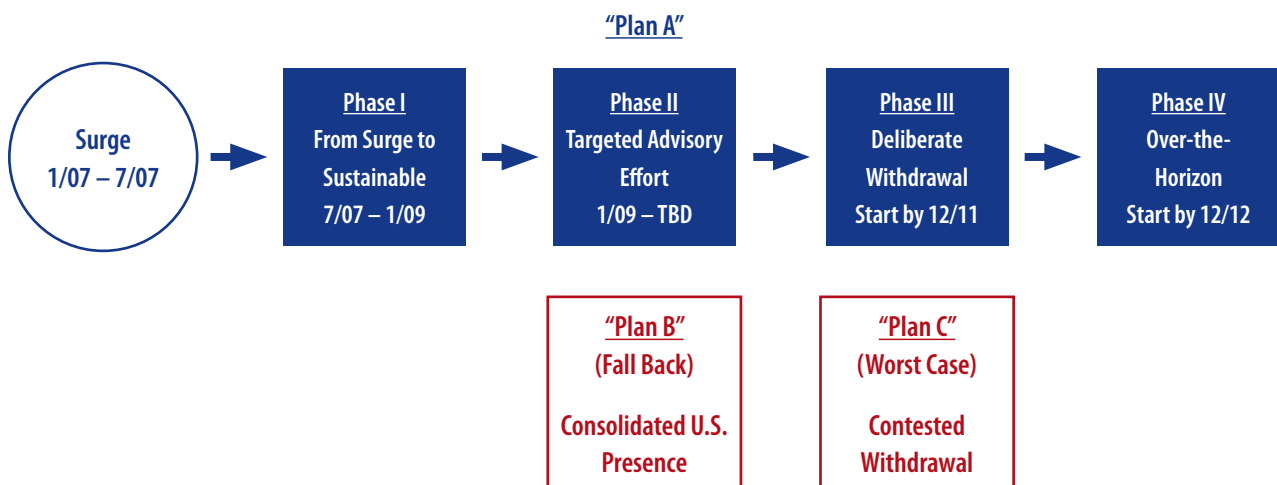
recommends establishing a specific timeline for U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, and a detailed plan for how to achieve it.

During all of this plan’s phases, the United States would pursue a strategy that includes three main elements. Its “top-down” element involves continuing to press Iraq’s central government and parliament to meet specific key benchmarks such as implementation of an agreement for the sharing of oil revenue, while helping to develop Iraqi security forces. Its “bottom-up” element involves working with tribal, local, and provincial leaders to reinforce and expand positive trends in Anbar province and avoid an escalation of the conflict between Turkey and Iraq’s northern Kurdistan region. And it embraces an “outside-in” element to build regional and international collaboration to increase stability in Iraq.

Although American influence in Iraq is limited amidst the ongoing insurgency and civil war, the presence and disposition of U.S. troops within the country offer essential leverage. Phased Transition would take advantage of this leverage by making America’s intention to depart Iraq explicit and credible, and by basing the transition’s contours on agreements with relevant parties in Iraq and the region.

Phased Transition involves four distinct phases, each of which is shown in Figure ES-1. In the current vernacular, Phased Transition is intended to be a new “Plan A.” Because the situation in Iraq is so tenuous, it is also critical to develop a fall back “Plan B”, and a worst case “Plan C”. Within each of these plans, the United States will have to take different approaches toward preventing al Qaeda safe havens, regional war, and genocide. Because of

Figure ES-1: Phased Transition Plan



its complexity and because it is less a focus today than fighting al Qaeda or avoiding regional war, a specific interagency plan should also be developed to prevent or if necessary stop genocide.

Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable

(July 2007 – January 2009)

Phase I occurs over the remainder of the Bush administration. The United States should reduce its forces in Iraq and undertake a gradual transfer of leadership for security operations in Baghdad and elsewhere to local, provincial, and national Iraqi security forces (police and military) which it would selectively support. At the same time, there must be a major national effort to train more U.S. advisors, with a target of approximately 20,000 deployed to Iraq by the end of 2008 (there are about 6,000 advisors in Iraq currently). Unlike previous U.S. advisory programs in Iraq, efforts to train, equip, advise, and support Iraqi security forces must be fully resourced. Increasing the size and reliability of the Iraqi Army is a high priority, and additionally much more emphasis should be given to developing local and provincial security forces. U.S. advisors would evaluate not only the technical skills of Iraqi units and personnel, but also their sectarian loyalties and record of conducting violence including human rights abuses.

By the end of this first phase, the U.S. military presence in Iraq would be reduced by some 100,000, to about 60,000 troops. The number of troops might be somewhat higher or lower depending on conditions in Iraq. The Bush administration would hand its successor, at best, a precarious situation in Iraq. But by making the recommended changes it may narrowly avoid taking America over the brink of strategic exhaustion.

President Bush should announce that the United States will not have any permanent military bases in Iraq, and that while the final withdrawal of

American troops will be left to his successor, he is taking the first step on that road with Phase I reductions now.

Phase II: Targeted Advisory Effort

(Suggested timeline: January 2009 – December 2011 at latest)

While the timeline for Phase I is established by the duration of the Bush administration, the timeline for Phases II, III, and IV would be set by the next president after a review of the situation and consultations inside the United States and with Iraqis and others. Once set, the timeline should not be changed lightly, but could be adjusted if required by major changes in the strategic situation. The specific dates for each Phase in this report are suggestive, and intended as a starting point for a later presidential decision.

If the security situation in Iraq remains challenging but well short of all-out civil or regional war, the United States would continue a targeted advisory mission for two to three years – enough time for significant progress towards building Iraqi capacity while making it clear that the U.S. military will in fact depart. Depending on a wide range of factors, the initial level of approximately 60,000 American troops including 20,000 military advisors would be expected to decline as the Iraqi security forces increased in size and effectiveness.

Phase III: Deliberate Military Withdrawal

(Suggested timeline: December 2011 – December 2012 at latest)

A deliberate U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq, on our own timetable (while consulting with the Iraqis and others), would undercut the al Qaeda and insurgency narratives that the United States was forced out again, as it was from Vietnam in the 1970s, Lebanon in the 1980s, and Somalia in the 1990s. Some may suggest that the U.S. military should only withdraw when the “job is

done”—when “victory” is achieved. However, there will be no American victory in Iraq in the terms defined by the Bush administration, no burgeoning democracy to serve as an example for the Middle East. Under the best case, the Iraqis will move toward political reconciliation rather than all-out civil war, and while the United States will withdraw its military, it must continue a long engagement with Iraq.

Phase IV: Long-Term Political Engagement; Over-the-Horizon Military Presence

(Suggested timeline: starting December 2012 at latest)

Under the Phased Transition plan, the fourth and final phase would be achieved by the end of the next president’s first term of office, and would continue indefinitely. American forces would have withdrawn entirely from Iraq, while the United States would work to establish a normalized (albeit unique and challenging) political, economic, military, and security relationship with Iraq and key players within the country. The United States would maintain a significant military presence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, probably including a continuous Navy and Air Force presence as well as Special Operations Forces and ground forces. Precise numbers and posture of the forces would depend on conditions at the time in Iraq and elsewhere in the region, as well as other demands on U.S. forces globally.

Other Essential Plans

“Plan B” (Fall Back): Consolidated U.S. Presence. It is possible that the security situation in Iraq may become too volatile for American advisors to deploy with Iraqi units. Therefore the United States should prepare for a “Plan B” in which civilian and military personnel would be consolidated in the Green Zone and at a limited number of bases in Iraq. Some continued training of Iraqi forces might take place at remaining U.S. bases. Details

regarding the mission, size, and location of U.S. forces would depend on conditions in various parts of Iraq and the judgment of commanders on the ground, but as a rough estimate 25,000 to 40,000 American troops might remain in Iraq.

“Plan C” (Worst Case): Contested Withdrawal.

No matter what course of action the United States pursues, it must prepare for the reality that the civil war in Iraq could escalate to the point where a continued U.S. civilian and military presence in the country posed an unacceptable risk, in which case a contested withdrawal could occur from part or all of the country. A “Plan C” is needed for this contingency, which would involve U.S. civilian personnel being withdrawn from the Green Zone and other areas, and the military withdrawing to an “over-the-horizon” posture under extraordinarily dangerous circumstances.³

Preventing or Stopping Genocide. An interagency plan is needed to prevent—and if prevention fails, stop—genocide once underway. The United States already has plans for countering al Qaeda and should have a good understanding how a regional war might start, but the same is not true of the third proposed objective, preventing genocide in Iraq. The first preventive measures are to press Iraqis to meet key political milestones in order to reduce pressures for sectarian violence, while helping improve security via a much-enhanced advisory effort. Further steps would include diplomatic and economic measures as well as military planning for missions including interdiction of death squads. The plan should be supported by intelligence collection and analysis relating to specific indicators.

³ It is worth emphasizing that because American military forces would be needed in Iraq to protect U.S. civilians in most likely scenarios, a decision to withdraw all U.S. military forces from Iraq while violence was still rampant would be a decision to withdraw our diplomats, contractors, and other personnel as well.

Why Set a Timeline for U.S. Military Withdrawal?

The U.S. military will withdraw from Iraq: the question is when and under what conditions. Establishing a timeline for departure, while providing several years beforehand for political progress and improved security in Iraq, would alter the political landscape in ways that will help protect America's core interests. More specifically, it would:

- Provide incentives for Iraqi political leaders to take necessary steps on political reconciliation—it offers our best chance of catalyzing action at the national political level.
- Leave American forces in place for a defined period to help suppress the immediate disruptive reactions of some groups in Iraq (and fearful reactions of others) once we make it plain that we are leaving.
- Establish that the United States does not have designs for the long-term occupation of Iraq.
- Undercut the narrative of al Qaeda and affiliated groups that the Americans are being forced out.
- Improve bargaining leverage to encourage other states to contribute toward stabilizing Iraq.
- Help establish a domestic consensus in the United States that avoids precipitous withdrawal at the outset of the next administration.

Recommendations

The following recommendations to the Bush administration are detailed in the final section of this report:

1. Adopt Phased Transition as a framework for guiding political-military planning and specific actions.
 - 1.1. Focus on realistic and limited objectives for Iraq: preventing al Qaeda safe havens, preventing regional war, and preventing genocide.
 - 1.2. Begin planning and consultations immediately, and implementation within several months, to gradually take U.S. forces out of the lead for security operations and reduce U.S. military forces in Iraq to approximately 60,000 by January 2009 (including about 20,000 advisors).
 - 1.3. Immediately make developing a significantly increased American advisory capacity to mentor and support Iraqi military and police a national priority.
 - 1.4. Begin planning and negotiations now for a significant long-term U.S. military presence in the Gulf region.
 - 1.5. Begin planning now for a full military withdrawal from Iraq, while assessing and preparing for the possible/likely reactions of Iraqis and regional players.
 - 1.6. Begin discussions with the Iraqi central government, as well as with provincial and regional governments (e.g., Kurdistan), to set the terms of a post-occupation relationship.
 - 1.7. Work with Congress to forge a bipartisan consensus for a Phased Transition plan that would give a reasonable chance for an advisory mission to work, while culminating by the end of 2012 in a full military withdrawal from Iraq.
2. Conduct contingency planning now for the possibility of more chaotic Iraqi environments which would require consolidation of the U.S. military within Iraq ("Plan B") or as a worst case the withdrawal of civilian and military personnel under fire ("Plan C").
3. Develop and implement an integrated inter-agency plan to prevent genocide in Iraq and if necessary to stop it once underway. The plan should be supported by ongoing intelligence

collection and analysis relating to specific indicators and warning.

4. More broadly, pursue a balanced strategy with continued attention to “top-down” efforts, and significantly expanded “bottom-up” and “outside-in” efforts.
 - 4.1. Continue “top-down” efforts to press the Iraqi central government to achieve current and future benchmarks, and redouble efforts to increase the size, competency, and non-sectarian nature of the Iraqi security forces.
 - 4.2. Expand “bottom-up” efforts in Iraq, including the support and development of local security forces, and negotiations with tribal, local, and provincial leaders.
 - 4.3. Aggressively pursue regional diplomacy as recommended by the ISG, with immediate attention to preventing a further escalation of tensions between Kurdistan and Turkey.

The Way Forward...and Out

This report is intended to provide a realistic appraisal of America’s enduring interests in Iraq—preventing al Qaeda safe havens, regional war, and genocide—and to provide a plan that identifies specific steps the Bush administration can take to make these outcomes more likely while also preparing for the worst. At this dangerous moment, such realism is essential to increasing the prospects that the United States will get out of Iraq more responsibly than it got in.



"We have opened the Pandora's Box and the question is, what is the way forward?"⁴
—Zalmay Khalilzad (U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, 2005-2007)

I. INTRODUCTION

Iraq is the most politically charged issue facing America today. There are no easy answers, but there is an urgent need for an honest, open, and truly bipartisan dialogue on the way ahead.

The situation in Iraq is grave. After initial indications that violence in Baghdad decreased coincident with the start of the surge, it now appears that both al Qaeda attacks and sectarian murders have actually increased.⁵ The second bombing of the Askariya shrine in Samarra on June 13, 2007 may cause the civil war to accelerate.⁶ Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Iraqi government appears incapable of quickly pushing through even the most urgent legislation, such as an agreement on the sharing of oil revenue. And in Kurdistan—which up to now has been the one bastion of stability in Iraq—a wildfire of sectarian conflict over Kirkuk's status or even open military conflict with Turkey loom as near-term possibilities.

In short, the United States is in an increasingly untenable strategic position. It is possible, even probable, that things will get worse before they get better. While the invasion and occupation of Iraq was a massive strategic error, assigning blame will not solve the terrible quandary or mitigate the risks now facing the nation.

At this critical juncture, America's political leadership must strive to move forward together. Given that many in Congress believe the 2006 election was a mandate on Iraq, and given that the administration did not embrace the path to bipartisanship offered by the Iraq Study Group (ISG), co-chaired by James A. Baker III and Lee H. Hamilton, Democrats may feel loathe

to compromise. Similarly, President Bush's presidency will be judged largely by how Iraq turns out, and therefore a strong propensity to “double down” and hope for the best is understandable. But such a political impasse will result in catastrophic failure in Iraq.

It is abundantly clear that by the end of the Bush administration, the United States will not have achieved a “victory” in Iraq. If the president attempts to maintain the surge through the end of his term, it would have a terrible cost for the Army and Marine Corps, and heighten strategic risks for the nation. Moreover, it would virtually guarantee that the 2008 election will be a referendum on the war, and barring a miracle in Iraq, the next president and the vast majority of the next Congress would very likely favor a precipitous withdrawal of U.S. military personnel from Iraq.

The premise of this report is that the Bush administration and Congress can and must do better than stalemate and a near-inevitable strategic failure in Iraq. It proposes a coherent strategy that builds explicitly on ISG recommendations, adding some specific suggestions to secure the situation in Kurdistan, exploit signs of progress in Anbar, and move toward progress in Baghdad and southern Iraq. It then goes further by describing a four-part Phased Transition plan that would systematically reshape the U.S. military force posture in Iraq before the end of the next president's administration, resulting in the withdrawal of all U.S. forces out of Iraq.

The report provides a brief overview of the current situation in Iraq before presenting a strategic

⁴ Quoted in Borzou Daragahi, “Envoy to Iraq Sees Threat of Wider War,” *Los Angeles Times* (7 March 2006): 1.

⁵ See Peter Spiegel, “Iraq Violence Up Since Troop Boost,” *Los Angeles Times* (14 June 2007): A1; Richard O'Connell, “Number of Unidentified Bodies Found in Baghdad Rose Sharply in May,” *The New York Times* (2 June 2007): 6; and Sudarsan Raghavan, “Morgue Data Show Increase in Sectarian Killings in Iraq,” *The Washington Post* (24 May 2007): A01. For excellent data on a wide range of variables, see Michael O'Hanlon and Jason Campbell, *Iraq Index* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution): Updated regularly at <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>

⁶ See Damien Cave and Graham Bowley, “Minarets on Shiite Shrine in Iraq Destroyed in Attack,” *The New York Times* (13 June 2007), and John Ward Anderson and Muhanned Saif Aldin, “Blasts Destroy Remnants of Samarra Shiite Shrine,” *The Washington Post* (13 June 2007).

framework. It argues that U.S. strategy must focus on three enduring interests: preventing al Qaeda safe havens, genocide, and regional war. It then outlines elements of a responsible strategy in Iraq. Next, it lays out a four-phase transition plan for protecting these interests, and describes in broad terms the military force structure needed to underwrite it. Finally, the report provides specific recommendations to the Bush administration.

II. CURRENT STRATEGIC CONTOURS

The security situation in Iraq remains tenuous and complex, and in very different ways the same is true of the political situation in the United States. A change in American policy is inevitable, and with eroding support for the administration's surge even in Republican ranks, summer 2007 looms as the last best chance for any effective bipartisan approach on Iraq.

Implications of the Surge

In June 2007, some six months after President Bush announced that more than twenty thousand (now closer to thirty thousand) additional American troops would be deployed to Iraq to help quell violence in Baghdad and contest Sunni insurgents in Anbar province, it is too soon to declare the "surge" a success or failure. However, while the effects of current operations will not be clear for some time, the broad strategic contours of the surge are coming into focus.

Although sectarian violence in parts of Baghdad was much lower during the first few months of the surge, the number of unidentified bodies found in Baghdad soared 70 percent during May—726 compared to 411 in April.⁸ More fundamentally, the surge does not appear to have accelerated the Iraqi central government's pursuit of the political reforms necessary to quell sectarian violence and preserve a unified Iraqi state.⁹

The situation in Anbar is more encouraging. Recent events there appear to have altered the contours of the Sunni insurgency, as well as the struggle against al Qaeda, as a growing number of tribes have allied

*"Tell me how this ends...
eight years and eight
divisions?"⁷*

—Major General David
Petraeus, March 2003

to form paramilitary units and support local police efforts to combat al Qaeda.¹⁰ If such success is consolidated, it may offer a foundation for making real progress in securing this area against al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), and helping Sunni tribes build local security and improve economic conditions.

However, overall trends in Iraq today remain dire, and in most respects continue to deteriorate from the grim picture painted in the National Intelligence Estimate of January 2007:

The Intelligence Community judges that the term 'civil war' does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, which includes extensive Shiite-on-Shiite violence, al-Qa'ida and Sunni insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, and widespread criminally motivated violence. Nonetheless, the term 'civil war' accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict, including the hardening of ethno-sectarian identities, a sea change in the character of the violence, ethno-sectarian mobilization, and population displacements.¹¹

Sectarian violence has ripped the fabric of Iraqi society. Power has devolved to sectarian and tribal

⁷ Rick Atkinson, "The Long, Blinding Road to War; Unexpected Challenges Tested Petraeus in Iraq," *The Washington Post* (7 March 2004): A01.

⁸ Richard Opiel, "Number of Unidentified Bodies Found in Baghdad Rose Sharply in May," *The New York Times* (2 June 2007): A6. Also see Ann Scott Tyson, "No Drop in Iraq Violence Seen Since Troop Buildup," *The Washington Post* (14 June 2007): A01.

⁹ See Gordon Lubold, "U.S. Benchmarks for Iraq May Be Hazy," *Christian Science Monitor* (7 May 2007); Edward Wong and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "A Draft Oil Bill Stirs Opposition from Iraqi Blocs," *The New York Times* (3 May 2007): 1.

¹⁰ James Janega, "In Anbar, Tribes Turn Against Al Qaeda," *Chicago Tribune* (27 May 2007): 13; Sam Dagher, "Sunni Muslim Sheikhs Join US in Fighting Al Qaeda," *Christian Science Monitor* (3 May 2007): 1.

¹¹ National Intelligence Council, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead* (January 2007): 7.

entities, deepening and reinforcing polarization, and further disconnecting average Iraqis from their elected national leaders, who remain largely confined to the American-controlled Green Zone in central Baghdad. As a recent analysis by a prominent U.K. think tank concluded, “the Iraqi government is only one of several ‘state-like’ actors. The regionalization of Iraqi political life needs to be recognized as a defining feature of Iraq’s political structure.”¹²

The widespread and intense sectarian and insurgent violence has caused significant shifts in Iraq’s population. According to estimates by the United Nations and other organizations, more than two million Iraqis have fled the country, and a further two million have been internally displaced, in many cases forced to flee for their lives.¹³ These trends continued through the spring—90,000 Iraqis per month were displaced in each month of March, April, and May of 2007.¹⁴

Any strategy that stands a chance of protecting core American interests in Iraq must counter the country’s destabilizing sectarian strife, fracturing of state power, and deadly insurgent violence. This will be difficult, but not impossible. Indubitably, it will take time—a fact slighted both by strategies that emphasize the rewards of short-term tactics like the surge and by strategies that establish near-term dates for complete withdrawal.

A Costly and Unpopular War

Since the Iraq War started in March 2003, U.S. troop levels have hovered between 120,000 and 160,000.¹⁵ The war is eroding the readiness of America’s ground forces. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell warned in December 2006 that the “active Army is about broken.” Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told reporters in January 2007 that “our forces are stretched, there’s no question about that.” The strain on the Army and Marine Corps is substantial and growing, and the military’s reduced readiness for other contingencies poses a growing strategic risk to the nation.¹⁶

More than 3,500 troops have been killed in Iraq since the war began, and May 2007 was one of the worst three months of the war, on par with the two battles for Fallujah in April and November 2004.¹⁷

Domestic support for the war has been eroding for years. At the invasion’s start, more than 70 percent of Americans supported President Bush’s decision to go to war in Iraq. By July 2003, support was already dropping to less than 60 percent.¹⁸ By the midterm elections of 2006, support for the war had plummeted. Exit polling indicated that 57 percent of all voters disapproved of the war in Iraq.¹⁹ Most recently, according to a May 2007 *CBS News* and *New York Times* poll, 76 percent of Americans

¹² Gareth Stansfield, *Accepting Realities in Iraq* (Chatham House: Middle East Programme Briefing Paper, May 2007): 1.

¹³ See Nir Rosen, “The Flight from Iraq,” *The New York Times Magazine* (13 May 2007); Rhoda Margesson, Jeremy Sharp, and Andorra Bruno, *Iraqi Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons: A Deepening Humanitarian Crisis?* (Congressional Research Service, RL33936: 23 March 2007); Ann Scott Tyson, “Iraqi Refugee Crisis Seen Deepening,” *The Washington Post* (17 January 2007): A04; and United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, *Growing Needs Amid Continuing Displacement* (Online at <http://www.unhcr.org>).

¹⁴ See Michael O’Hanlon and Jason Campbell, *Iraq Index* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution): Updated regularly at <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>

¹⁵ See Michael O’Hanlon and Jason Campbell, *Iraq Index* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution): Updated regularly at <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>, and Ann Scott Tyson, “Repeat Iraq Tours Raise Risk of PTSD, Army Finds,” *The Washington Post* (20 December 2006): A19.

¹⁶ Colin Powell quoted in Mark Thompson, “Broken Down,” *Time* (16 April 2007), Robert Gates quoted in Ann Scott Tyson and Josh White, “Strained Army Extends Tours To 15 Months,” *The Washington Post* (12 April 2007): A01. Also see Ann Scott Tyson, “Nominee to Head Joint Chiefs Sees Current Strain on Military,” *The Washington Post* (12 June 2007). For an evaluation of options for these and other issues relating to U.S. ground forces, see Michèle A. Flournoy and Tammy Schultz, “Shaping U.S. Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right,” (Washington D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2007): Available online at <http://www.cnas.org>.

¹⁷ “May Toll for U.S. Soldiers in Iraq Climbs to 122,” *Reuters* (31 May 2007); Ann Scott Tyson and John Ward Anderson, “Attacks on U.S. Troops in Iraq Grow in Lethality, Complexity: Bigger Bombs a Key Cause of May’s High Death Toll,” *The Washington Post* (3 June 2007): A01.

¹⁸ See, “Poll: Americans Less Positive on Iraq,” *CNN* (1 July 2003); also see Richard Morin and Claudia Deane, “7 in 10 Americans Back Decision to Go to War,” *The Washington Post* (21 March 2003): A25.

¹⁹ “Exit Polls: Bush, Iraq, Key to Outcome,” *CNN News* (8 November 2006).

believe things are going badly in Iraq, and 63 percent believe the United States should set a date for withdrawing troops sometime next year.²⁰

Inevitability and Opportunity

The December 2006 Iraq Study Group report was eagerly anticipated on Capitol Hill and by the media, and rightly so, for it provided the first viable blueprint for a bipartisan way ahead on Iraq. The ISG described the situation in Iraq as “grave and deteriorating.”²¹ It argued that the Iraqi government needed to reach political solutions, and the Iraqi Army needed to take on more responsibility for the nation’s security. It also called for the U.S. government to begin redeploying overstretched ground forces to meet security responsibilities outside of Iraq, with the goal of having all combat brigades out by the first quarter of 2008 except for a rapid reaction force to be used against al Qaeda in Iraq. The report’s significance seemed to be enhanced by the November 2006 elections, which were widely seen as a referendum on Iraq and cost the Republicans control of both the House and Senate—and also because the new Secretary of Defense, Robert M. Gates, had served as an ISG member prior to his nomination in November 2006.

The biggest battle to date between Congress and the White House occurred over the recent emergency wartime supplemental for Iraq, with President Bush vetoing legislation that included timetables for withdrawal. After months of debate, just prior to Memorial Day 2007, Congress passed a supplemental funding bill that included benchmarks for the Iraqi government as a condition

for further reconstruction aid. It also called for reports from the president in July and September 2007 on how the current strategy is working in Iraq, and independent assessments of Iraqi military capabilities in September and every 120 days thereafter. The supplemental did not include timetables for the withdrawal of American forces, but some Democratic leaders in Congress promised to renew that fight this fall.

In perhaps the most important domestic political development of the Iraq War since it began in 2003, recent comments by senior Republicans have strongly suggested that General Petraeus’s September report may mark a turning point. “I think that the handwriting is on the wall that we are going in a different direction in the fall,” said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell in late May, “and I expect the president to lead it.”²² Recent media reports suggest that the White House may be considering shifting away from the surge toward a reduced force posture sometime in 2008, perhaps in the range of 100,000 American troops.²³

The next several months constitute a critical window of opportunity to responsibly prepare for and initiate a transition to a reduced force posture in Iraq that will be able to protect enduring U.S. interests.

General David Petraeus was right: the so-called “Washington clock” is moving faster than the “Baghdad clock.”²⁴ By the time he and Ambassador Ryan Crocker provide their status report in September 2007, the United States will have its last best opportunity to forge a bipartisan approach on Iraq. The remainder of this report describes what this approach should entail.

²⁰ See Dalia Sussman, “Poll Shows View of Iraq War is Most Negative Since Start,” *The New York Times* (25 May 2007): 16.

²¹ See James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward — A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006): xiii.

²² See Michael Abramowitz and Peter Baker, “White House Considers Next Steps in Iraq,” *The Washington Post* (27 May 2007): A05; and *Associated Press*, “Troop Cut Expected After Iraq Report,” (27 May 2007).

²³ David Sanger and David Cloud, “White House Is Said to Debate ‘08 Cut in Iraq Combat Forces by 50%,” *The New York Times* (26 May 2007): 1. David Sanger, “With Korea as Model, Bush Team Ponders Long Support Role in Iraq,” *The New York Times* (3 June 2007): A1.

²⁴ Quoted in “General Petraeus holds Defense Department News Briefing,” *CQ Transcripts Wire* (26 April 2007). Also see “Joshua Partlow, “Path in Iraq Hard But Not Hopeless, U.S. General Says,” *The Washington Post* (11 February 2007): A14. Finally, see James Kitfield, “Army Strained to Near Its Breaking Point,” *National Journal* (6 April 2007).

III. ENDURING U.S. INTERESTS IN IRAQ: THE “THREE NO’S”

American strategy and plans for Iraq must focus on critical U.S. interests. The Bush administration’s November 2005 National Strategy for Victory in Iraq calls for attempting to create an Iraq that is “united” and “democratic.”²⁵ It is doubtful whether either of these goals is achievable within the foreseeable future, and indeed a near-term effort to press for national unity and American-style democracy—as opposed to an approach rooted in Iraqi cultural history and federalism as called for in Iraq’s constitution—would likely exacerbate rather than solve current problems.

Instead, the United States should focus on three enduring American interests:

- **No al Qaeda Safe Havens:** The United States has an enduring interest in preventing Iraq from becoming the terrorist sanctuary of choice, as Afghanistan was on September 10th, 2001.
- **No Regional War:** The United States has an enduring interest in Iraq’s internal chaos not triggering regional conflict, and in external actors not further exacerbating Iraq’s civil war.
- **No Genocide:** The United States has an enduring interest in preventing or stopping genocide in Iraq.

Securing these “Three No’s” requires a strategy focused on maintaining Iraq’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, and creating an internal balance of power among Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds that reduces the chances of mass violence. These interests are interrelated: avoiding al Qaeda safe havens

and preventing genocide will both help reduce the risk of regional war.

No al Qaeda Safe Havens

The United States has an enduring interest in preventing Iraq from becoming the terrorist sanctuary of choice, as Afghanistan was on September 10th, 2001.

Contrary to past statements by the White House and in particular by Vice President Cheney, the Iraq invasion was a boon to the jihadist movement.²⁶ It has opened an Arab country in the center of the Middle East for use by jihadists who were not significantly present before the U.S. invasion. America’s intelligence community concluded in 2006 that “the Iraq conflict has become the *cause célèbre* for jihadists, breeding a deep resentment of U.S. involvement in the Muslim world and cultivating supporters for the global jihadist movement.”²⁷ By invading Iraq, the United States created a new battleground for the global jihadist movement featuring urban and human terrain far more advantageous to our enemies than to us.

Instead of heeding the intelligence community and analysts who warned against the growth of the jihadist movement and the way their narrative is being reinforced by U.S. policy, the Bush administration has suggested that any shift in force posture in Iraq would embolden our enemies.²⁸ Such rhetoric overlooks the reality that our enemies are emboldened—and their recruitment significantly enabled—by an apparently indefinite American occupation of Iraq. Given the nature of the violence in Iraq, it is fair to conclude that “a decision to remain in Iraq so as to avoid emboldening radicals is inevitably quixotic.”²⁹

²⁵ National Security Council, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* (November 2005).

²⁶ Jeffrey Smith, “Hussein’s Prewar Ties To Al-Qaeda Discounted,” *The Washington Post* (6 April 2007): A01.

²⁷ See Office of Director of National Intelligence, *Declassified Key Judgments of the National Intelligence Estimate “Trends in Global Terrorism: Implications for the United States” dated April 2006* (Available online at: http://www.dni.gov/press_releases/Declassified_NIE_Key_Judgments.pdf).

²⁸ For example, see Steve Negus and Andrew Ward, “Bush Warns Against Early Iraq Withdrawal,” *Financial Times* (25 April 2007): 4.

²⁹ Steven Simon, *After the Surge: The Case for U.S. Military Disengagement from Iraq* (Washington D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations, February 2007): 22.

That said, whatever America's military footprint is in Iraq, U.S. strategy must include an aggressive effort to contest the establishment of havens where jihadists can congregate, train, and potentially export their brand of terrorism to other countries in the region and around the world.³⁰ Recent reports indicate that the percentage of foreign fighters in Sunni insurgency groups may be declining, and that local Sunni populations are turning on foreign fighters who continue to terrorize Iraqi civilians.³¹

In the near-term it will be difficult to balance between retaining sufficient forces to prevent Iraq from becoming a terrorist sanctuary and reducing the U.S. presence that attracts jihadists in the first place. Over the longer-term, a visible American military presence in Iraq would be an accelerator for the recruitment of terrorists and constitute a magnet for the jihadist movement. Although unilateral U.S. action must remain an option, to the greatest extent possible the United States should enable Iraqi efforts as well as take advantage of intelligence provided by Iraqis when conducting U.S.-led counterterrorism operations. Recent trends in Anbar province hold particular promise.

No Regional War

The United States cannot allow instability in Iraq to spark a regional war.

The risk of regional war is real and must be taken seriously as policymakers consider alternative strategies. A recent Brookings Institution report concluded that "if the United States is confronted

with an all-out civil war in Iraq, its principal challenge will be to contain spillover so that it does not destabilize the region."³² The January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq concluded that if a rapid U.S. withdrawal from Iraq were to take place, "neighboring countries—invited by Iraqi factions or unilaterally—might intervene openly in the conflict."³³ Saudi Arabia and Turkey, allies of the United States, have warned that unless their concerns are met, they may overtly participate in the conflict.³⁴

Any reduction or redeployment of American troops needs to be executed in a manner that does not threaten the security of Iraq's neighbors to the point of inducing their large-scale military intervention. At the same time, it is important to understand that *Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey will continue to pursue their national interests in Iraq.* This means a likely continuation of Iran transferring money, weapons, and their intelligence operatives into the country. While the United States should seek to do what it can to reduce interference from Iran and Syria, we must recognize that Iran, Syria, and other states will seek to establish relationships with the various Iraqi political, religious, insurgent, and militia groups as a means to protect and advance their own interests.

Iraq holds the world's second largest supply of identified oil reserves, and a long-term collapse in Iraq would disrupt regional security and the global energy market. However, the world has lived with a limited supply of oil from Iraq for several years,

³⁰ See Peter Bergen and Alec Reynolds, "Blowback Revisited," *Foreign Affairs* (November 2005): 2-6.

³¹ For recent articles on the changing nature of the jihadist threat in Iraq, see Karen DeYoung and Walter Pincus, "Al Qaeda in Iraq May Not Be Threat Here," *The Washington Post* (18 March 2007): A20; Peter Grier, "Where does Al Qaeda stand now?" *Christian Science Monitor* (5 March 2007): 1; Craig Whitlock, "Terrorist Networks Lure Young Moroccans to War in Far-Off Iraq," *The Washington Post* (20 February 2007): A01.

³² Daniel Byman and Kenneth Pollack, *Things Fall Apart: Containing the Spillover from an Iraqi Civil War* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2007): 4.

³³ National Intelligence Council, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead* (January 2007).

³⁴ On the concerns of Saudi Arabia see Nawaf Obaid, "Saudi Arabia Will Protect Sunnis if the U.S. Leaves," *The Washington Post* (29 November 2006): A23; Helene Cooper, "Saudis Give a Grim 'What If' Should U.S. Opt to Leave Iraq," *International Herald Tribune* (13 December 2006). On Turkey, see especially International Crisis Group, *Iraq and the Kurds: Resolving the Kirkuk Crisis* (Washington D.C.: ICG Middle East Report # 64, 19 April 2007): 15-17. Also see Robert Reid, "Ambitions of Iraqi Kurds Worry Turkey," *Associated Press* (17 April 2007).

and the fungible nature of this resource mitigates the effect of reduced Iraqi oil production on the United States and the global economy. Iraq currently accounts for less than three percent of global oil production, roughly 2 million of 85 million barrels per day. If a regional war were to occur such that the flow of oil from other Gulf states was interrupted, the impact would be much greater.³⁵

While a regional war could take many forms, two scenarios are of particular concern. The first involves Iraq's neighbors increasing their support for Iraq's sectarian and insurgent groups. With Iran backing the Shiites and Saudi Arabia the Sunnis, a proxy war involving both nations is a real threat that risks further destabilizing Iraq and the region.

The second scenario of concern is a major escalation of tensions between Turkey and the Kurdistan region of Iraq, exacerbated by growing talk of Kurdish nationalism and the continued militant activities of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK, for its Kurdish name *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*).

The challenge for policymakers is for the United States to use all elements of its national power to influence Tehran, Damascus, Riyadh, and Ankara. Before the release of the ISG report in late 2006, the administration had rejected any notion of engaging in high-level bilateral talks with either Iran or Syria concerning the future of Iraq. The administration has since moved some, with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice taking a more active diplomatic role.³⁶ A strategy aimed at lowering the chance of a regional war needs to contain a prominent role for inclusive but tough

diplomacy that utilizes any leverage created by a shifting American force posture in Iraq.

No Genocide

The United States has an enduring interest in preventing genocide in Iraq.

Genocide is defined as "acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group."³⁷ While Iraq to date has suffered from sectarian cleansing, and many thousands have died, the divisiveness among Shiite factions and general disarray of governing authorities are significant impediments to near-term, centrally-directed genocide. Nevertheless, the history of colonial withdrawals (as for example when the British left India) and some present indicators suggest that turbulence and pervasive insecurity are intensifying sectarian tension to very dangerous levels. Moreover, Shiite militias or other entities in Iraq may develop genocidal plans once their political power has been sufficiently consolidated. Unfortunately, a history of prior genocidal violence in Iraq and the existence of exclusionary ideology point in this direction.³⁸

The United States will never be in a position to prevent all sectarian killing, or even a large-scale Iraqi civil war and the bloodbath it would entail. To date, the biggest Shiite militias in Iraq have largely refrained from large-scale campaigns of sectarian cleansing. At some point, however, the United States will no longer be responsible for securing the population, and once U.S. forces begin to shift to a reduced force posture in Iraq, Iraq's Shiite players are likely to attempt to deci-

³⁵ For example, in March 2007 Saudi Arabia pumped 8.6 million barrels per day, and Iran 3.7 million barrels per day, a combined total of more than six times Iraq's production. See Energy Information Administration, *Short-Term Energy Outlook* (U.S. Department of Energy: 8 May 2007): Available online at <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/may07.pdf>

³⁶ See Robin Wright, "Rice Urges Iran to Attend Mideast Meeting on Iraq," *The Washington Post* (24 April 2007): A10.

³⁷ See United Nations, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (12 January 1951).

³⁸ Barbara Harff, "No Lessons Learned from the Holocaust? Assessing Risks of Genocide and Political Mass Murder Since 1955," *American Political Science Review*, (February 2003): 57-73. Additionally, genocide scholar Gregory Stanton has identified eight stages of genocide: classification ('us vs. them'); symbolization (including ID cards); dehumanization (comparing groups to animals or diseases); organization; polarization (elimination of moderate positions); preparation (including concrete planning and training for execution of mass murder); extermination; and denial. Gregory Stanton, "Could the Rwandan Genocide Have Been Prevented?" *Journal of Genocide Research* (June 2004): 211-227.

sively enhance their respective positions. It is possible that conflict among the largest Shiite militias including the Mahdi Army and the Badr Organization could break out, and if so Iraq's central government, particularly its Interior Ministry, could come unhinged.

Preventing a complete degeneration of Iraqi security ministries is one of the main reasons why the United States cannot rapidly withdraw from Iraq. U.S. forces need to withdraw in a manner that preserves American options and maintains sufficient contact with Iraqi security forces (ISF) to detect and prevent their devolution into de facto militias. The January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate is clear on this point: "If Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sectarian conflict in Iraq...we judge that the ISF would be unlikely to survive as a non-sectarian national institution."³⁹

However, it is unlikely that the Shiite militias alone have the capability to conduct genocide against Iraq's Sunni population.⁴⁰ Averting genocide in Iraq is principally about the United States preventing Iraq's Defense or Interior Ministries from being utilized as overt mechanisms of genocide. These institutions, particularly the Interior Ministry, are rife with corruption and sectarian agendas, so much so that a shift in U.S. force posture could accelerate the degree to which Iraqi Army or police units become further politicized.⁴¹ The United States will need to make it clear to Iraq's Shiite-dominated central government that the use of national institutions to increase the

scope and intensity of Iraq's civil war is unacceptable and will lead to severe consequences.

While U.S. forces cannot stop Iraq's civil war, they can and must protect Iraq's Sunni and Kurdish populations from genocide enabled by the central government or rogue elements thereof.

Other Important Interests

While the three enduring interests outlined above constitute those fundamental objectives that any responsible U.S. strategy in Iraq should pursue, America has other important interests at stake in the region and around the world that are affected by the ongoing war in Iraq.

Protecting American Citizens in the Region

As long as there are American citizens in Iraq and around the region, policymakers and planners must work to ensure their safety. As the situation in Iraq continues to pose significant risks to all involved in operations there or in the Gulf region, it will be important to consider how a shifting force posture will affect the security of American civilians—including government personnel, contractors, and business people.

Preventing Failure in Afghanistan

The situation in Afghanistan is precarious. The Taliban constitutes a constant threat, the government of Hamid Karzai does not enjoy much influence beyond Kabul, and while some NATO members are performing heroically, others have made minimal contributions. Whatever happens in Iraq, it is in America's long-term interest to prevent Afghanistan from devolving back into a

³⁹ National Intelligence Council, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead* (January 2007): 2. The NIE assumes, as does this report, that the Iraqi security forces can not yet be classified as de facto Shiite militias. Such an assumption may need to be reconsidered if the situation in Iraq does not improve.

⁴⁰ For an interesting examination on how certain structural dynamics in Iraq may mitigate the chances of certain "worst case" scenarios, see Barry Posen, "The risks of staying vs. leaving Iraq," *The Boston Globe* (19 April 2007): A11.

⁴¹ Recent media reports are not encouraging in this regard. See Joshua Partlow, "Maliki's Office is Seen Behind Purge in Forces," *The Washington Post* (30 April 2007): A01.

failed state from which instability and terrorism would again take root and pose serious dangers to the region and the world.⁴²

Limiting Iranian Influence

One irony of the war in Iraq is that an attempt to create a shining beacon of democracy that would help to transform the Middle East has weakened the United States and empowered Iran. Irrespective of what any post-surge Iraq strategy may look like, Iran has gained enormous influence in Iraq and the region.⁴³ It will remain an important American interest, however, to mitigate additional strategic setbacks in Iraq in order to limit further Iranian strategic gains. A failure to do so could significantly increase the long-term risks of regional war in the Middle East.

Rebuilding the U.S. Military

Over four years of constant combat rotations to Iraq have eroded the capabilities of U.S. Army and Marine Corps units, leaving the military ill equipped to prepare for future missions and respond to potential crises.⁴⁴ To secure America's long-term interests not only in Iraq but globally, U.S. troops must return to a more sustainable deployment tempo and the "reset" and recapitalization of ground forces must be a top national priority.⁴⁵

Restoring U.S. Credibility

The war in Iraq has been an enormous blot on American credibility in the region and throughout the world. Having gone to war

without the international community's support, failed to find weapons of mass destruction upon which the invasion was predicated, and proven unable to stem Iraq's bloody unraveling, the United States finds its global standing at the lowest level in decades.⁴⁶ Rebuilding American legitimacy and credibility is a critical enabling factor in the pursuit of U.S. national interests.

⁴² For recent reports on Afghanistan, see Anthony Cordesman, *Winning Afghanistan: Facing the Rising Threat* (CSIS PowerPoint Presentation: 25 January 2007): available online at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/061212_afghanistan.pdf. Also see Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (Congressional Research Service: 11 January 2007), and Thomas Johnson and Chris Mason, "Understanding the Taliban and Insurgency in Afghanistan," *Orbis* (Winter 2007): 71-89.

⁴³ The best author on this subject is Vali Nasr. See *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: Norton, 2006). Also see "When the Shiites Rise," *Foreign Affairs* (July 2006): 58-74, and "Who Wins in Iraq? Iran," *Foreign Policy* (March 2007): 40-41.

⁴⁴ See Peter Schoomaker, *Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Army's Preparedness for Current and Future Missions* (15 February 2007), and James Conway, *Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Readiness* (15 February 2007). Also see DoD Inspector General, *Equipment Status of Deployed Forces Within the U.S. Central Command*, Report No. D-2007-049 (25 January 2007).

⁴⁵ See Michèle A. Flournoy and Tammy Schultz, "Shaping U.S. Ground Forces for the Future: Getting Expansion Right," (Washington D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2007): Available online at <http://www.cnas.org>.

⁴⁶ See Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *American Against the World: How We Are Different and Why We Are Disliked* (New York: Times Books, 2006). Also see a report of the Pew Global Attitudes Project, *America's Image Slips, But Allies Share U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas* (Washington D.C.: June 2006): Available online at <http://pewglobal.org/reports>.

IV. TOWARD A BALANCED STRATEGY

We propose a balanced strategy that aims to protect enduring American interests while accounting realistically for the current state of affairs in Iraq and in the United States. While this approach cannot guarantee success, it offers much better prospects of achieving critical U.S. objectives than either the current surge or a rapid withdrawal of American forces.

This strategy recognizes that Iraq is in many ways evolving into a more decentralized federal structure in which each of three relatively autonomous regions are becoming more homogenous by ethnicity and sect and more powerful in governing themselves. To the north, Kurdistan has enjoyed status as a relatively autonomous region since the aftermath of the first Gulf War in the early 1990s.⁴⁸ In the south, several Shiite-dominated provinces have been classified as under provincial Iraqi control. And the large Sunni province of Anbar continues to be a challenging environment but retains a strong tribal structure.

American strategy to date has been insufficiently nuanced to cope with Iraq's enduring systems of power and influence. This strategy attempts to see Iraq as it is, and not as one might want it to be, and aims to establish a better balance between Iraq's largely Shiite central government and the outlying regions. If the United States is to achieve success at preserving more limited but important interests, it is critical to help establish an internal balance of power that does not require the indefinite presence of large numbers of American forces.

Therefore, this proposed strategy has three elements: a "bottom-up" approach to strengthening security

"One of the concerns I've had... was whether we focused too much on central government construction in both Iraq and Afghanistan and not enough on the cultural and historical, provincial, tribal and other entities that have played an important role."⁴⁷

—Secretary of Defense
Robert Gates

at the local and provincial level; a continued "top-down" effort aimed at Baghdad and the Iraqi central government; and assertive regional diplomacy as called for by the Iraq Study Group.

"Bottom-Up" Elements of a Balanced Strategy

The objective of bottom-up efforts in Iraq should be to help establish an internal balance of power, where both the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Sunnis in Anbar province provide internal security against al Qaeda and deter any large-scale incursions by militias or rogue government forces. Shiites

⁴⁷ Secretary of Defense Robert Gates quoted in Jim Michaels, "In Diyala Province, U.S. Aligns with Tribal Leaders," *USA Today* (8 June 2007): 9. Moreover, during a recent trip to Iraq, Secretary Gates commented that "perhaps we have gotten too focused on the central government, and not enough on the provinces, and on the tribes and what is happening in those areas." He further spoke to the need for a "ground-up effort." See Thom Shanker, "In Iraq, Gates Says Progress Toward Peace Is Lagging," *The New York Times* (16 June 2007).

⁴⁸ Note that Iraq's current constitution acknowledges the region of Kurdistan as having permanent legal status. Moreover, the constitution describes Iraq as a republic, with a federal system "made up of a decentralized capital, regions and governorates, and local administrations." See Iraqi Constitution, Section 5, Articles 112-117.

account for 60 percent of Iraq's population and are now dominant in the government. Therefore, in order to create a balance the United States must focus in particular on building local and provincial political, economic, and security capacity in Kurdistan and Anbar, as well as other severely challenged provinces like Diyala and Ninewah.

Iraq's federal constitutional arrangement is compatible with a bottom-up approach. Indeed, the Kurdistan region is already responsible for its own internal security.⁴⁹ The ongoing trends in Iraq require an approach that encourages local relationships and enables the growth of effective regional security, governance, and economic institutions.

Sectarian conflict and the resulting separation of Sunni and Shiite populations continue to move Iraq toward a *de facto* version of what some have called a "soft partition."⁵⁰ Bottom-up efforts recognize that Iraq has already moved and is still moving in this direction, and attempt to make a virtue out of necessity in single-sect areas by helping Shiites to protect Shiites, Sunnis to protect Sunnis, and Kurds to protect Kurds.

A bottom-up approach must be differentiated according to locality, and adapted over time.

It would principally involve maintaining positive relationships with tribal leaders in Anbar and other Sunni areas, and avoiding setbacks in Kurdistan. Depending on how events unfold in southern Iraq, it may also involve working with local and provincial forces there. Helping local and provincial leaders build security forces, gain effective access to American and international aid, and maintain open, constructive communications with U.S. advisors will reduce in key areas of Iraq.⁵¹

Help Build Police and Security Force Capacity in Anbar

Real progress has been evident in Anbar province in recent months.⁵² Two factors seem to have converged in this Sunni heartland. First, long-term counterinsurgency efforts by U.S. Army and Marine units appear to have successfully built relationships among key Sunni tribal leaders. Second, the most extreme elements of the insurgency (al Qaeda in Iraq and other neo-Salafist groups) appear to have underestimated the hatred their violent intimidation of the local Sunni population would engender. Many tribal sheikhs have agreed among themselves that al Qaeda constitutes a more immediate threat than the United States and have joined forces to oppose them and other terrorist groups.⁵³ According to senior U.S. military offi-

⁴⁹ For example, Section 5, Article 117.5 of the Iraqi Constitution reads, "The Regional Government shall be responsible for all the administrative requirements of the region, particularly the establishment and organization of the internal security forces for the region such as police, security forces and guards of the region."

⁵⁰ See Joseph Biden and Leslie Gelb, "Bipartisan Redeployment," *The Wall Street Journal* (24 October 2006): A18; Joseph Biden, "A Plan to Hold Iraq Together," *The Washington Post* (24 August 2006): A21; Michael O'Hanlon and Edward Joseph, "Resort to 'Soft-Partition' Repair in Iraq?" *The Washington Times* (8 January 2007): A16; and David Brooks, "Parting Ways in Iraq" *New York Times* (28 January 2007): 16.

⁵¹ The January 2007 National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq concluded that one possible way to reverse the negative trends in Iraq could be through a "bottom-up approach — deputizing, resourcing, and working more directly with neighborhood watch groups and establishing grievance committees — to help mend frayed relationships between tribal and religious groups." See National Intelligence Council, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead* (January 2007): 3.

⁵² See Chris Kraul, "In Ramadi, a Ragtag Solution with Real Results," *Los Angeles Times* (7 May 2007): A6; Sam Dagher, "Sunni Muslim Sheikhs Join U.S. in Fighting Al Qaeda," *Christian Science Monitor* (3 May 2007). Finally, see Jim Michaels, "Behind Success in Ramadi: An Army Colonel's Gamble," *USA Today* (1 May 2007): A1.

⁵³ While the situation in Anbar continues to evolve, as of the time of this report there appear to be two different groups of Sunni tribal forces opposing al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and their announced "Islamic State of Iraq" (ISI). First, the Anbar Salvation Council (ASC) is an alliance that opposes AQI/ISI and is willing, at least temporarily, to cooperate with U.S. forces. A second grouping among three prominent insurgent groups—Ansar al-Sunna Sharia Council (The Supporters of the Sunna), al-Jaish al-Islami (the Islamic Army in Iraq) and the al-Mujahadeen Army—formed their own umbrella organization, the Reform and Jihad Front (RJF), in response to the threat posed by AQI/ISI. The RJF currently remains opposed to any cooperation with U.S. forces and continues to pursue the insurgency. See Kirk Semple, "Uneasy Alliance is Taming One Insurgent Bastion," *The New York Times* (29 April 2007): 1; Karen Brulliard, "Bombs Kill 20 in Sunni Insurgent Stronghold," *The Washington Post* (8 May 2007): A19, and John Ward Anderson, "Fallujah Bombing Targets Mourners of Tribal Figure," *The Washington Post* (25 May 2007): A12.

cials, 12,000 Anbar residents have joined the Iraqi security forces in the first five months of 2007, compared with 1,000 in all of 2006.⁵⁴

A new strategy in Iraq must attempt to consolidate the recent progress in Anbar with a deft combination of economic, political, and security assistance—while recognizing that positive relationships with Sunni tribes are not indicative of an enduring alliance, but rather the logic that “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” If and when the danger posed by al Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist groups begins to wane, and the local tribes feel more secure against the Shiite-dominated national security forces, it will likely be necessary to reduce visible American involvement in order to maintain effective alliances with local leaders.⁵⁵

America’s enduring interests—the Three No’s—are immediately at stake in Anbar province. If al Qaeda is able to establish a safe haven in Iraq, most

likely it will be in this Sunni-dominated province. The recent decision of many Sunni clerics to turn against al Qaeda has provided a tremendous opportunity. Strengthening Sunni security forces in Anbar will help suppress al Qaeda and at the same time provide a deterrent against aggression by Shiite militias or rogue elements of the Interior Ministry or Iraqi Army. If the Sunnis are able to take care of their own security and al Qaeda in Anbar, it will greatly reduce the chances for genocide against them and thereby also remove one of the most likely sparks for intervention by Saudi Arabia and other outside powers.

Reinforce Success and Avoid Unraveling in Kurdistan

Advertisements sponsored by the Kurdistan Development Corporation describe Kurdistan as “the other Iraq,” and there is much truth to this claim.⁵⁶ Thanks in part to the U.S.-enforced No Fly Zone, the Kurds have enjoyed relative autonomy since shortly after the 1991 Gulf War, and this

Figure 1: Kinds of Violence Iraqis Reported as Occurring Nearby, March 2007 (Percent Reporting)⁵⁷

	Kurdistan	Baghdad	Rest of Iraq
Kidnappings for ransom	4%	58%	41%
Government/Anti-Government Fighting	1%	57%	33%
Car bombs, Suicide Attacks	3%	52%	31%
Snipers, Crossfire	—	56%	27%
Sectarian Fighting	1%	49%	22%

⁵⁴ John Ward Anderson, “Sunni Insurgents Battle in Baghdad,” *The Washington Post* (1 June 2007): A11.

⁵⁵ Recent reports on the possible splintering of the ASC indicate that the situation in Anbar remains in constant flux. See Joshua Partlow and John Ward Anderson, “Tribal Coalition in Anbar Said to Be Crumbling,” *The Washington Post* (11 June 2007): A11.

⁵⁶ For access to the various media campaigns run by the KDC, see <http://www.theotheriraq.com/>.

⁵⁷ ABC News/USA Today/BBC/ARD poll, released March 19, 2007, pp. 5-6. Cited in Anthony Cordesman, *Iraqi Force Development and the Challenge of Civil War* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 26 April 2007).

autonomy has increased over the past four years of America's presence in Iraq. Moreover, the sectarian strife that has ripped apart much of the rest of Iraq has been, for the most part, absent from Kurdistan. A March 2007 opinion poll showed that far fewer Kurds had encountered violence nearby than those elsewhere in Iraq (see Figure 1).

Kurdistan could turn from success story to failure quickly, however, unless two challenges are dealt with effectively. Both impinge on enduring U.S. interests.

First, continued efforts by the PKK and other militant factions to establish a separate and larger Kurdish state may provoke increasing conflict with Turkey and Iran, and in the worst case plant the seeds for a broader regional war. Indeed, Turkey's senior military commander recently argued that the Turkish Army should be allowed to intervene in Iraq against the PKK.⁵⁸

Second, Iraq's constitution mandates a 2007 referendum on the status of Kirkuk, and enough Kurds have moved into the city that it appears likely that the referendum will result in Kirkuk becoming part of Kurdistan. The Iraq Study Group described Kirkuk as a potential "powder keg," and concluded that the referendum should be postponed beyond 2007.⁵⁹ Although the potential for sectarian conflict is real, the resolution of Kirkuk's status would only directly affect core U.S. interests if tensions increased to the point where sectarian cleansing grew to genocidal proportions, and/or other states in the region felt compelled to intervene. Continued U.S. political and economic engagement and a modest military presence are important to near-term stability.

In Kurdistan, a bottom-up approach would not require large numbers of American advisors, but a civilian and military presence sufficient to maintain contact with local leaders, fulfill promises of economic, governance, and security assistance, and ensure adequate support for ongoing American intelligence and diplomatic efforts.

American civilian and military advisors in Kurdistan should work particularly closely with Kurdish security forces who can help contain the PKK and others harboring visions of a greater Kurdistan. An American presence can also help to reassure Turkey that the United States is serious about helping to reduce the presence of the PKK in northern Iraq, which should in turn decrease the chances of Turkish intervention.

"Top-Down" Elements of a Balanced Strategy

Top-down efforts in Iraq must aim to maintain robust connections with Iraq's central government, encourage and facilitate political reconciliation, increase economic development, and increase the capabilities and reliability of national security forces. This element of strategy is especially important in attempting to prevent genocide in Iraq.

Any responsible approach needs to see Iraq's federal government for what it is: extremely weak, inefficient, prone to corruption and sectarianism, and with limited influence outside of Baghdad.⁶⁰ As the U.S. intelligence community concluded in January 2007, "even if violence is diminished, given the current winner-take-all attitude and sectarian animosities infecting the political scene, Iraqi leaders will be hard pressed to achieve sustained political reconciliation in the time frame of this estimate (12 to 18 months)."⁶¹

⁵⁸ See Sabrina Tavernise, "Turkey Vows to Pursue Militant Kurds into Iraq," *The New York Times* (24 May 2007): 8; Karen DeYoung, "Turkish-Kurdish Dispute Tests U.S. Strategic Alliance," *The Washington Post* (8 May 2007): A17, and Guy Dinmore, "Attack Against Kurdish Rebels Risk Strategic Defeat," *Financial Times* (30 April 2007): 7.

⁵⁹ See James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward — A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006): 66.

⁶⁰ This report considers the basic thrust of Stephen Hadley's November 2006 memo on the Maliki government to remain relevant today. Hadley concluded that "the reality on the streets of Baghdad suggests that Maliki is either ignorant of what is going on, misrepresenting his intentions, or that his capabilities are not yet sufficient to turn his good intentions into action. See "Text of U.S. Security Advisor's Iraq Memo," *The New York Times* (29 November 2006).

⁶¹ National Intelligence Council, *Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead* (January 2007): 5

Iraq's central government is unlikely to significantly improve in the near term, and it is still largely dependent on the presence of U.S. forces to train and advise its military and police units, as well as to provide connectivity to international diplomatic channels and the global economy. Despite its weaknesses, however, remaining engaged with the central government at multiple levels is essential to protecting U.S. interests in Iraq.

Assist Iraqi Security Forces in Meeting Benchmarks

When President Bush signed the Iraq emergency supplemental appropriations bill in May 2007, he agreed to eighteen specific benchmarks for Iraqi progress, and a requirement to report to Congress on July 15 and again on September 15, 2007 (*see* Appendix A).⁶² Half of the benchmarks relate to the capabilities and performance of the Iraqi security forces or the implementation of the Baghdad Security Plan. Examples include: “providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations,” “establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad,” and “increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.” The United States can and is helping by providing advisors and other support. Much more is needed. Progress should be tracked to get a sense of how ready various units of the Iraqi Army and national police are to provide security in Baghdad with or without embedded U.S. advisors and the logistical, intelligence, and medical evacuation capabilities on which they can call.

Help Broker Necessary Deals on Key Political Benchmarks

Six of the Congressionally-mandates benchmarks deal with contentious issues that the Iraqi parliament must take up (all start with the phrase “enacting and implementing legislation”) and a seventh with completion of a review of the Iraqi constitution. These benchmarks address fundamental issues about the future shape of Iraq and the relative power and autonomy of various groups, including de-Baathification, amnesty, militia disarmament, the ability to form semi-autonomous regions, and the equitable sharing of oil revenue.

The Iraqis must make progress on all of these intertwined issues soon to help defuse ever-growing sectarian tensions. Iraqis may resent U.S. interference, but given Prime Minister Maliki's weakness and the fractured nature of the parliament, it is likely that a combination of American diplomacy, mediation, and both carrots and sticks will be needed to have a chance for progress any time soon.⁶³

Transition from Leading to Advising Iraqi Security Forces

Starting in July 2007, the United States should gradually transition away from directly conducting population security missions that have defined the surge in Baghdad and the surrounding areas. At the same time, the United States should boost its efforts to train and advise Iraq's national military and police forces on an urgent basis. The transition will be difficult, and some setbacks are inevitable, but the United States must gradually transition out of providing the bulk of day-to-day security and urban patrols in Baghdad and elsewhere in Iraq.

⁶² HR2206, “U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007.” Section 1314 (pp. 19-30).

⁶³ The supplemental appropriations bill includes a provision that would not allow an “Economic Support Fund” for Iraq to be obligated or expended until the President certifies that Iraq is making progress on each of the benchmarks or describes what the United States is doing to “bring the Iraqi government into compliance.” Op. cit. HR2206.

American advisors need to retain sufficient contact with Iraqis not only to help build Iraqi police and military capabilities, but also to gain essential intelligence. If the United States were to maintain or simply draw down the number of civilians and military officers who are advising and training Iraq's government and security forces commensurate with the broader withdrawal of American combat units, it would dramatically decrease the ability of U.S. forces to effectively detect, prepare for, deter, or respond to a variety of possible scenarios. Sufficient contact and familiarity with Iraq's Interior and Defense Ministries, for example, will be critical to generate the type of robust intelligence that will help American counterterrorism efforts against al Qaeda and prevent a genocide that in turn could precipitate a regional war. Sufficient visibility into the activities of Iraq's government and security forces is also important in order to measure the degree to which Iranian influence is shaping behavior or tainting relationships between Iraq's major actors.

While the transition from leading to advising the Iraqi security forces at the national level is extremely important, it is imperative that the United States broaden its focus on advising to include a much greater effort to build up local police forces. A myopic focus on the federal government would likely be interpreted by Iraq's Sunni population (and indeed the Sunni Arab world) as akin to the United States taking sides in a civil war.

Some have argued in favor of siding explicitly with the Shiites in Iraq's civil war, suggesting that the only way to break the back of the Sunni insurgency is by helping the majority "take the gloves off." Advocates consider taking sides a pragmatic if unpleasant way to get through the civil war.⁶⁴ The

"80 percent solution" (so named because about 80 percent of the Iraqi populace is Shiite or Kurdish) is dangerous to all core U.S. national interests and to the future integrity of Iraq. It risks destroying the gains made recently in Anbar province where Sunni tribes have turned against al Qaeda; it opens the door to genocidal violence; and it will inflame regional opinion, encouraging neighboring Arab states to ratchet up their support to Sunni Arabs under threat in Iraq. It also would require increased actions to balance Iran, which would likely seek even more influence over Iraq.

"Outside-In": Regional Diplomacy in a Balanced Strategy

It is essential to approach Iraq's continued instability as a regional problem. A workable strategy must bring Iraq's neighbors and the international community together to set the parameters for a diplomatic negotiation over the future of Iraq and the region.

For too long U.S. diplomacy has been disregarded in favor of military approaches. Over the last several months, however, the Bush administration seems increasingly to be engaging in regional diplomacy—most evidently with the late May meeting between U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and Ambassador Hassan Kazemi Qumi of Iran.⁶⁵ The United States should do much more, and the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group should be heeded.

In addition, the United States needs to engage immediately in a series of comprehensive negotiations with those countries in the region which American forces would either need to transit through or use to position forces for an "over-the-horizon" presence—for example, Turkey, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other Gulf states. Talks

⁶⁴ See Reuel Gereht, "On Democracy in Iraq: It's Starting to Take Root," *Weekly Standard* (30 April 2007); and Nikolas Gvosdev and Ray Takeyh, "Why America must throw in its lot with the Shia," *Financial Times* (14 February 2007).

⁶⁵ See Kirk Semple, "U.S. and Iranian Officials Meet in Baghdad, but Talks Yield No Breakthroughs," *The New York Times* (29 May 2007): 8.

The Continued Relevance of the Iraq Study Group

The recommendations released by the Iraq Study Group in December 2006 remain the most viable framework for considering a regional political and economic approach to Iraq. In broad terms, any responsible transition strategy in Iraq needs to include what the ISG termed an “external approach” at building international consensus. The ISG’s recommended external approach would include four main efforts:

- A New Diplomatic Offensive that would address many of the key issues in the Middle East as well as specific multilateral initiatives aimed at encouraging reconciliation efforts among Iraq’s Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish populations.
- Creation of an International Support Group that would include all of Iraq’s neighbors as well as other key countries, to assist Iraq in maintaining its territorial integrity.

- Real dialogue with Iran and Syria that consists of direct face-to-face talks on Iraq’s future. Whether these talks take place within the context of other multilateral meetings is less important than the substance, seriousness, and ongoing nature of the exchanges.
- Re-engaging the wider regional context by addressing issues such as the Arab-Israeli conflict and the ongoing problems in Lebanon. Dealing with these issues can help the United States rebuild its moral authority and credibility as an honest broker—a reputation that has been badly tarnished in recent years.⁶⁶

While Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s recent efforts to engage Iraq’s neighbors (including Iran and Syria) are positive developments, they do not go nearly far enough in creating the diplomatic momentum that will be necessary as the United States moves toward a responsible transition strategy.⁶⁷

should cover the nature of an enduring American presence, the use of bases for counterterrorism and quick response missions into Iraq, and the development of deep partnerships with their intelligence services to help combat al Qaeda and protect other American interests.

Conclusions

The balanced strategy outlined in this section is based on the assessment that the United States should work with (and pressure) Iraq’s central government, but that we must at the same time pursue relationships with key parties within Iraq and conduct active diplomacy with Iraq’s neighbors. Under this more nuanced approach,

the United States would retain deep diplomatic ties with the central government, and continue to train and advise its Army and national police units. At the same time, the United States should aggressively pursue a bottom-up effort to establish a sustainable balance of power among Iraq’s sectarian groups, build up local and provincial police forces, and make clear to all parties that America will not tolerate genocide.

While the current surge may have put parts of the sectarian civil war into a temporary holding pattern, the United States must begin to look for ways to build and sustain a balance of power that can be maintained without the presence of large

⁶⁶ See James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward – A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006): 43-58.

⁶⁷ See Robin Wright, “Rice Urges Iran to Attend Mideast Meeting on Iraq,” *The Washington Post* (24 April 2007): A10, Michael Slackman and Helene Cooper, “U.S. Now Reaching Out to Those it Shunned,” *The New York Times* (5 May 2007): 7, and Karen DeYoung, “At Meeting on Iraq: Doubt and Détente,” *The Washington Post* (5 May 2007): A12.

numbers of American military forces. A significant bottom-up effort is essential to advance positive trends in Anbar and to avoid backsliding in Kurdistan. If the fundamental disparities in power among Iraq's Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish factions are not addressed, the surge will simply delay the inevitable slide into chaos.

To reinforce both bottom-up and top-down efforts in Iraq, and pave the way for an ultimate withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Iraq, a balanced strategy must also include robust regional diplomacy. In order to reduce the risks of regional war, this diplomacy should consider the threat perceptions of other states in the region, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey, and retain a residual U.S. force posture in the region that convinces external actors that genocide of Iraq's Sunni population will not occur. At the same time, the United States must engage our allies in the region to secure basing and overflight rights needed for a long-term presence in the Gulf region.

Although securing America's enduring interests in Iraq and the region will require fewer U.S. troops than are in Iraq today, *a robust military and civilian presence will likely be needed for at least several more years in Iraq and in the region for the foreseeable future.* The next section of this report describes what that posture might look like, focusing in particular on the next five years.

V. A PHASED TRANSITION PLAN

American military forces will leave Iraq. The question is when, and under what circumstances. A precipitous withdrawal would leave a power vacuum, and greatly increase the prospects of Iraq descending into a new level of anarchy and civil war that could easily result in genocide and regional war, while allowing al Qaeda to consolidate a new base of operations.

However, if American forces stay too long, the United States will continue to be seen as a foreign occupier rather than an ally, making al Qaeda's recruiting in Iraq, the region, and the world all the easier. And if U.S. military forces depart after suffering a major attack or operational failure — as when President Reagan withdrew from Lebanon after the bombing of Marine barracks in October 1983 and President Clinton from Somalia after the “Black Hawk Down” episode in October 1993 — the result will be to strengthen the al Qaeda narrative that portrays the United States as a paper tiger.

If the United States must withdraw our military from Iraq but must not do so precipitously, or too slowly, or in reaction to an al Qaeda attack or operational failure, how should we withdraw? The answer is: gradually yet deliberately, on our own schedule, while managing the contours of the transition with key players in Iraq and the region.

A gradual and deliberate withdrawal of U.S. forces would serve as clear and dramatic proof that America is transitioning out of the “surge” but not hastily departing Iraq. Moreover, it would alter Iraq's political landscape to the advantage of America's enduring interests. Further, beginning a responsible drawdown of American troops in 2007 would change the political dynamics at home, thereby increasing the chance that the American

“I don't think a majority of the American people want us to just completely leave Iraq to the devices of al Qaeda and to leave a failed state there for al Qaeda, and they do not want to see a regional war, a conflagration develop as we leave. So I think they would favor a responsible way of reconfiguring our forces, a responsible way of drawing down.”

—Former Secretary of State
James A. Baker,
June 11, 2007.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ James Baker, *Comments at the National Press Club* (Washington D.C.: 11 June 2007).

public, the next Congress, and the next president would support a responsible transition strategy.

The proposed Phased Transition plan has four phases, each corresponding to a critical transition that must occur within the United States, in Iraq, or in U.S.-Iraqi relations.

- **Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable (July 2007–January 2009).** Iraq will remain a critical issue for the next president. The security situation in Iraq is likely to remain extremely challenging at best, and it is clear that President Bush will not withdraw. Therefore the Bush administration will pass the Iraq situation, including a significant military presence, to its successor. Under Phased Transition, it would do so responsibly, by reducing U.S. military forces to a sustainable level, by urgently developing a much-increased advisory capacity, and by conducting contingency planning not only for the best-case, but for a range of possible bad outcomes.
- **Phase II: Targeted Advisory Effort (suggested timeline: January 2009 – at latest December 2011).** The United States will not maintain the surge indefinitely, and ultimately must transfer responsibility for Iraq’s security to Iraqis. Under Phased Transition, America would attempt to do so responsibly, by helping to develop local, provincial, and federal security forces and supporting them for a period with logistics, medical, intelligence, and firepower capabilities. This is extremely challenging in the context of sectarian conflict and civil war, but at this time appears possible.⁶⁹
- **Phase III: Deliberate Withdrawal (suggested timeline: at latest December 2011 – December 2012).** At some point in time, U.S. forces will and should transition from Iraq. The Phased Transition plan would provide ample warning to Iraqis and others when a transition of U.S. forces was to occur, and would use this as negotiating leverage with parties in Iraq and others.⁷⁰
- **Phase IV: Long-Term Engagement and Over-the-Horizon Deployment (suggested timeline: start by December 2012).** The United States and Iraq must transition to a post-occupation relationship. The details of this relationship will depend on events in Iraq in the coming months and years, and also on American choices, but the United States can and should start planning for this transition now.

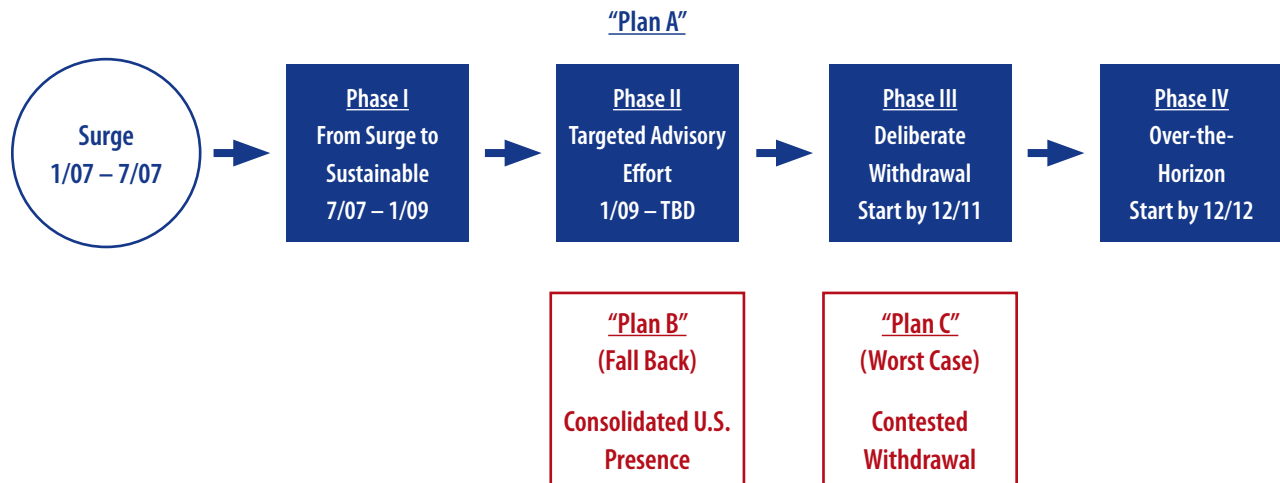
These four phases are shown in Figure 2. Phases I and III are themselves transitional. Phase I would involve the reduction of U.S. forces in Iraq from about 160,000 at the peak of the surge, to about 60,000. Phase III would involve the deliberate withdrawal of remaining U.S. forces from Iraq; some would be redeployed within the region, but most would return home. Phase II represents the last best chance for a large U.S. advisory mission to help build competent Iraqi security forces; Phase IV represents the long-term posture of having no U.S. permanent military presence in Iraq.

Phased Transition is intended to follow directly on the surge, and therefore is a proposed new “Plan A.” Because the security situation in Iraq remains extremely tenuous, it is also necessary to develop a fallback “Plan B” in the event that security deteriorates to the point where an advisory mission is not tenable. It is also critical to consider the worst case,

⁶⁹ A key tenet of the Phased Transition plan is that, despite past problems, a significantly expanded and well-targeted American advisory effort could significantly improve the capabilities of Iraqi local, provincial, and federal security forces. This issue is so important that we devote a separate section (VI) to it.

⁷⁰ The notion of setting a date for U.S. withdrawal is anathema to military planners, and as a rule a “conditions-based” approach is preferred. While there are downsides to establishing a specific target date for military withdrawal from Iraq, there are also important advantages, and on balance we recommend that a target date be set. This issue is discussed in detail below.

Figure 2: Phased Transition, Fall Back, and Worst Case Plans



and develop a “Plan C” to cope with a situation in which American civilian and military personnel, U.S. contractors and business people, and Iraqis who had assisted the United States had to be withdrawn in the context of a collapse into anarchy and all-out civil war.

Finally, because of its complexity and because it has received inadequate attention to date relative to countering al Qaeda or avoiding regional war, a specific interagency plan should also be developed to prevent or if necessary stop genocide.

Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable

(Timeline: July 2007 – January 2009)

Phase I is defined by the remaining tenure of the Bush administration. The administration may be disinclined to change direction on Iraq prior to the September 2007 report from Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Petraeus on the surge’s progress. However, the September report is likely to conclude that progress is, at best, mixed, and so will be seized upon by both sides of the debate as evidence for their positions. If the Bush admin-

istration were to change course in this politically charged context, it would risk the appearance of having done so under political duress. Therefore, there may be domestic political as well as strategic advantages to the Bush administration for beginning planning, consultation, and even implementation of a change in direction before September 2007.

In summer 2007, at the height of the surge, there will be approximately 160,000 American troops in Iraq. Phase I would gradually take the U.S. military out of the lead in providing security for Baghdad and other areas, thereby enabling a reduction in U.S. troop levels by about 100,000 by the end of the Bush administration. The remaining 60,000 or so troops, including about 20,000 advisors, would be by far the lowest force level since the war started in 2003.

The target figure of 60,000 troops including about 20,000 advisors is an estimate only. The Bush administration should conduct detailed planning to establish appropriate figures. See Appendix B for further discussion of appropriate force levels under a Phased Transition.

Today, many U.S. combat forces in Iraq are leading operations to provide security to Iraqi civilians in Baghdad and elsewhere.⁷¹ During Phase I, U.S. forces would gradually disengage from leading door-to-door patrols to protect Iraqi civilians in Baghdad or other cities. Instead, U.S. military and civilian advisors would increasingly participate in patrols and other legitimate operations conducted by the Iraqi Army, and by local and provincial police. This change would increase U.S. leverage with Iraqi national, provincial, and tribal actors and enhance the ability to use political and economic negotiations to secure American interests.

Few if any units of the Iraqi Army today can protect mixed Sunni-Shiite neighborhoods without U.S. support or (in many cases) leadership, so if the United States were to withdraw too rapidly from this mission—which we are not recommending—many more civilians might be killed or forced to flee. If the United States were to make clear now its intent to withdraw from this mission over time, there would be some additional time to develop Iraqi security force capabilities, and people who felt threatened could move to other areas of Baghdad or other parts of the country with far less risk than would be the case after the U.S. had pulled out. The continued segregation of Iraq by sect is lamentable, but the hard reality is that it is not a vital U.S. interest that all Iraqi families remain in their current neighborhoods. And it is not feasible to accomplish such a goal in any event. The war has already resulted in the exodus of almost two million people from Iraq and the internal displacement of nearly another two million; when U.S. forces stop leading security operations in Baghdad, these numbers may well grow.⁷²

As it transitions out of the population security mission, the U.S. should help to direct aid toward those in greatest need and assist those nations in the region that have accepted large numbers of refugees. Iraqi civilians will continue to face extremely challenging circumstances, and a reduction in American forces providing security will increase these dangers at least temporarily. A deliberate and phased transition would reduce the risks a more rapid reduction would pose.

Reducing American combat forces in Iraq would help in building highly capable advisory teams. Today, most advisory teams deployed with Iraqi units in the field have about ten members; we recommend more than doubling to a typical team size of 25 (including an infantry squad) in order to allow the teams to operate at lower levels of Iraqi units, and to improve force protection. Many would come from the current Army and Marine Corps training programs, which must be significantly increased and enhanced. Others would come from the Army Brigade Combat Teams, Marine Corps Regimental Combat Teams, and Special Operations Forces that would have been scheduled to deploy to Iraq regardless. We provide further details about how to rapidly build an enhanced advisory capability in Section VI of this report.

Phase II: Enhanced Advisory Effort

(Suggested timeline: January 2009 – December 2011 at latest)

The starting point for Phase II is January 2009, the start of the next administration's term of office. At that time, the new president will have a host of campaign promises and other issues to attend to; Iraq will most likely be at the top of the list.

⁷¹ For example a major feature of the surge strategy was the creation of 58 "joint security stations" throughout Baghdad from which American and Iraqi forces could patrol specific neighborhoods. See Ann Scott Tyson, "Troops at Baghdad Outposts Seek Safety in Fortifications," *The Washington Post* (8 May 2007): A1.

⁷² Michael O'Hanlon and Jason Campbell, *Iraq Index* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution): 32. Accessed 14 May 2007 at <http://www3.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>. On the refugee crisis see *Growing Needs Amid Continuing Displacement* (Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Press Release: Online at <http://www.unhcr.org>). Also see Nir Rosen, "The Flight from Iraq," *New York Times Magazine* (13 May 2007).

Phase II would continue for the first one to three years of the next president's administration, and would involve about 60,000 American troops in Iraq, of which some 20,000 would be serving in an advisory capacity to Iraqi Army and police units. Military efforts would include conducting the advisory mission; targeted counterterrorism missions; and air strikes and air mobility missions. Several Quick Reaction Forces (QRFs) would support the advisory mission, backstop air and Special Operations Forces, conduct combat search-and-rescue missions, and protect other American military personnel and civilians in Iraq. See Appendix B for an example of possible U.S. forces in Iraq during Phase II.

Iraqis' desire to have a visible American presence will vary throughout the country and over time. In western Iraq in particular, it will be critical to gauge the appropriate mix of security, economic, and political support. If the actual or perceived threat posed by al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Sunni insurgents, and/or Shiite militias is high, a substantial advisory presence would likely be desired. However, if the proximate threat of AQI and others diminishes—as is certainly desirable—American forces will be less needed and may be less welcome. Americans must retain sufficient situational awareness to prevent misunderstandings and disagreements over the advisory mission that could derail the strategy and make it far more difficult to pursue U.S. core interests.⁷³

Phase II would be planned to end at least one year before the end of the next president's first term of office. At that point, a massive advisory effort to improve the quality and reliability of Iraqi security forces would have been underway for up to four years, including one year of Phase I.

Phase III: Deliberate Withdrawal

(Suggested timeline: December 2011 – December 2012 at latest)

Phase III of the Phased Transition plan would start by December 2011. The remaining U.S. military presence in Iraq would begin to draw down, leading by the end of the year to a complete military withdrawal.⁷⁴ Careful assessment and planning will be needed to determine the appropriate order and timing for various advisory teams and other units to disengage from their daily contact and operations with Iraq's national and local forces.

Preparing for Phase III will require negotiating with Iraqi political leaders regarding the nature of America's long-term commitment to political and economic development, ensuring the maintenance of adequate connections to Iraq's security and intelligence institutions to enable ongoing counterterrorism cooperation, and determining how the United States can best help Iraq better integrate into the global system. Planning for such negotiations should begin now.

Phase IV: Over-the-Horizon Presence and Engagement

(Suggested timeline: starting December 2012 at latest)

By the start of the fourth phase of the Phased Transition plan, which we suggest should be planned for December 2012 at the latest, American forces would have withdrawn from Iraq, mostly back home. The United States would maintain a significant military presence in the Middle East and Persian Gulf region, and would shift to a normalized (albeit unique and challenging) military and security relationship with Iraq. If Iraq is reasonably stable, American troops would conduct

⁷³ For example, while recent reports of Sunni residents in Baghdad rising up against Al Qaeda are manifestly positive, it will be important to appropriately modulate the level of overt U.S. support. "If the Americans interfere [with our fight against Al Qaeda], it will blow up," Abdul Khaliq of Baghdad told *The Washington Post*, "because they are the enemy of us both, and we will unite against them and stop fighting each other." See John Ward Anderson, "Sunni Insurgents Battle in Baghdad," *The Washington Post* (1 June 2007): A11.

⁷⁴ Phase III could start sooner or (less likely) later than January 2012. The starting and ending dates are intended to provide a basis for military planning as well as to establish expectations in both the United States and Iraq.

joint exercises and train with Iraqi forces but not serve as embedded advisors.

The United States would also desire to stay engaged with local and provincial officials in Kurdistan and in Sunni-controlled areas such as Anbar province. In the best of circumstances, American civilians including State Department and USAID personnel will be present. If the situation is more dangerous, then there may be few Americans on the ground aside from intelligence operatives and paramilitary forces involved in tracking and helping to suppress al Qaeda.

During Phase IV, which is intended to continue indefinitely, there would be no American military bases in Iraq, and no American combat units stationed in Iraq. If Iraq was relatively stable, the nature of any military involvement would be similar to the normal combined exercises and training that the U.S. military performs on an ongoing basis with dozens of countries around the world. In addition, combined counterterrorism operations might be conducted, and the United States would retain a significant diplomatic and intelligence presence in Iraq devoted to pursuing America's continuing interests.

“Plan B”: Fall Back to a Consolidated Posture

If Iraq degenerates further into civil war, then U.S. military advisors could find themselves on opposite sides of the conflict, and the United States would have to rapidly choose sides or withdraw the advisors. Moreover, if Iraq's Shiite-dominated Defense or Interior Ministries undertake widespread genocidal violence, then the United States would withdraw its advisors from these institutions, and it is possible that continuing to embed with local and provincial Sunni security forces would be too dangerous. Therefore a “Plan B” is needed as a fallback option if the advisory mission is not tenable.

A Plan B, which would involve a continued U.S. presence in Iraq without military advisors, might involve 25,000 to 40,000 American forces in Iraq as compared to the roughly 60,000 assumed for a Phase II with advisors. (The upper end of this range is consistent with simply removing 20,000 advisors from the 60,000 estimate provided for U.S. presence in Iraq with a robust advisory mission.) If the U.S. maintained a diplomatic presence in this environment, then a key mission of remaining military forces would be to protect U.S. civilians, and a substantial Quick Reaction Force in the vicinity of Baghdad would be essential. Air power and air mobility would remain critically important missions. Special Operations Forces would continue counterterrorism operations. U.S. military personnel could train Iraqi forces on remaining American bases, thereby reducing the dangers associated with being in the field as advisors.

Why shouldn't “Plan B” instead be the preferred “Plan A”? There are two important reasons. First, quite simply, the lack of advisors would mean much greater risk that both bottom-up and top-down efforts to promote security would fail because the Iraqi security forces would not have the requisite professional skills, nor the logistical, medical, intelligence, communications, and firepower that American advisors can call upon. Failures of Iraqi security forces similar to those seen when the United States first attempted to train Iraqis in 2003-2004 could be much more likely, and al Qaeda fighters, Sunni insurgents, and Shiite militias may have a much freer reign.

Second, because U.S. advisors would not be in the field, the United States would lack the day-to-day contact with Iraqi security forces and the population needed to develop trust and intelligence leads. Therefore the ability of U.S. special mission units to conduct counterterrorism operations could well be significantly reduced and far more dangerous, and the prospects for an escalation of violence and potentially genocide would be greater.

“Plan C”: Undertaking a Contested Withdrawal

In a worst case scenario, Iraq could go to all-out civil war, likely with significant intervention of outside powers. Depending on the details, the United States might withdraw its military to a few locations within Iraq or pull out entirely. Therefore a “Plan C” is also needed.

In the event of an all-out civil war in Iraq, the United States may need to conduct a massive non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) in the most difficult circumstances. In addition, the United States would still want to influence events in order to prevent al Qaeda safe havens, regional war, and genocide, and where necessary take unilateral military action, such as counterterrorism operations against al Qaeda. Therefore, the United States must be prepared to simultaneously conduct a NEO involving tens to hundreds of thousands of civilian and military personnel, conduct selected counterterrorism and other operations while transitioning to a significantly increased military presence in the Gulf region, including naval, air, and ground-based assets.

The Bush administration did not plan realistically for providing stability to Iraq after major combat operations ended in 2003, and as a result was unprepared to prevent or quickly respond to the instability that occurred. If it makes the same mistake again, and fails to plan seriously for Iraq’s possible descent into civil war, the United States may again find itself unprepared, and thousands of Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis could pay a steep price. It is an unfortunate contingency for which the military should plan in detail. We believe that this scenario is less likely if Phased Transition is pursued.

Figure 3 provides a sense of how “Plan B” and “Plan C” relate to other parts of this Phased Transition plan. The consolidation of U.S. forces in Iraq is shown as a way-station for contested withdrawal, but planning should consider that U.S. forces would consolidate very differently in preparing for a contested withdrawal as opposed to preparing for a several-year deployment. For simplicity in presentation, the figure shows a consolidation and contested withdrawal both happening at a specific point in time; planning should consider that they could begin at any time.

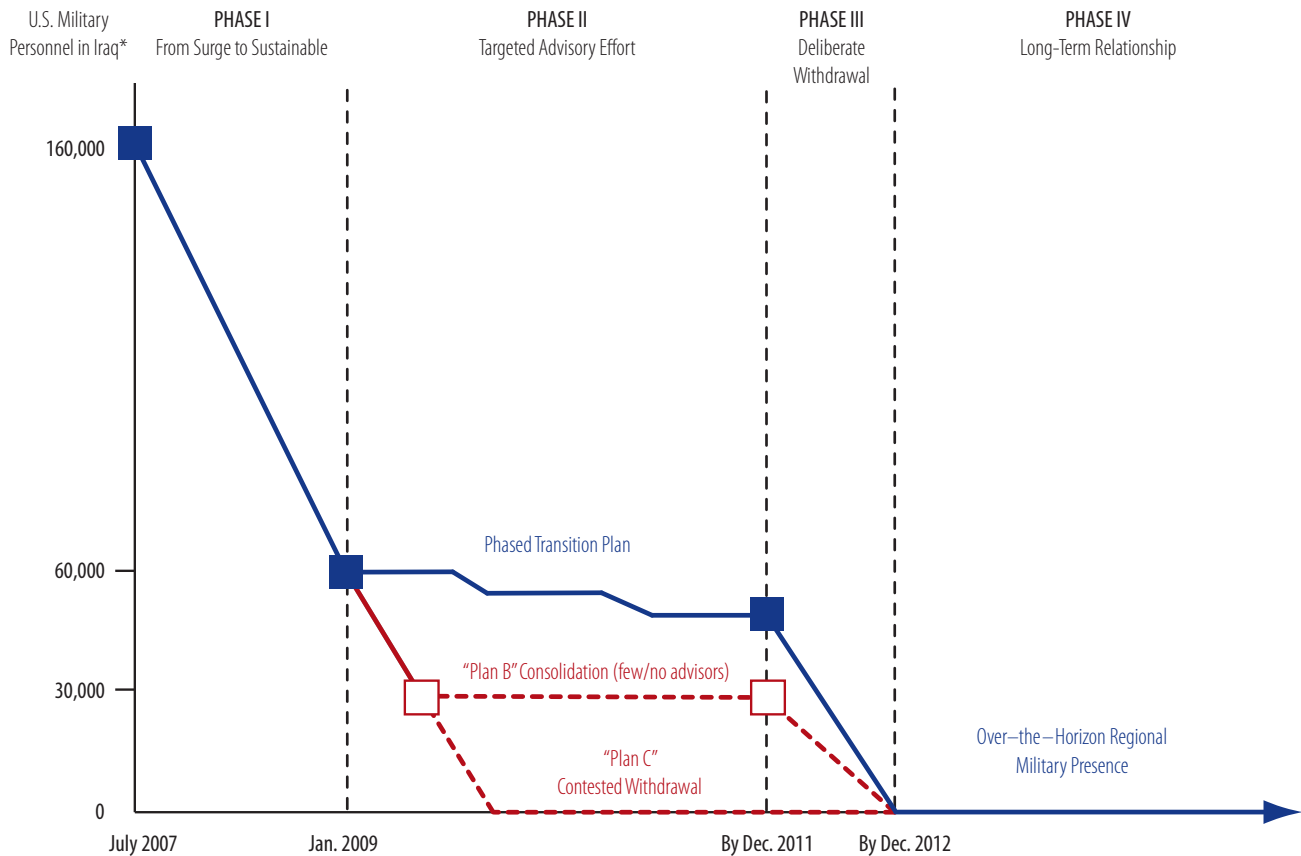
Preparing Now to Prevent Genocide

The greatest risk of genocide in Iraq may be in Baghdad and other areas that still have significant mixed Sunni and Shiite populations. There are fewer mixed neighborhoods in Baghdad now, and it is likely that this trend will continue at least for the near term. Although regrettable, it is not a vital national interest of the United States to reverse this trend and is likely beyond U.S. capabilities. To stay in or return to mixed neighborhoods, locals need to feel a type of security that can only be provided by their own neighbors and reinforced by non-sectarian local security forces. This may or may not become possible throughout Iraq. In any event, the U.S. should attempt to bolster security for those who seek to leave their current neighborhoods out of fear.

Where there are not natural boundaries between Shiite and Sunni communities, separating populations by erecting concrete barriers may provide useful short-term protection.⁷⁵ However, in these areas, and in areas where there are no defensible barriers (natural or man-made), an Iraqi Army capable of operating in mixed areas will

⁷⁵ David Kilcullen, a noted expert on counterinsurgency and currently a Senior Counterinsurgency Advisor to General David Petraeus in Iraq, recently concluded: “Gated communities in counterinsurgency are like tourniquets in surgery. They can stem a life-threatening hemorrhage, but they must be applied sparingly, released as often and as soon as possible, and they have side-effects that have to be taken into account. They are never a first choice. But, given the dire current situation in Baghdad, the ‘urban tourniquet’ is the lesser of several evils, because it breaks the cycle of sectarian violence that has caused so much damage and human suffering in Iraq.” See David Kilcullen, “The Urban Tourniquet: ‘Gated Communities’ in Baghdad,” *Small Wars Journal* (27 April 2007): Online posting available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com>.

Figure 3: Possible Force Levels for Phased Transition, "Plan B," and "Plan C"



*Numbers of American troops in Iraq are approximate for July 2007 and representative estimates for January 2009 and thereafter. Figures are for Iraq only, and do not include other U.S. forces in region.

be essential to avoid or quell sectarian violence, and American advisors will be critical enablers. If Shiite militias are opposed by neutral and competent Iraqi Army forces, it is unlikely they could prosecute a campaign of genocide against Iraq's Sunni population.

Early warning and early recognition are critical to preventing genocide. The United States must put mechanisms in place to detect and deter preparations for genocide by any central authority in Iraq. Our diplomatic and intelligence agencies should

monitor the political and military environments for signs of organization for genocidal violence, centrally controlled militias, purging of armed forces, and propaganda institutions such as hate radio and other media.

If violence progresses to a genocidal level, the United States should use its remaining military presence to stop the violence and increase the cost of genocide for its perpetrators. Such missions would include interdiction of death squads, coercion of extremist militias, and facilitation of safe passage of refugees.⁷⁶ The existence (though not

⁷⁶ Mission tasks are based on an assessment of plausible interventions in the Rwandan genocide completed by Alan J. Kuperman in *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention: Genocide in Rwanda* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001).

the details) of these plans should be made known in advance to all power elites in Iraq to deter the use of genocide as a political tool. By making an explicit commitment to prevent genocide in Iraq, by making clear that U.S. forces are withdrawing over time but will help provide safe passage for those who wish to leave mixed areas, and by warning all parties that sectarian use of national military or police forces will be strongly opposed by the United States and the international community, the danger of genocide can be reduced significantly.

Genocide in Iraq is possible and therefore detailed interagency contingency planning must begin in order to ensure that American military and civilian officials are prepared to act swiftly should this threat begin to materialize. The United States was unprepared for the instability and chaos that followed the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime in 2003, and a similar error must not be allowed to occur once again.

Why Set a Date for Military Withdrawal?

Pursuing a Phased Transition plan on a specific timeline—while understanding that the timeline could change—has both downsides and benefits.

Before making the case that a timeline is appropriate and indeed necessary, we must acknowledge that there is a significant argument against setting a specific timeline for the termination of the U.S. military presence in Iraq, or of the advisory mission specifically. Indeed, it is possible that by the time of the planned U.S. withdrawal the civil war and insurgency could finally be waning but the Iraqi security forces still need support from the U.S. military. In that case, quite simply, the president would have to consider changing the plan. Such a decision could not be made lightly, for there would be political costs to doing so.

More broadly, setting a timeline is contrary to standard “conditions-based” military planning. After all, the U.S. did not quit World War I or World War II after a specific time elapsed; it fought them to a successful end. Conducting a counterinsurgency campaign has been rightly compared to “eating soup with a knife,” messy and slow.⁷⁷ If we think an advisory mission has potential to succeed, why set a seemingly arbitrary timeline? There are six reasons.

First, setting a timeline will provide incentives for Iraqi political leaders to take necessary steps on political reconciliation, i.e., it will help accelerate the “Baghdad clock.” Iraqi leaders now recognize that before the end of the Bush administration they must show significant progress on political reconciliation and security benchmarks to convince the next president that the United States should continue its military commitment to Iraq. Phased Transition would build on this dynamic. By setting the terms of our own disengagement well in advance, the United States will provide incentives for Iraqi political leaders to take necessary steps to move toward a functioning albeit highly decentralized federalized state.

Second, and very important, setting a specific timetable would set in motion reactions from individuals and groups in Iraq, including the movement of people who did not believe the Iraqi security forces in their area could or would protect them, while the United States still has forces in place to contain the impact. The continued separation of Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq is unfortunate, but averting genocide is a more important objective.

Third, it would make clear that the United States does not have designs for the long-term occupation of Iraq. The United States has moved to a minimal

⁷⁷ See John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

and low-visibility presence in Saudi Arabia because of sensitivity among many Muslims associated with having Americans in the land of Mecca and Medina. A similar phenomenon applies to the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf, among others in Iraq. It is a bad idea for the United States military to stay too long, and a good idea to signal clearly to Iraqis that the U.S. military intends to leave.

Fourth, when the United States does withdraw from Iraq, having done so on our own previously announced timetable will help undercut the narrative of al Qaeda and affiliated groups that the Americans have again been forced out, as we were from Lebanon in 1983 and Somalia in 1994. With an open-ended military presence in Iraq, the United States is in a lose-lose political and informational situation vis-à-vis al Qaeda and Iraqi insurgents. A failure to set a date feeds the al Qaeda and insurgency narratives that the U.S. is in Iraq for the oil, and will never leave. On the other hand, setting a date in the very near-term adds credence to al Qaeda and insurgency claims that they forced the United States out. Setting a date several years in advance, and backing it up with real public diplomacy and informational efforts, can reduce this cost.

Fifth, setting a target date for withdrawal would increase U.S. bargaining power to convince other states to contribute to Iraq. Among outside powers, without question the United States has the largest stake in the outcome in Iraq, but it would not be alone in hurting from the repercussions of further chaos in Iraq and spillover in the region. It will be very difficult for the Bush administration to convince other nations to help in Iraq, since it has shunned diplomacy and multilateral approaches to most global problems, and indeed since it shut many countries out of the hoped-for reconstruc-

tion contracts after the end of conventional combat operations in Iraq in 2003. However, it should try, and the next administration will need to redouble diplomatic efforts; both will do better if they start diplomatic negotiations from the position that the United States will not continue in Iraq indefinitely.

Sixth and finally, if the Bush administration proposes a Phased Transition and shows that its final months in office are aimed at implementing this plan, it can help establish a bipartisan consensus in the United States that may help avoid a precipitous withdrawal at the outset of the next administration.

For the above reasons, setting a timeline for next steps in Iraq is the best available option for protecting America's enduring interests. This approach is far from ideal, but it is better than the available alternatives.

In June 2007, and for that matter in September 2007, it cannot be foreseen how the U.S. military mission in Iraq might proceed over the next four-plus years. If Iraq becomes increasingly stable, then the final withdrawal of U.S. forces should be relatively uneventful. However, if Iraq remains chaotic, or if U.S. forces pull out earlier in the context of increased sectarian strife or widespread civil war, then the challenge of withdrawal could be extreme.⁷⁸

Once the next president specifies a target date for American withdrawal from Iraq, it will be politically costly to break, perhaps even more so than President George H. W. Bush's famous pledge "Read My Lips: No New Taxes." Thus, absent a very costly reversal by the president, if once in office he or she specifies a departure date, Americans, Iraqis, and others should act on the

⁷⁸ As retired Major General Robert Scales, a former commandant of the Army War College, noted recently: "There's an old military adage that the most dangerous and hazardous of all military maneuvers is a withdrawal of forces while in contact with the enemy. That's the operation all of us soldiers fear the most." See James Kitfield and Brian Friel, "The Clock Winds Down," *The National Journal* (21 April 2007).

expectation that American troops would in fact to be out of Iraq by that date.

Ultimately, the decision whether to execute the final withdrawal of American forces from Iraq early, on time, or late will be made by the next president based on conditions at the time. Under the timeline suggested in this report, the United States would have as long as four to five more years of military presence to secure its enduring interests and help Iraq—far more than if it withdrew hastily either during the Bush administration or shortly thereafter. And it will have created useful leverage if it decides to stay somewhat longer.

Getting From Here to There: Negotiating a Transitional Presence of U.S. Forces

In pursuing a new strategy and force posture in Iraq, the United States should initiate an extensive negotiating effort with Iraq’s national and local leaders. These negotiations would not aim to resolve all of Iraq’s myriad political controversies (though such negotiations are needed). Rather, the negotiations would establish the conditions and timetables for an American withdrawal and what the mission of remaining “transitional” forces will be. If successful, this could be the starting point for broader political and economic negotiations, and might help augment the U.S. role as a credible honest broker among Iraq’s various political actors.⁷⁹

There is no agreement that would satisfy all parties, but there is reason to believe that a transitional American force posture in Iraq would be acceptable to a majority of the key actors and could be the foundation for a negotiated arrangement if the United States aggressively pursued it.⁸⁰

The Shiites and Kurds: In general, the dominant Shiite and Kurdish factions would likely prefer

to be unconstrained in order to deal with the “Baathists” and “terrorists” in their own way. As time goes on and sectarian identities harden, there is a growing chance that several Shiite or Kurdish elements will attempt to implement their own ethnic and sectarian agenda.⁸¹ However, the Shiite government and its supporters realize that they are not ready to stand on their own and so must continue to rely heavily on the United States, particularly for military logistics and air support. The Kurds know that good relations and at least a minimal U.S. presence are important to deter Turkish intervention. Thus, the United States retains some leverage with the Shiites and the Kurds that it should be able to exploit in the context of a general troop drawdown.

Moqtada al-Sadr and the Mahdi Army: The Sadrist want the “occupiers” out, but they have also signaled that they do not want this to happen until the Iraqi security forces are self-sufficient. This may provide some room for co-opting at least some elements of the movement, especially if the negotiations are framed in explicit terms for setting the conditions and timetables for an eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The Sunni tribes/Anbar Salvation Council (ASC): The ASC is likely to sign on to Phased Transition because it serves their interests of defeating al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, the proximate threat to the Sunnis in Anbar), deterring the Shiites and Iranians, and eventually gives them the ability to defend their localities. However, reaching agreement within the context of negotiations for withdrawal will help give them political cover with constituents who oppose cooperation with American forces.

Sunni insurgents: The Sunni insurgency is

⁷⁹ See Stephen Biddle, “Hard Bargaining,” *The Boston Globe* (3 June 2007): C1.

⁸⁰ The authors would like to thank Colin Kahl for his suggestions and thoughts on the key players in Iraq and the possible leverage the United States retains.

⁸¹ Recall Maliki’s initial proposal for the Baghdad security plan, which would have seen U.S. forces stationed on the outskirts of the city. Moreover, regular comments by Iraq’s Kurdish President Jalal Talabani and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim (leader of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council) portray a view that sees the Sunni insurgency as the root of strife in Iraq.

composed of numerous overlapping groups with a mix of common interests (removal of the “dual occupiers”—the Americans and the Iranians) and conflicting ones (secular vs. religious motivations and desired end-states, competition over local power, views about targeting Shiite and Sunni civilians, etc.). The Reform and Jihad Front (RJF), which recently formed in opposition to AQI, and some other insurgent groups may be coaxed to sign on as well if:

1. The negotiations are premised on establishing concrete conditions and timetables for an American withdrawal, especially since, in the interim, the United States would continue to target their AQI rivals; and
2. The process of negotiations extracts some genuine concessions from the central government. Harith al-Dari, the leader of the Association of Muslim Scholars (the largest Sunni clerical body) and a spiritual guide to the insurgency recently noted that Maliki’s conciliatory gestures have thus far been empty promises. “All he does is say, ‘Come and join us.’ But he doesn’t change any of the things that make us feel we are being victimized by his administration.” In particular, al-Dari noted the importance of making progress in removing sectarian influences from the Iraqi security forces. “And then the Americans can leave with their dignity and leave us with ours.”⁸²

Al Qaeda in Iraq: Obviously, AQI should not be part of the negotiating process. They are implacable and, despite their rhetoric, do not want the United States to leave, since our presence reinforces their jihadist narrative and distracts America from other venues (Afghanistan and Pakistan).

A strategy that allows the United States to lead in setting the conditions for withdrawal while encouraging emerging wedges between Sunni

groups and AQI takes the initiative away from AQI and allows us a better chance of leaving Iraq on our terms.

⁸² Bobby Ghosh, “Al Qaeda Loses an Iraqi Friend,” *Time* (14 May 2007).

VI. THE CRITICAL ENABLERS: AMERICAN ADVISORS IN IRAQ

A responsible transition strategy that allows the United States to reduce its force posture while protecting our enduring interests requires an increased advisory presence in Iraq. A significant advisory effort provides a level of connection, awareness, and ability to understand and influence the security environment in Iraq that a rapid withdrawal simply would not allow. The number of military and civilian advisors in Iraq should be increased from today's approximately 6,000 to 20,000 advisors or more.

The advisory mission to date has been insufficiently resourced at every level, and must be enhanced to advance American core interests. An expanded advisory mission would allow for both an increase in the number of advisory teams (what the military calls "transition teams") as well as in the size of a typical team.

Previous attempts at robust training and advisory missions have occurred in Iraq, but never as a component of a strategy emphasizing the training of local and provincial forces. Past efforts were plagued by the attempt to create separate military units that could be deployed anywhere in Iraq, an approach contrary to why many joined in the first place—to protect their local towns and villages. A more targeted advisory effort that is sensitive to local security concerns is an essential pillar of a more nuanced and balanced advisory effort.

A revamped and robust advisory mission would enable both the top-down and bottom-up elements of a balanced strategy. A "top down" approach to the advisory mission would continue to place transition teams throughout the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior, as well as at the division, brigade, battalion, and company

"[I]t is not feasible to have TTs [transition teams] assigned to all of the more than 1,100 police stations in Iraq due to funding constraints on hiring civilian police advisors and limitations on the number of available Military Police."⁸³

—Department of Defense
report to Congress,
June 2007

level of the Iraqi security forces (both Army and national police). A "bottom up" approach to the advisory mission would embed transition teams in local security forces, with a particular emphasis on Anbar province.

Why the U.S. Must Boost Advisory Capacity

Credit goes to the Department of Defense for telling it like it is in the above quote from a recent Congressionally-mandated quarterly report on the Iraq War. At the same time, however, it is a stunning indictment: After more than four years of the Iraq War, and hundreds of billions of dollars spent, it is simply not acceptable that the most essential element of success—and one of the cheapest—is

⁸³ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: Report to Congress* (June 2007): 33

under-resourced due to “funding constraints and limitations on the number of available Military Police.” The United States must do better.

If developing more advisory capacity is not made an urgent national priority, with a senior (most likely four-star) military officer in charge and given the authority and resources needed to make it happen, then the Phased Transition plan proposed in this report—or any effort to rapidly build Iraqi military and police capacity—is very likely to fail.

While some advisors would have staff jobs, most would embed with Iraqi units conducting operations, including population security, search and seizure of weapons, and counterterrorism. In addition to their expertise, American advisors would serve as critical enablers of Iraq operations by tapping into U.S. logistical support, medical evacuation, intelligence and surveillance, secure communications, and both ground- and air-delivered firepower. The Iraqi security forces are currently relatively weak in all of these areas, but bring a knowledge of the local situation (and of course the culture and language) essential to effective police work and security operations.

Increasing the number of U.S. military advisors embedded in Iraqi national and provincial security forces in the context of an overall reduction of American military personnel in Iraq may seem counterintuitive. Indeed, the advisory mission is among the more hazardous military missions in Iraq and it is possible that the danger to advisors would rise as American forces began to withdraw. However, the United States can best protect its enduring interests in Iraq by including a robust advisory mission as a prominent feature of a responsible transition plan.

Any significant reduction in the U.S. force posture in Iraq is likely to create a degree of instability in Iraq’s security environment. To prevent a dramatic

increase in chaos and violence, American forces must retain sufficient contact with Iraq’s major political and security forces to detect, shape, and respond to any warning signs. The departure of significant numbers of American troops combined with the termination of the training and advisory mission would dramatically curtail the available security, intelligence, and diplomatic channels that are critical to ensure that the United States can contest the presence of al Qaeda, avert a regional war, and prevent genocide.

First, military advisors will be in constant contact with Iraqi security forces and local political leaders to generate and exploit valuable information that can lead to successful operations against al Qaeda in Iraq and other groups that have designs on conducting terrorist acts. Advisors who maintain positive relationships with local political leaders will greatly increase America’s chances of navigating the complex tribal politics and various alliances—especially in western Iraq—that will enable effective counterterrorism operations.

Second, military advisors embedded throughout Iraq’s central government and security ministries will be positioned to provide critical information on the degree to which sectarian violence is government-sponsored. Preventing genocide in Iraq is principally about making sure Iraq’s central government does not use national military or police units to prosecute operations against Iraq’s minority populations. Maintaining a robust advisory capacity throughout Iraq’s central government infrastructure is vital, in part because the difficulties in perceiving, deterring, or responding to sectarian use of national security forces would greatly increase were America to remove its military advisors; and also because a great deal of anecdotal evidence suggests that the behavior of Iraqi military and police units is significantly affected by the presence of American advisors.

Third, by helping prevent Iraq from becoming either a haven for al Qaeda or a genocidal conflagration, an American advisory mission can help deter the outbreak of a regional war. Moreover, a large advisory mission would be a clear signal to Iraq's neighbors that the United States remains highly engaged in helping Iraqis develop their political, security, and economic infrastructure, and would thus mitigate their likelihood of seeing a shift in U.S. force posture as highly destabilizing or necessitating their overt intervention. However, the principal deterrent to an outbreak of war between and among Iraq's neighbors remains the presence of American combat units in Iraq and throughout the region.

Fourth and most important, American advisors would help build the capacity of Iraq's Army and local police, so that over time they can take full responsibility for providing security in Iraq. For all the reasons outlined above, an extensive American advisory effort in Iraq is a critical component of a responsible transition strategy, and the best way to lay a sustainable foundation for long-term success in protecting core U.S. interests.⁸⁴

What U.S. Advisors Will Do in Iraq

In addition to their primary mission of helping to enable effective Iraqi police and military operations, embedded advisors will help negotiate the nature of American political, economic, and security aid with Iraqi national and local leaders. A strategy predicated on both a top-down approach to Iraq's central government and a bottom-up approach that treats local and provincial leaders as valuable partners will rely heavily on transition teams and diplomats fostering unique relationships throughout the country.

Andrew Krepinevich offers a clear description of U.S. advisory missions and their contributions:

Advisers coach their Iraqi counterparts on how to plan, conduct and sustain counter-insurgency operations involving dozens and eventually hundreds of soldiers. They also work to identify and report the corruption in the Iraqi government that can make it difficult to get adequate supplies to Iraqi troops. Living and working day in, day out with the Iraqis, advisers are also an invaluable source of intelligence. They know which Iraqi military leaders are the most talented and worthy of promotion and which are incompetent and need to be relieved. They can help us identify which officers are loyal and which have sectarian sympathies, which are honest and which corrupt. The advisers can best tell us what equipment the Iraqis need to be most effective, rather than what equipment we think they should have.⁸⁵

Increasing the advisory mission would allow for a far more robust "push" of American expertise and support out to more Iraqi units on a regular basis, which in turn will facilitate a better "pull" of information on the progress and status of Iraqi security force units.

To facilitate the accuracy and consistency of the information on the ISF units under observation, the U.S. should develop a better set of metrics to track sectarian loyalty and human rights abuses. Currently, transition teams rate ISF units on metrics that are primarily military in nature (e.g., manning, proficiency at basic military tasks, equipment status, and unit leadership). New metrics should be an important component in identifying which units and which commanders should be rewarded for professional and non-sectarian performance, and which units should be isolated, retrained, or disbanded. To the extent that this type of information is currently collected, it

⁸⁴ Many of the ideas in this section are the product of conversations and interviews held with several military and civilian officials currently involved in the training and advising effort.

⁸⁵ Andrew Krepinevich, "Send in the Advisers," *The New York Times* (11 July 2006): 19.

is highly differentiated and ad hoc. A more coordinated assessment of the ISF should help U.S. officials adjust the “top down” policy toward the Iraqi government.

At the local level, an expanded advisory effort would focus on helping provincial and local leaders build capacity from the bottom-up. Here, the main difference from the top-down advisory effort is the acceptance that local forces will be representative of the populations they are protecting and thus will be largely homogenous in sectarian or ethnic identity. In Anbar province, for example, local police units will consist largely of local Sunnis who are known to the population and who can differentiate between local residents and outsiders.

In the northern Kurdish areas, where the security situation is generally less volatile, the nature of the advisory mission would be different. Here, the presence of American advisors will allow observation of the tensions in the mixed northern cities, Kirkuk in particular, and reassure Turkey that the United States remains committed to reducing PKK activity. The presence of American troops in the north will also reduce the likelihood that Turkey will initiate a military incursion.

In southern Iraq, the advisory effort might focus on maintaining sufficient contact and relationships among provincial and local leaders. Several southern provinces are under provisional Iraqi control. An advisory effort in these areas would aim to maintain relationships and keep the channels of economic and security assistance open as important sources of continued American leverage. A bottom-up advisory effort will also help U.S. intelligence analysts better understand the complicated relationships between Iraq’s Shiite political parties and population, as well as their Iranian neighbors.

Advisors working to enable and build local security capacity – whether in Anbar, Kurdistan, southern Iraq, or elsewhere (e.g., Diyala province just north of Baghdad) – will need to be given a significant degree of latitude in determining what kind of support to provide, and how deeply to embed in local units in order to preserve positive relations with local leaders while making progress on core American interests.

Expanding the American advisory effort is critical to implementing a responsible transition strategy in the context of a broader troop drawdown. A more robust advisory capability will provide greater connectivity with the Iraqi central government as well as provincial and local leaders. The advisory effort, in many ways, constitutes the eyes and ears of a reduced American force posture and will help preserve and expand U.S. influence in assessing and shaping the changing strategic contours in Iraq.

What an Expanded Advisory Mission Would Look Like

The United States currently fields about 6,000 military advisors in Iraq, serving principally in five types of “transition teams,” with missions as summarized below (*see* Figure 4). All operate as part of the Multi-National Security Transition Command—Iraq (MNSTC-I), which has the overall mission of assisting the Iraqi government “in the development, organization, training, equipping, and mentoring” of the Iraqi Defense and Interior Ministries.⁸⁶

While the United States currently embeds throughout the ISF, the limited number and small size of teams prevent adequate coverage and supervision. For example, each military transition team at the division, brigade, and battalion level

⁸⁶ MNSTC-I missions described at <http://www.mnstci.iraq.centcom.mil>. Figures are as of late 2006.

Figure 4: Advisory/Transition Teams Under MNSTC-I

Type of Advisory Team	Mission
Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT)	“Supports the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Joint Headquarters (JHQ) as they recruit, train, equip, base, and sustain Army, Air Force and Navy units throughout Iraq”
Joint Headquarters Transition Team (JHQ TT)	“Assist in the development of Iraq’s Joint Headquarters inside the MoD to effectively command and control the Iraqi Joint Forces (IJF; Army, Navy, and Air Force) in accordance with Iraqi MoD direction”
Coalition Air Force Transition Team (CAFTT)	“Assist in the development of Iraq’s military air capability;” “improve current capabilities in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as well [as] mobility and airbase operations”
Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT)	“Training, equipping, organizing, mentoring and developing the Ministry of Interior forces”
Ministry of the Interior Transition Team (MoI TT)	“Assist in the development of Iraq’s law enforcement capacity and its ability to lead and resource the Iraqi Police”

numbers only 11 American troops. This means that because force protection needs require a minimum of nine troops to stay together during each patrol or movement, the entire team can only do one thing at a time. Further, it is very difficult to regularly observe Iraqi military activity at the all-important company or platoon level.

In order to implement a Phased Transition, it will be necessary to increase U.S. advisory teams to approximately 25 advisors each, including dedicated security and administrative support elements (see Figure 5). Doubling the number of teams would allow advisors to embed farther down in the Iraqi security forces and observe operations at the company level or equivalent. These “super-sized” advisory teams would also have increased force protection abilities that should allow for more safety and freedom of movement during

inherently dangerous missions, and will facilitate a more robust bottom-up approach to the advisory mission, as organic security elements will help the team push farther out into rural areas and provide support to local security forces.

The estimate of twenty thousand advisors overall is just that: an estimate. Its derivation is provided in Appendix B. If more teams are needed, they should be quickly established. Military planners will need to determine when, where, and in what size to allocate the teams, the expanded capacity should allow for an adequate mix of teams sized and shaped for effective top-down and bottom-up advisory missions. If more advisors are needed for some teams, e.g., in particularly dangerous areas, the team’s size should be increased. The advisory mission must be tailored; one size will not fit all circumstances.

Figure 5: What an Appropriate Advisory Team Might Look Like⁸⁷

Advisor Team Composition

- Team Leader
- Team Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge
- Team Adjutant
- Team Personnel Specialist
- Team Intelligence Officer
- Team Intel Sergeant
- Team Intel Specialist
- Team Ops Officer
- Team Ops Sergeant
- Team Logistics Officer
- Team Logistics Sergeant
- Team Medical Sergeant
- Team Light Wheel Mechanic
- Infantry Squad (Personal Security Detachment/Infantry Trainers)

Total Strength: 25

To succeed, U.S. advisors need more than good education, good training, and good luck. They also require logistics and medical support for themselves and the indigenous forces with whom they work, as well as communications, intelligence, and air support. Advisory teams in Iraq are often valued more for the combat and logistical capability they can offer to their Iraqi counterparts than their “advice,” and thus it is important to consider the advisory teams as the connective

tissue between U.S. combat and support capability and the Iraqi national or local security forces. Therefore an advisory mission requires supporting airpower, a Quick Reaction Force capability, and intelligence and logistical (including medical) support. These essential force elements are described in Appendix B.

How to Rapidly Increase Advisory Capacity

While it is beyond the scope of this report to describe in detail how the United States can rapidly surge its overall capacity for military advisors in Iraq, four steps are essential:

First, because a Phased Transition would significantly reduce combat forces in Iraq, some Army and Marine combat units (BCT/RCTs) that would otherwise be scheduled to deploy to Iraq would no longer be required. In order to increase advisory capacity a number of officers and senior enlisted soldiers with prior experience in Iraq would be assigned away from each unit to the advisory mission. Depending on the need for advisors in Iraq and each individual’s level of experience, they could be assigned either to an advisor training course or sent straight to an operational advisory team in Iraq. Moreover, planners should attempt where possible to assign these individuals to areas within Iraq in which they were previously deployed. Finally, some attempt should be made to ensure that advisory teams are optimized according to the Iraqi unit they are advising. For example, an Iraqi Army infantry unit should ideally be assigned a U.S. advisory team that contains infantry officers or senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs).

Second, as the number of combat units in Iraq declines, there will likely be some that are sent back to the United States ahead of schedule, as well as units that would leave at the end of their planned tour of duty. In the first case, officers and senior

⁸⁷ See John A. Nagl, “Institutionalizing Adaptation: It’s Time for a Permanent Army Advisor Corps,” (Washington D.C.: Center for a New American Security, June 2007): 7.

NCOs could be reassigned to advisory teams for the time they had left in their previous assignment. In the second case, the military should ask for volunteers who are willing to extend their stay in Iraq as part of an advisory team. Appropriate incentives should be provided for those who volunteer for extended tours and further dangerous duty.

Third, senior leaders—starting with the president—should issue a general call for volunteers to man the advisory teams. Volunteers could come both from active and reserve military personnel in the United States or abroad, and even from recently retired veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom, of which there are tens of thousands.

Fourth, as a last resort, individuals could be involuntarily assigned to the advisory mission. Given all the options outlined above, it is unlikely that many officers or senior NCOs would be involuntarily assigned the advisory mission, but it may be necessary. In any event, all advisors should be rewarded in terms of promotion, pay, and prestige for the essential service they would be providing to the nation.

The length of advisory tours is a critical issue. Longer tours have two major advantages. First, as they do their job, advisors build trust relationships with their ISF counterparts and local tribal and political leaders, and gain essential knowledge of local customs, culture, terrain, and people. A frequent transition of advisory personnel would disrupt this process, and make the mission more challenging. Second, if at least some advisors stay for longer tours, it would allow a quicker ramp-up in overall numbers.

At the same time, however, longer tours for advisors would place an even more disproportionate share of the cost and risk of protecting America's interests on a small number of individuals and their families. Therefore, a sensible policy would

be to provide very significant career and pay incentives for personnel who serve as advisors, and even more so to those who reenlist. In addition, if advisory teams are grown to 25 personnel, as we recommend, it would be possible for a few team members at any one time to get some well-deserved rest and relaxation.

In order to facilitate the creation of an increased advisory capacity, the Army and the Marine Corps need to devote more resources toward establishing schoolhouses and training centers that can produce a greater number of advisors while retaining sufficient quality. It will be difficult to devote more resources to training in the context of the substantial strain that U.S. ground forces are currently experiencing, but the reduced levels of combat forces in Iraq will significantly ease this challenge. Any and all means must be brought to bear as the advisory mission is the most important element of a successful Phased Transition in Iraq. The Army and Marine Corps should establish a joint advisory training center at a major military base in the United States.⁸⁸

American military advisors will be essential to protecting America's enduring interests in Iraq. Moreover, they are likely to play a much-increased role in a future characterized by irregular threats and thus an effort to increase advisory capacity will have long-term value in preparing the U.S. military for tomorrow's security environment.⁸⁹

The advisory mission is central to both the bottom-up and top-down elements of a balanced strategy for Iraq, and the *sine qua non* of a successful Phased Transition that protects U.S. enduring interests in Iraq. How well the advisory effort succeeds may affect the security of the United States for generations to come.

⁸⁸This training center can reproduce (on a larger scale) the current Army advisory training center operated by the First Infantry Division at Fort Riley, Kansas.

⁸⁹See Nagl, "Institutionalizing Adaptation: It's Time for a Permanent Advisor Corps."

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As of the date of this report in late June 2007, the situation in Iraq may not yet be hopeless, but it is both dire and precarious. America's enduring interests—preventing the establishment of al Qaeda safe havens, preventing genocide, and preventing regional war—are at grave risk.

To protect our most important interests in Iraq, the United States must pursue a balanced strategy with three elements: assertive regional diplomacy as called for by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group; continued top-down efforts to increase the reliability and capacity of the Iraqi security forces; and a significantly increased bottom-up effort to build local and provincial security by working in particular with the Sunnis in Anbar province to counter al Qaeda, and the Kurds to avoid the unraveling of the situation there.

The surge of U.S. troops to Baghdad and Anbar province in 2007 will not produce anything close to “victory.” Because of the intense strains on U.S. ground forces, troop levels in Iraq must decline significantly within the remaining months of the Bush administration. From that point forward, in order to protect U.S. interests in Iraq and to balance with broader regional and global risks, including in Afghanistan today, the United States must navigate four challenging transitions: from President Bush to his successor; from U.S.-led to Iraqi-led operations; of U.S. forces in Iraq back to elsewhere in the region and back home; and to a new post-occupation relationship with Iraq.

This report proposes a four-phase approach to advancing U.S. interests in Iraq while reducing our military presence. It has suggested specific timelines for consideration, understanding that

“Hard is not hopeless.”⁹⁰

—General David Petraeus

the next president should set timelines for Phases II, III, and IV based on conditions in early 2009:

Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable
(July 2007 – January 2009)

Phase II: Enhanced Advisory Effort
(January 2009 – December 2011
or sooner)

Phase III: Deliberate Withdrawal
(completed by December 2012)

Phase IV: Over-the-Horizon Presence
and Engagement
(started by December 2012)

If planning and consultation for this four-part Phased Transition plan is begun in July 2007, with implementation underway by fall 2007, then by the end of the Bush administration American troop levels would be reduced by more than 100,000 from their peak surge levels to approximately 60,000 in Iraq. The last year of the Bush administration and as much as the first three years of the next president's term of office would see an aggressive advisory effort, involving some 20,000 U.S. military advisors. In order to protect American advisors and others in Iraq, the continued presence of combat forces in Iraq and additional forces in the region would be essential.

Under the timelines we have suggested for a Phased Transition plan, by the end of the next president's first term, the United States would have withdrawn all of its military forces from Iraq, with some returned home and others deployed in the region. At the same time, the United States would be actively engaged in building relationships with the Iraqi

⁹⁰ General David Petraeus, “Statement to Senate Armed Services Committee,” (23 January 2007).

central government and just as actively engaged with other key parties in Iraq including both Sunnis and Kurds, and with our regional partners.

Some who might otherwise support a shift to an advisory-focused effort in Iraq may object to the notion of a specific timeline and particularly to planning for a total military withdrawal from Iraq by the end of the next president's first term. Indeed, it is possible that just at the time of the planned U.S. withdrawal the civil war and insurgency could finally be waning, but the Iraqi security forces would still need support from the U.S. military. In that case, quite simply, the president would have to consider changing the plan. Such a decision would not be made lightly, but could be made.

Setting a timeline for withdrawal from Iraq is not ideal, but the benefits outweigh the costs and risks. Perhaps most importantly, setting a specific date for U.S. military withdrawal would help accelerate the "Baghdad clock," and if part of a credible Phased Transition plan, could at the same time decelerate the "Washington clock." Setting a course that involves moving out of Iraq is essential to setting conditions for moving forward.

The critical enabler of the Phased Transition proposed in this report is the rapid development of a cadre of some 20,000 military advisors for Iraq. Some will object that an advisory approach was already attempted and failed in Iraq, to be replaced by the current surge. However, the earlier effort was not adequately resourced in terms of training, equipment, or personnel; nor was it appropriately targeted.

More than tripling the overall size of the advisory effort from 6,000 today to about 20,000, coupled with an all-out effort to fill the ranks of advisors with top-notch experienced personnel, can make a substantial difference. And focusing the advisory mission not exclusively on a top-down effort to support the Iraqi Army and national police, but

increasingly on a bottom-up effort to promote local, tribal, and provincial security efforts, will significantly increase its impact.

Phased Transition—our proposed "Plan A"—relies heavily on the contribution of American advisors to protect core U.S. interests. While success is far from guaranteed, this approach has a reasonable chance to prevent al Qaeda safe havens. It would also provide a reasonable basis for preventing genocide, since Americans would both buttress and observe Iraqi security forces. And if it is successful in preventing al Qaeda safe havens and genocide, the increased stability in Iraq would reduce prospects for regional war.

Recommendations for the Bush Administration

The Bush administration should immediately pursue the following steps.

1. Adopt Phased Transition as a framework for guiding political-military planning and specific actions.

Adopting the Phased Transition plan would provide a focal point for bipartisanship on Iraq, consistent with the Iraq Study Group's recommendations. Although implementation of Phase I might not start until Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus report on progress in September, the Bush administration should consider earlier implementation, and at minimum use the intervening several months to conduct planning and consultations in order to build consensus for moving forward expeditiously.

1.1. Focus on realistic and limited objectives for Iraq: preventing al Qaeda safe havens, preventing regional war, and preventing genocide.

It is time to acknowledge that the expansive goals articulated by the Bush administration will not materialize in Iraq. Unless policymakers shift soon toward the pursuit of more realistic goals that address America's

enduring national interests, failure in Iraq and strategic exhaustion of the United States are likely.

1.2. Begin planning and consultations immediately, and implementation within several months, to gradually take U.S. forces out of the lead for security operations and reduce U.S. military forces in Iraq to approximately 60,000 by January 2009 (including about 20,000 advisors).

The redeployment of 100,000 American forces will require extensive pre-planning and wide-ranging political consultations in Iraq and the region. The administration should begin its military planning and diplomatic preparations now, and should consider implementation prior to the September report by Ambassador Crocker and General Petraeus.

1.3. Immediately make developing a significantly increased advisory capacity to mentor and support Iraqi military and police a national priority.

The Bush administration attempted to build Iraqi military and police capability from 2004 to 2006, with very limited success. In order for a future advisory effort in Iraq to make a real difference, it must be larger, draw from the most talented people in the military, and be fully resourced. A senior military official, preferably a four-star officer, must be given the authorities and resources needed to make it happen. And the advisory effort must be targeted on building local and provincial police capacities as well as the Iraqi Army and national police. None of these were the case in previous efforts. While success is far from certain, an urgent effort is needed. Section VI of this report provides detailed recommendations for how to do better.

1.4. Begin planning and negotiations now for a significant long-term U.S. military presence in the Gulf region.

Negotiating the continued presence of American military forces in Kuwait and elsewhere in the Gulf region will take time, and should be a near-term diplomatic priority. Before negotiations are initiated, pre-planning is required to develop and compare various options, and to allow preliminary consultations with friends and allies in the region.

1.5. Begin planning now for a full withdrawal from Iraq, assess possible/likely responses, and develop plans to capitalize on positives and reduce negatives.

The announcement of a specific date for the planned withdrawal of American forces from Iraq would set in motion a number of reactions, many (though not all) of which can be anticipated in advance. An interagency planning effort, supported by the intelligence community, should be undertaken now, and updated over time. This effort will help shape the contours, and reduce the costs and risks, of American withdrawal. The planning effort should account for the fact that withdrawal could occur under a range of circumstances. The United States has an opportunity to shape the contours of our exit, but to do so effectively we must think seriously about the perspectives, interests and likely reactions of various groups in Iraq and the region, and how to encourage or in some cases constrain their behavior.

1.6. Begin negotiations with the Iraq federal government, as well as with provincial and regional governments (e.g., Kurdistan), to set the terms of a post-occupation relationship.

The prospect of the U.S. military staying in Iraq, but only for a specified period of time, would increase American bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the Iraqi central government. In

recognition of the likely devolution of power in Iraq and the move to a federal form of government, the United States should also conduct negotiations with selected tribal, local, and provincial leaders regarding the terms of a continued near-term military presence and long-term economic and political presence.

1.7. Work with Congress to forge a bipartisan consensus for a Phased Transition plan that would give a reasonable chance for an advisory mission to work, while culminating by the end of 2012 in a full military withdrawal from Iraq.

Without a bipartisan approach soon on Iraq the first essential transition, from the Bush administration to its successor, will fail. After sixteen more months of polemical argumentation by the extreme wings of both parties leading into the November 2008 election, the prospects for a sensible policy on Iraq will be dim.

2. Develop and implement an integrated inter-agency plan to prevent genocide in Iraq and if necessary stop it once underway. The plan should be supported by ongoing intelligence collection and analysis relating to specific indicators.

The United States must not allow the worst to occur in Iraq. Genocide in Iraq would overwhelm the region with internecine violence, further inflame ancient sectarian strife, and completely destroy any chance that the United States can withdraw from Iraq – or stay – with any semblance of honor or credibility. America must be ready to prevent or stop genocide in Iraq, and thus all instruments of national power must be involved in a comprehensive interagency effort to plan for this scenario. The United States was not prepared for the chaos and strife that followed the invasion's initial success—to fail to plan to prevent genocide in Iraq now would be profoundly irresponsible.

3. Conduct contingency planning now for the possibility of more chaotic Iraqi environments which would require consolidation of the U.S. military within Iraq (“Plan B”) or as a worst case the withdrawal of civilian and military personnel under fire (“Plan C”).

The United States should develop a contingency plan to cope with a scenario in which in the security environment in Iraq deteriorates to the point where the advisory mission becomes untenable in some or most parts of the country. In this case, the United States would need to be prepared to rapidly extract advisors to well-defended bases in Iraq. To be effective, such a plan must be developed in advance.

In addition, the Bush administration should begin contingency planning for an ugly scenario that is plausible under any U.S. policy options: an Iraq civil war that has spun out of control. If this occurs, the United States military would have to conduct a massive non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO) involving tens of thousands of American government civilians and contractors, while simultaneously continuing to combat al Qaeda, prevent genocide, and work with some regional players and deter others in an effort to avoid escalation into a regional conflagration.

4. More broadly, pursue a balanced strategy with continued attention to “top-down” efforts, and significantly expanded “bottom-up” and “outside-in” efforts.

4.1. Continue “top-down” efforts to press the federal government to achieve current and future benchmarks, and redouble efforts to increase the size, competency, and non-sectarian nature of the Iraqi security forces. U.S. assistance is particularly important in meeting benchmarks relating to the performance and capabilities of the Iraqi security forces. The United States must use its leverage to push for the continued professionalization

of the ISF, and the removal of elements that are intent on fostering the Sunni insurgency or supporting Shiite militias.

In addition, the United States should continue to press hard on benchmarks relating to political reconciliation, and should tie future economic assistance to movement forward, as mandated by U.S. legislation. Although the president can waive this provision in the benchmark legislation by certifying specific actions that the administration is taking to bring the Iraqi government into compliance, any such waiver should be a one-time deal with a finite deadline for Iraqi action. Getting Iraqi agreement on the sharing of oil revenues is particularly urgent.

4.2. Expand “bottom-up” efforts in Iraq, including the support and development of local security forces, and negotiations with tribal, local, and provincial leaders.

U.S. military units and Provincial Reconstruction Teams have begun to establish relationships and negotiate with key tribal, local, and provincial leaders. These relationships provide a starting point for farther-reaching efforts that will serve both U.S. and local Iraqi interests.

4.3. Aggressively pursue regional diplomacy as recommended by the Iraq Study Group, with immediate attention to preventing a further escalation of tensions between Kurdistan and Turkey.

The Bush administration has begun to tentatively discuss Iraq with other countries in the Middle East. While recognizing that the interests of other countries, and particularly of Iran and Syria, may overlap with those of the United States in some areas but will certainly conflict in others, the administration should make regional negotiations a top priority.

The Way Forward...and Out

Neither Republicans nor Democrats, neoconservatives nor liberals, will like everything recommended in this report. However, it is hoped that a sufficient number of American political leaders will see Phased Transition as a way to update and implement the recommendations of the Iraq Study Group, and therefore as a focal point for viable change.

Pursuing a Phased Transition is not without risks, but the same is true of any feasible choices on Iraq. Relative to continuing the current surge, Phased Transition has two decisive advantages. First, it would be militarily sustainable while allowing the Army and Marine Corps to begin to reset and increase force readiness for other possible contingencies. In so doing, it would reduce strategic risks to the United States from other quarters, and reduce the growing danger of American strategic exhaustion. Second, it would allow America’s military presence to end gradually and predictably (rather than abruptly at the outset of the next administration), while giving the advisory mission the resources and time needed to have a decent shot at success.

The Phased Transition plan described in this report is intended to provide a new way forward and ultimately out of Iraq. Drawing extensively on the hard work and insight of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group, it hopes to provide a focal point for a new surge of bipartisanship. Pursuing a Phased Transition will take real political courage from the Bush administration, Congress, and presidential candidates in the current partisan environment. However, it is not too much to ask that our political leaders work together to do what is right for the nation. The American people, and particularly our fine troops and civilians who are in harm’s way and who have already paid a terrible price, deserve no less.

A P P E N D I X A

CONGRESSIONAL BENCHMARKS
ON IRAQ**110th Congress, H.R. 2206: U.S. Troop
Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and
Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007.⁹¹
SEC. 1314.**(B) CONDITIONING OF FUTURE UNITED
STATES STRATEGY IN IRAQ ON THE
IRAQI GOVERNMENT'S RECORD OF
PERFORMANCE ON ITS BENCHMARKS.

(1) IN GENERAL

(A) The United States strategy in Iraq, hereafter, shall be conditioned on the Iraqi government meeting benchmarks, as told to members of Congress by the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and reflected in the Iraqi Government's commitments to the United States, and to the international community, including:

- (i) Forming a Constitutional Review Committee and then completing the constitutional review.
- (ii) Enacting and implementing legislation on de-Baathification.
- (iii) Enacting and implementing legislation to ensure the equitable distribution of hydro-carbon resources of the people of Iraq without regard to the sect or ethnicity of recipients, and enacting and implementing legislation to ensure that the energy resources of Iraq benefit Sunni Arabs, Shia Arabs, Kurds, and other Iraqi citizens in an equitable manner.

- (iv) Enacting and implementing legislation on procedures to form semi-autonomous regions.
- (v) Enacting and implementing legislation establishing an Independent High Electoral Commission, provincial elections law, provincial council authorities, and a date for provincial elections.
- (vi) Enacting and implementing legislation addressing amnesty.
- (vii) Enacting and implementing legislation establishing a strong militia disarmament program to ensure that such security forces are accountable only to the central government and loyal to the Constitution of Iraq.
- (viii) Establishing supporting political, media, economic, and services committees in support of the Baghdad Security Plan.
- (ix) Providing three trained and ready Iraqi brigades to support Baghdad operations.
- (x) Providing Iraqi commanders with all authorities to execute this plan and to make tactical and operational decisions, in consultation with U.S. commanders, without political intervention, to include the authority to pursue all extremists, including Sunni insurgents and Shiite militias.
- (xi) Ensuring that the Iraqi Security Forces are providing even handed enforcement of the law.
- (xii) Ensuring that, according to President Bush, Prime Minister Maliki said "the

⁹¹ 110th Congress, H.R. 2206: U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 Section 1314 (May 2007): Available online at <http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-2206>

Baghdad security plan will not provide a safe haven for any outlaws, regardless of [their] sectarian or political affiliation.”

- (xiii) Reducing the level of sectarian violence in Iraq and eliminating militia control of local security.
- (xiv) Establishing all of the planned joint security stations in neighborhoods across Baghdad.
- (xv) Increasing the number of Iraqi security forces units capable of operating independently.
- (xvi) Ensuring that the rights of minority political parties in the Iraqi legislature are protected.
- (xvii) Allocating and spending \$10 billion in Iraqi revenues for reconstruction projects, including delivery of essential services, on an equitable basis.
- (xviii) Ensuring that Iraq’s political authorities are not undermining or making false accusations against members of the Iraqi Security Forces.

A P P E N D I X B

U.S. FORCE POSTURE IN IRAQ UNDER A PHASED TRANSITION PLAN

Under the Phased Transition plan proposed in this report, the U.S. military presence in Iraq would begin to decline in summer 2007. From a peak of approximately 160,000 today, American troops in Iraq would be reduced by 100,000 to a level of about 60,000 by the end of the Bush administration, and stay at about that level for as long as the first three years of the next presidency. After a deliberate withdrawal process that might take as much as a year, the U.S. would have no permanent military presence in Iraq. The phases, along with timelines suggested for consideration in this report, are:

Phase I: From Surge to Sustainable (July 2007
– January 2009)

Phase II: Enhanced Advisory Effort (January 2009
– December 2011 or sooner)

Phase III: Deliberate Withdrawal (completed by
December 2012)

Phase IV: Over-the-Horizon Presence and
Engagement (started by December 2012)

This appendix is intended to provide readers a sense of what U.S. force posture might look like under this report's proposed Phased Transition plan. Details regarding the size of U.S. force elements and their possible locations within Iraq are provided here not as the "right" answer but as reasonable estimates to inform discussion.

Force planning is appropriately conducted by military planners with access to classified information regarding a wide range of factors, including the current status of various American units and the

specific requirements for supporting them logistically; the availability of ground, sea, and air-based transportation; the capacities of roads, bases, and ports; the current threat assessment for various parts of Iraq and the region; and the amenability of Iraqi and other governments in the region to accept U.S. forces. The estimates provided in this report are intended to give readers a sense of scale, and to advance the debate.⁹²

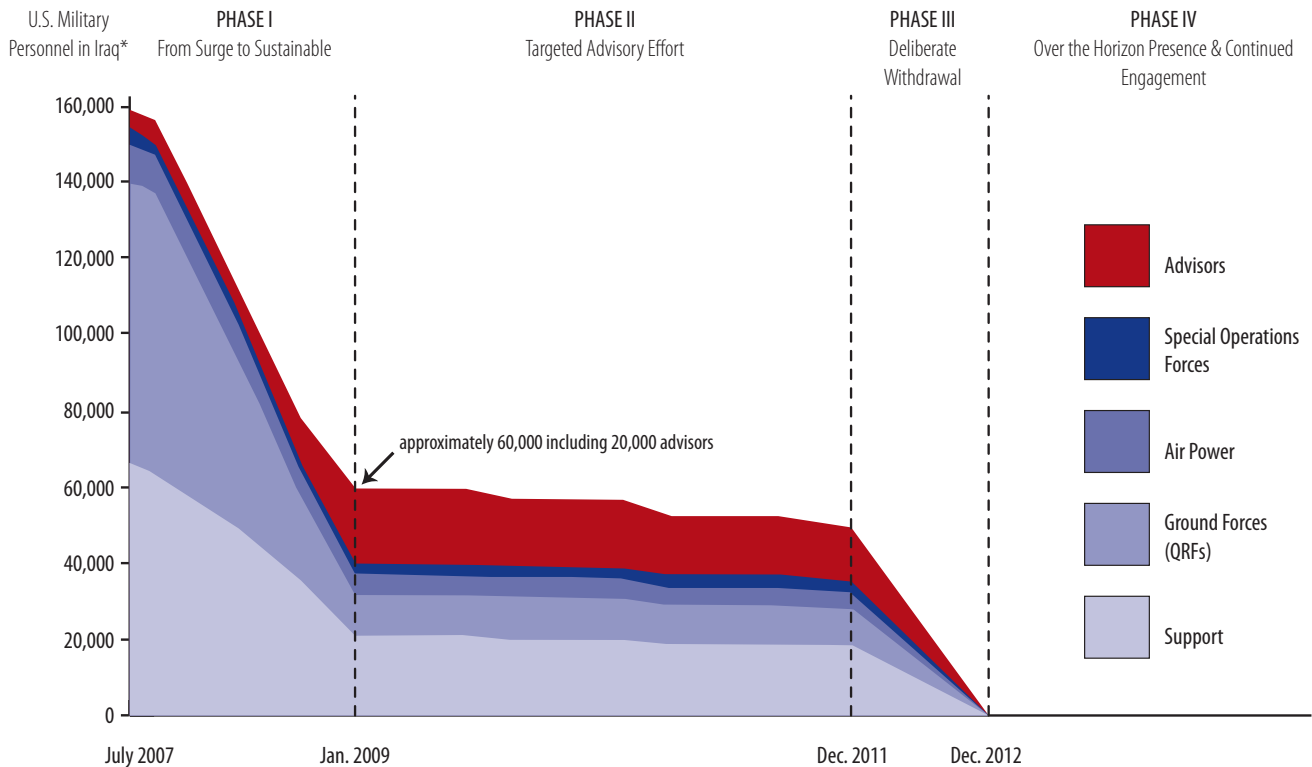
To explicitly address a thought that may occur to some readers, it would be a serious mistake for Congress to legislate the size and composition of U.S. military forces in Iraq. Similarly, it would be a serious mistake for the Secretary of Defense to start by defining the number of troops as opposed to the objectives, missions, and key assumptions that should guide military planning.

Figure 6 is intended to provide a representative view of how Phased Transition might play out, assuming a duration of three years for Phase II. Although this phase might be shorter or longer, three years is offered as a reasonable planning assumption. The figure shows overall U.S. force levels in Iraq declining slightly during Phase II; this is a reasonable assumption if the advisory mission is working and the security situation in Iraq is improving. As discussed in detail in this report, planning must also consider the possibility that things in Iraq would be getting worse.

Five categories of forces are shown in Figure 6: military advisors; Special Operations Forces (SOF); airpower; combat ground forces constituted as Quick Reaction Forces; and supporting forces including logistics and intelligence.

⁹² Former Assistant Secretary of Defense Bing West and his Marine reservist son Owen West recently suggested a somewhat similar approach that would involve 20,000 more troops (80,000 total) and an expected 10 years for the advisory mission. See Bing West and Owen West, "The Adviser Model: We Have to Stay in Iraq for a Decade. Here's How to Do It," *Slate* (23 May 2007): Available online at <http://www.slate.com/id/2166854>.

Figure 6: U.S. Military Forces in Iraq Under Phased Transition (Representative)



*Numbers of American troops in Iraq are approximate for July 2007 and representative estimates for January 2009 and thereafter. Figures are for Iraq only, and do not include other U.S. forces in region.

Military Advisors

Currently there are approximately 6,000 U.S. military advisors serving in Iraq. In December 2006, the Iraq Study Group called for increases to 10,000 to 20,000.⁹³ We have suggested an increase to approximately 20,000 deployed advisors in Iraq—an acknowledgement that the ISG recommendations appear to be in the right ballpark. Of course actual numbers of advisors deployed would depend on a range of variables and vary over time.

Section VI of this report provides extensive details about the proposed advisory mission, and how the more-than tripling of current capacities could

be accomplished. What follows is a brief consideration of how many advisors might be needed. While detailed military and interagency planning is needed, the following figures are intended to provide a starting point.

Supporting “Bottom-Up” Efforts: Police Transition Teams

As of June 2007, about 2,000 U.S. military personnel, mostly military police, were involved in some 223 police transition teams. This included 10 teams at the provincial level, 65 at the district level, and 148 at police stations. A typical team includes 12 to 15 members, of which about 10 are military personnel, typically military police (MPs).⁹⁴

⁹³ James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report: The Way Forward — A New Approach* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006): 71.

⁹⁴ Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq: Report to Congress* (June 2007): 33. This document is the principal source for figures relating to advisors in this Appendix.

Currently less than 15 percent of police stations (148 of 1,100) have American advisors and the resources they bring to bear. It is clear that more are needed, and DoD should immediately assess the opportunities and priorities for such deployments.

Many anecdotal reports from the field suggest that the typical size of police transition teams may be too small. As a very rough guess at what might be found appropriate by a much-needed study of requirements, we calculate the following: Assume that 30 percent rather than less than 15 percent of the 1,100 police stations (i.e., 330) would have embedded transition teams, and that consistent with our suggestion in section VI regarding military transition teams for companies in the Iraqi Army, each team would include 25 MPs instead of ten. The result would be a requirement for a total of 8,250 MPs deployed at 330 police stations. Assuming a continuation of the smaller teams at the provincial and district levels, the total requirement for military personnel in support of police operations would be as follows:

- 8,250 MPs deployed at about 330 police stations
- 750 MPs deployed at provincial and district level
- 9,000 MPs deployed in total

Added to these figures should be the approximately one hundred personnel who form the Ministry of Interior's Transition Team.

Under these very rough calculations, there would be a requirement for over 9,000 MPs deployed as the core of police transition teams in Iraq.

By no means do we believe that 9,000 MPs is the "correct" answer. This rough estimate is intended to demonstrate that very easily four or more times current deployments may be needed. The Department of Defense, with assistance from the Departments of Justice and State, should urgently study this question.

Supporting "Top-Down" Efforts: Military Transition Teams

As of June 2007, over 2,000 US military personnel were embedded in the Iraqi Army, at the division, brigade, and battalion levels. Because the size of the Iraqi Army is slated to grow somewhat, from 10 to 12 divisions (resulting in 42 brigades and 136 battalions), the overall requirement will be increased. In addition, as discussed in section VI of this report, U.S. advisors are clearly needed at the company level.

As a very rough approximation of what might be found if the Department of Defense were to study this issue in depth, as it should, consider the implications of maintaining current advisory efforts at the division, brigade, and battalion levels, and adding larger advisory teams as recommended in section VI to just half of the Iraqi Army's companies. The result would be approximately as follows:

- 6,800 American troops deployed as advisors, in average-sized teams of 25, to half of the roughly 544 companies in the Iraqi Army
- 2,280 advisors for division, brigade, and battalion levels
- 9,080 American troops deployed in these military transition teams overall

The above figures do not include about fifty personnel who form the Ministry of Defense Transition Team to advise civilian leadership and staff, and an additional fifty or so who advise the Joint Headquarters (JHQ). These teams both include a high percentage of non-American (principally Australian and British) advisors. In addition, as of June 2007, some 60 transition teams were focused on improving the Iraqi Army's currently limited ability to plan and provide logistical support.

Under these very rough calculations, there would be a requirement for approximately 10,000 personnel for military transition teams in support of the Iraqi Army.

The above calculations are only suggestive of the possible scale of a *selective* advisory mission that addressed 30 percent of the police stations in Iraq and 50 percent of the companies in the Iraqi Army. The administration should urgently initiate a review of requirements for military and civilian personnel (we have not addressed Provincial Reconstruction Teams, but the U.S. review should do so), and develop a plan to provide the needed capacity as soon as possible.

Special Operations Forces

Special Operations Forces (SOF) conduct a range of missions in Iraq, including counterterrorism and training Iraqi Special Forces. These two missions would continue until all U.S. forces were withdrawn, and therefore the number of SOF in Iraq, which we estimate at approximately 3,000, would remain roughly constant for Phases I and II.

During Phases I through III, SOF, including in particular Army Civil Affairs units and perhaps Marine Corps Foreign Military Training Units, would be involved in advising and supporting the Iraqi military and other security forces. Others, including Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, and Air Force Combat Search and Rescue teams, would likely participate in Quick Reaction Forces. Personnel with expertise in psychological operations, civil affairs, and training indigenous forces would likely be embedded with advisory forces remaining in Iraq.

In Phase IV, after the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, some SOF personnel would remain in theater to continue targeted military operations against al Qaeda. Special mission units such as Army Delta

forces, Navy SEAL Team Six, the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, and the Air Force's 24th Special Tactics Squadron will remain an essential part of U.S. global operations against al Qaeda and its affiliates.⁹⁵ Because there are already signs that al Qaeda fighters are leaving Iraq for other states in the region and world, regionally-based special mission units would likely be conducting operations not only in Iraq but across many parts of the Middle East and beyond.⁹⁶

Airpower: Strike, Mobility, and Surveillance

Airpower will remain essential as the United States reduces its force posture in Iraq. Many missions can be accomplished from bases outside of Iraq's borders — as demonstrated by the decade-long Operation Southern Watch and Operation Northern Watch over Iraq. Therefore, if a premium is placed on minimizing the U.S. footprint in Iraq, many U.S. Air Force personnel could be re-positioned in Kuwait and perhaps elsewhere in the region. Air Force aircraft in Kuwait at the Ali Salem Airbase (about 64 km. from Iraq's southern border) and the Al-Jaber Airbase (about 75 km. from Iraq's southern border), as well as carrier-based aviation, would provide significant capabilities.

During Phase II, the United States is likely to have remaining ground forces at bases that also include large airfields, such as Al Asad in Anbar province. Therefore, to reduce flying times and operational risks to flight crews, it would make sense to base some fighters, refueling tankers, and manned and unmanned surveillance aircraft (including Predators) within Iraq. We have estimated that some 4,000 Air Force personnel would remain in Iraq (with many more in the region) during Phase II.

⁹⁵ Andrew Feickert, *U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 17 April 2006).

⁹⁶ Michael Moss and Souad Mekhennet, "Militants Widen Reach as Terror Seeps Out of Iraq," *The New York Times* (28 May 2007): 1.

Ground Combat Forces: Consolidation to Several Quick Reaction Forces

In Phase II, U.S. Army and Marine Corps combat units will discontinue leading operations to secure Baghdad and other cities. Many of these units will return home for much-needed rest and reset. However, three brigade combat units, approximately 11,000 forces (plus required support) would remain in Iraq during this phase in order to provide Quick Reaction Forces.⁹⁷ An additional QRF consisting of one to two brigades, plus significant airpower, would be positioned in Kuwait. Each would need the ability to deploy by ground, and given the possible urgency of many operations they should also be air-mobile, i.e., deployable by helicopter.

QRFs would have four critical missions. First, these units would defend locations where large numbers of Americans remain, and in particular the U.S. embassy and other locations in the Green Zone. Second, QRFs would respond quickly to situations in which U.S. military and/or civilian personnel need immediate support including combat search and rescue, and *in extremis* the conduct of a large scale Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO). Third, they would deter and if necessary respond to cross-border incursions or aggression, e.g., by Syria or Iran. Fourth, these forces would contribute to deterring and, if necessary, stopping genocide. QRFs would require support in the form of airpower, intelligence, and logistics from other forces in Iraq and the region.

Although Army and Marine Corps units are considered “ground forces,” in fact both have airpower that would be critical to the success of their operations in Iraq. In particular, the mobility allowed by significant numbers of both attack and transport/lift helicopters would be essential to

providing fire support quickly to units in the field, transporting units from one location to another, and conducting search-and-rescue missions.

Because U.S. military advisors will typically operate in small groups embedded in Iraqi units, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will also be in the field in small groups, they need to know that if their unit comes under attack, help will be there within minutes. More broadly, military personnel or civilians in Iraq could come under attack and require urgent assistance. Therefore, maintaining several large QRFs in or near Iraq will be essential as long as American personnel remain in the country and it remains conflict-ridden.⁹⁸

Detailed military planning is needed to determine the appropriate size, composition and locations of QRFs in Iraq. In calculating overall numbers of combat ground forces, we have assumed that there are three brigade-sized QRFs within Iraq, and at least an additional brigade or two positioned nearby, most likely in Kuwait. Certainly, a QRF would be needed in the vicinity of Baghdad; other locations would depend on the security situation in various parts of the country.

QRF-Baghdad

A QRF will be needed in the vicinity of Baghdad because of the city’s concentration of American military, civilian, and contractor personnel, as well as the Baghdad Airport’s strategic importance. A key mission would be responding to threats and attacks on the Green Zone, and providing the front-end of the large force that could be needed to conduct a massive non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). Several sites could be used, including Camp Falcon/Al Saqr (about 11 km.

⁹⁷ This report does not attempt to provide the detailed force planning that would be needed to define the appropriate size and composition of each QRF. Instead, we provide approximate estimates of overall force size based on average sizes of Army Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) and Marine Corps Regimental Combat Teams (RCTs).

⁹⁸ Smaller Quick Reaction Forces would likely be on alert to respond to incidents at each of the remaining U.S. bases in Iraq including the Green Zone. The discussion in this section focuses on larger QRFs that would be responsible for responding to, or positioning to deter, incidents outside U.S. bases and across a specified region in Iraq.

southeast of central Baghdad) and Camp Liberty/al-Tahreer (northeast of Baghdad International Airport), both large bases currently in use by American forces.⁹⁹ In calculating overall figures, we have assumed one Brigade Combat Team equivalent (about 3,500 to 4,000 troops) would be deployed in the vicinity of Baghdad, with QRFs in Kurdistan, Al Anbar, and Kuwait, as well as land-based and carrier-based aircraft, available to support if needed.

QRF-Kurdistan

If the situations in Mosul and/or Kirkuk remain volatile, then a QRF in the Kurdistan region could provide a stabilizing influence. In addition, a QRF in Kurdistan might well be welcomed by both the Kurds and the Turkish government, in the latter case particularly if it supported operations against the PKK terrorist group. We have assumed one Brigade Combat Team equivalent, about 3,500 troops.

QRF-Anbar

A QRF based in Anbar province could be on call to support American military and civilians in the province. Several sites might be used; most obviously Al Asad, a base and airfield currently in use by American forces. If the situation in Kirkuk remains volatile, but it was desired not to have a QRF in Kurdistan, then a QRF in western Iraq could also be prepared to provide assistance there. In calculating overall numbers, we have assumed that there would one Brigade Combat Team equivalent in Anbar, about 3,500 troops.

QRF-Kuwait

A quick reaction force based in Kuwait, for example at the Al-Jaber Air Base, would be able to get to trouble spots in southern Iraq relatively quickly. Positioning at least one QRF outside of

Iraq, in locations where significant U.S. air forces would in any case be likely to be deployed, and from which they could rapidly deploy without political constraints, would be both militarily and politically advantageous. One to two brigades might be appropriate.

Overall QRF / Ground Force Requirements for Iraq

The Department of Defense and in particular Central Command should conduct detailed military planning, including consideration of a wide range of contingencies well beyond the scope of this report. However, as a very rough estimate, if we assume the equivalent of three average Army Brigade Combat Teams in size, i.e., 3,500 to 4,000 personnel, some 11,000 troops in Iraq would be required.¹⁰⁰ An additional 3,500 (one brigade-equivalent) to 8,000 (two larger brigade-equivalents) or more ground forces would be deployed in Kuwait and elsewhere in the region. These figures, like others provided in this appendix, are intended as rough estimates. Detailed military planning is needed.

Logistical, Medical, and Intelligence Support

The transportation and logistical requirements to support the U.S. presence would drop significantly by Phase II. However, remaining U.S. forces, including advisors, Special Operations Forces, and Quick Reaction Forces will still require transportation, logistical, and medical support.

During and after the drawdown of U.S. combat forces in Iraq, the value of intelligence and surveillance missions is likely to grow. Special Operations Forces, advisory teams, and Quick Reaction Forces would have important intelligence roles, as some intelligence capabilities are embedded in

⁹⁹ Another possible location would be Camp Anaconda/Balad Airbase (68 km. north of Baghdad).

¹⁰⁰ It is important to understand that keeping a certain number of troops on alert for short-notice deployment on a 24x7 basis on a sustained basis would require three to four times the number of alert troops, plus additional troops for command and control, maintenance, force protection and other vital roles. For comparison, the QRF in Somalia that responded to attacks on Pakistani forces had about 1,200 troops.

each. However, these forces and others including airpower also require external intelligence support to do their jobs and to protect themselves. Some intelligence and surveillance assets and personnel could be based outside Iraq for their security, but for planning purposes, as a rough first estimate it is reasonable to assume that their overall numbers would remain about the same. In addition, because of the threat from terrorists and insurgents, it would be essential to maintain a robust counterintelligence capability. In considering force requirements for Iraq, while modern information technology will allow intelligence analysis functions to be conducted outside of Iraq to a significant degree, there is no substitute for human intelligence assets on the ground, and a range of manned and unmanned surveillance platforms such as the Predator and Global Hawk operating within Iraqi airspace.

As a rough estimate of total supporting forces required in all phases, we assumed that on average, three support personnel were required for every four advisors or members of a QRF, and that the figures for airpower and Special Operations Forces were inclusive of required direct support.¹⁰¹ This resulted in a rough estimate of required additional support forces of 22,000 associated with 20,000 advisors plus 11,000 ground forces. These figures are very rough estimates only; detailed planning well beyond the scope of this report should be conducted.

¹⁰¹ The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has used a larger support ratio for combat forces, but its conclusions have been disputed by the Department of Defense. Moreover, neither CBO nor other sources appear to have reasonable estimates for the support requirements of advisory teams. Many variables, including in particular contractor support and host nation support (from Iraqi personnel) could significantly affect estimates. Because of these uncertainties, we chose a 1:1 ratio for this report, with the understanding that actual support requirements might be higher or lower – but in any event detailed military planning well beyond the scope of this report is needed to answer this issue at all definitively. For CBO's analysis, see Michael Gilmore, "Estimating the Costs of Military Operations in Iraq," CBO Testimony before the Committee on the Budget United States Senate, Statement of J. Michael Gilmore, Assistant Director for National Security (6 February 2007). This report notes that "Army and DoD officials have indicated that it will be both possible and desirable to deploy fewer additional support units than historical practice would indicate."

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