

Strategy paper

Withdrawing US Forces from Iraq

A Policy Framework, Strategy & Action Plan

Progressive Caucus of the California Democratic Party

Position Paper No. 1

Progressive Policy to Withdraw US Forces from Iraq and to Support the Reconciliation and Reconstruction of the Iraqi Nation.

The Progressive Caucus strongly recommends that the California Democratic Party (CDP) adopt the following strategic plan of action for withdrawing US Forces from Iraq and, further, urges the CDP to instruct its Democratic National Committee (DNC) representatives to carry the plan forward for formal action as a National Party Policy Paper to:

- 1) End the illegal US occupation in Iraq and re-establish a commitment to the rule of International Law and Human Rights;
- 2) Provide for the financial security of the Iraqi people during Iraq's transition toward self-governance;
- 3) Return the national territory of Iraq to the sovereign control of the people of Iraq;
- 4) Support UN and international efforts to assist in peaceful reconciliation amongst the Iraqi people;
- 5) Contribute to the International Reconstruction Fund to rebuild Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure.

1. Multilateral Cooperation

Starting immediately, the US will pursue a diplomatic initiative, shifting its role from that of Iraq's military occupier to that of a supporting partner with other United Nations (UN) members.

As a member nation of the UN, the U.S. shall enter into multilateral agreements with the international community to support the establishment of a multinational interim security force for Iraq. (The Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations is well suited to this task).

As credible evidence of America's return to multilateral cooperation, the US must immediately:

- 1) Pay its long overdue share of financing prior UN peacekeeping operations;
- 2) Clear its arrears in annual dues to the UN operating budget;
- 3) Settle all accounts with the UN's specialized agencies;
- 4) Instruct the US ambassador to the UN to stop the obstructionism that is delaying all other members from reaching consensus on crafting an effective UN reform;
- 5) Agree to pay at least half the costs of peacekeeper operations and trainers for new Iraq military and new local police forces.
- 6) The US will provide a substantial share of a UN administered International Reconstruction Fund, perhaps half or more, necessary to rebuild Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure.

Final multilateral agreements will be in place by the end of July 2006 at which time the US must begin comprehensive withdrawal of their troops.

2. Termination of the US Military Occupation of Iraq

As fast as it can reasonably be done, assuring the safety of the US forces, the US will cease military operations, dismantle all of its military bases, camps, and outposts, and end its military presence in Iraq. Furthermore, the US will terminate all private contracts to operate in Iraq. US military forces and private contractors must complete their withdrawal within 6 months of the multilateral agreement date.

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3. Transition

The US must recognize the full sovereignty of the Iraqi Government, its unfettered right to rescind any or all contracts awarded during the occupation and the Iraq Government's power to alter or repeal any law, decree or order issued by the Coalition Authority. This means returning Iraq back to the Iraqi people.

Without equivocation, the US will relinquish its illegitimate control of Iraqi oil, natural gas, water and other resources returning control of these and all resources to the Iraqi people.

The US will rescind all contracts awarded by the previous occupying authority and contracts will be negotiated by the Iraqi government.

International non-governmental organizations and other not-for-profit organizations may assist in Iraq's institutional and economic renewal as well as aid in meeting immediate humanitarian needs.

Iraqi firms, Iraqi governmental and non-governmental organizations and public agencies shall direct the reconstruction program which will provide work to the Iraqi people to build a viable and sustaining economy.

4. Reconciliation and Just Reparations

An International Commission for Peace and Reconciliation under the auspices of the UN must be established to promote post-war reconciliation amongst the Iraqi people when and if determined to be necessary by the Iraqi Government and nationalist factions that have demonstrated an expressed desire to be represented.

Separately, but essential to the national healing process, an independent audit authority shall be commissioned by joint authority of the Iraqi Government and the UN. With consent of all UN members the Iraq Audit Authority (IAA) will be given full and unfettered access to all records of the Coalition Occupying Authority, as well as to all US and other contracts let by the Authority and by other Coalition members. It shall have open access to all records of the deposed Hussein/Baathist regime and any of its operating agencies. Findings of the Audit Authority may be used by the Iraqi Government for civil and criminal legal action as it deems necessary for reparations and to right any wrongful actions of prior regimes and agents.

5. Post-Conflict Reconstruction

An International Commission for Reconstruction shall be established under the auspices of the UN to oversee the International Reconstruction Fund. The Commission shall be charged to work with UN agencies and the disparate parties in Iraq at, national, regional, and local levels, to facilitate joint action on the common task of rebuilding basic infrastructure and public services. The Iraqi Government shall determine the finite period of time given to carry out this joint action.

Members of the Commission for Reconstruction shall be nominated by, and/or selected by the UN with preference given to those members from key nation states with common borders with Iraq as well as from member states of the Arab League and intergovernmental organizations such as the European Union and the African Union, which have recent experience in international resolution and reconstruction. Working together with Iraqis, they shall craft a program of action to rebuild cross-border physical infrastructure, resolve water and other shared resource issues, and forge agreements to promote productive transnational economic cooperation.

The US will provide a substantial share of the International Reconstruction Fund, perhaps half or more, necessary to rebuild Iraq's physical and economic infrastructure.

6. A Date Certain

The orderly withdrawal of US forces will begin no later than August 30, 2006, as UN peacekeeping forces are phased in. The incremental US phase-out will be fully completed no later than Feb 31, 2007 (*exact dates to be set in negotiation of an agreement by all parties*).

The US Congress must use its power over appropriations to oblige the administration to execute the armed forces withdrawal plan.

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Congress must immediately block funding for specified overseas military operations should the administration fail to meet the timeline and substantive targets for action as outlined above or if it delays action through misinformation or subterfuge.

7. Acknowledging the Costs and Consequences of War

The cost of the war in Iraq - both human and financial - has been staggering both to Iraq and to the US and is crippling every aspect of our political economy as well as wreaking cruel savagery on the Iraqi people. Tragically, the American and Iraqi lives lost and the billions of dollars spent, have failed to make either our country or the world community safer from the threat of international terrorism. To the contrary, since the onset of this calamity, terrorist events have multiplied exponentially around the world.

Meanwhile, at home, our social safety net is in shambles. The wages of America's working poor continue to decline. Over 46 million Americans are without insured healthcare. Cuts to veterans' benefit programs, and growing numbers of homeless including thousands of veterans, are a national disgrace and a gross human indignity. A sinister and relentless transfer of wealth from America's poor and middle class to the richest among us is eroding hope for economic justice.

Our leaders seem incapable of mounting a genuine program for disaster prevention and post disaster reconstruction whether in response to a terrorist threat or to a natural calamity. These and other urgent issues demand that the Iraq war be ended and our national agenda rewritten. The war in Iraq cannot be separated from domestic issues in the United States. Social programs that ensure our strength and humanity as a nation are gradually being defunded by a war that costs 7 billion dollars a month, all of which is billed against our country's future. It is time for the Democratic Party to reassert its most fundamental values and to stand up and reclaim our country.

Each dawn in Iraq marks more carnage, destruction and wasted resources. Each sundown in America bears witness to a nation spiraling even further into debt from the untenable cost of war and war profiteering. We must end the silent consent to the Bush Administration's disastrous and immoral war policies and instead speak for the majority of Americans who know that to continue to "stay the course" is to be party to an unforgivable moral default. We must end this perfidious misadventure by bringing our troops home now.

The Progressive Caucus is confident that with a clear policy of withdrawal from Iraq and with Senate and House candidates pledged to honor the plan, the Democratic Party will regain the confidence of the electorate. With that, we can take back control of Congress and stop a corrupt and wrong-headed administration from further carnage abroad and from its relentless war on democracy at home.