

The Goalposts Keep Moving—What is Success?

The following statements from Administration officials show how the goalposts for success continue to move. How do we know if we are truly succeeding? How do we know what has to be accomplished in order for our troops to come home?

2003

- “It's not that we shouldn't have a plan for an end state, but that we -- if we talk an awful lot about exit strategies, what we're doing is encouraging our enemies to say, we can outwait the Americans.” **Amb. Paul Bremer, Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority, HIRC Hearing, 09/25/03**
- “The transition from dictatorship to democracy will take time, but it is worth every effort. Our coalition will stay until our work is done. Then we will leave, and we will leave behind a free Iraq. The war on terror is not over; yet it is not endless. We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen the turning of the tide.” **President Bush, “Mission Accomplished” Address, 5/1/03**

2004

- “...that will be our exit strategy, when they are able to take care of their own security and when their political processes mature to the point that they can handle the kind of problems they have to handle security-wise, politically and economically in that country.” **General Myers, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, HASC Hearing, 5/21/04**

2005

- “We will see the Iraqi military gaining strength and confidence, and the democratic process moving forward. As these achievements come, it should require fewer American troops to accomplish our mission... Our forces in Iraq are on the road to victory -- and that is the road that will take them home.” **President Bush, Address to the Nation, 12/18/05**
- “Our strategy can be summed up this way: As the Iraqis stand up, Americans will stand down. And what that means is, as more and more Iraqis take the fight to the few who want to disrupt the dreams of the many, that the American troops will be able to pull back.” **President Bush, Discuss with Press Pool on Iraqi Constitution, Donnelly Idaho, 8/23/05**

2006

- “The presence of the United States will be in Iraq so long as the government asks us to be in Iraq.” **President Bush, Joint Press Availability with Prime Minister Maliki of Iraq, Amman Jordan, 11/30/06**

- “The goals of the United States in Iraq remain clear. We support a democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself, defend itself, and be an ally in the war against extremists. While we have not changed our goals, we are constantly reviewing, adapting and adjusting our tactics to achieve them.” **Amb. David Satterfield, Senior Advisor on Iraq to the Secretary of State, HASC hearing, 11/15/06**
- “Our objective from the start has been not to create a dependency, but rather to encourage Iraqi independence and capacity by transitioning increasing responsibility to Iraqis -- over time -- to have them take charge of their security and governance of their country.” **Secretary Rumsfeld, HASC hearing, 2/8/06**

2007

- “The way to leave is to stabilize the situations in each area, and each area will require a slightly different solution... and then to establish a sustainable security arrangement that increasingly is one that Iraqis can take over by themselves.” **Gen. Petraeus, Joint HASC/HFAC hearing, 9/10/07**
- “The exit strategy is that as the level of violence goes down and as the Iraqis gain control of the -- restore control in Baghdad, the presence of the United States would diminish.” **Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, HASC Hearing, 01/11/07**