



THE WHITE HOUSE
PRESIDENT
GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
August 28, 2007

Making America Safer by Defeating Extremists in the Middle East

President Bush Explains Why Winning The Fight In Iraq Is Key To Countering The Ambitions Of Al Qaeda And Iran



[White House News](#)

Today, President Bush Will Address The American Legion National Convention In Reno, Nevada, To Explain Why Defeating Extremists In The Middle East Is Essential To American Security – And Why Success In Iraq Is Vital To Winning This Battle. America is engaged in a great ideological struggle against violent Islamic extremists around the world, and the fight for the future of the Middle East is a key aspect of this struggle.

- **America Has Enduring And Vital Interests In The Middle East.**
 - We seek a region of secure democratic states at peace with each other, participating in an open global market and existing as partners in the war on terror.
 - We seek to dry up the stream of recruits for al Qaeda by helping nations offer their people a path to a more hopeful future.
 - We seek an Iran whose government is accountable to its people – instead of to leaders who promote terror and pursue the technology that could be used to develop nuclear weapons.
 - We seek to advance a two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security; and
 - We seek justice and dignity and human rights for all people of the Middle East.
 - Achieving this future requires hard work and strategic patience, but our security depends on getting it done.

- **The Most Important And Immediate Way To Counter The Ambitions Of Al Qaeda, Iran, And Other Forces Of Instability And Terror In The Middle East Is To Win The Fight In Iraq.** The challenge in Iraq comes down to this: either the forces of violent extremism succeed and our enemies advance their interests in Iraq, or the forces of freedom succeed and we advance our interests.

If Violent Extremists Were Allowed To Prevail In The Middle East, The Region Would Be Dramatically Transformed In A Way That Could Imperil The World

The Violent Islamic Radicalism That Inspires Extremists In The Middle East Has Two Main Strains. Allowing these forces of radicalism to drive America out of the Middle East could result in disaster for the region's people, danger to our friends and allies, and a direct threat to American peace

and security.

1. **The First Strain Is Sunni Extremism, Embodied By Al Qaeda And Its Terrorist Allies.**
These extremists hope to impose their dark vision across the Middle East by raising up a violent and radical caliphate that spans from Spain to Indonesia. They kill fellow Muslims in places like Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia in an attempt to undermine their governments. And they kill Americans because they know we stand in their way – they attacked U.S. Embassies in Africa in 1998, attacked the USS Cole in 2000, killed nearly 3,000 people on 9/11, and plot to attack us again.
2. **The Second Strain Is Shia Extremism, Supported And Embodied By Iran's Government.**
Iran is the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism, and the United States is working with friends and allies around the world to confront the danger presented by actions of Iran's government. Iran's leaders threaten the security of nations everywhere by:
 - Actively pursuing technology that could be used to develop nuclear weapons;
 - Arresting visiting American scholars who have committed no crimes and pose no threat to their regime;
 - Backing Hezbollah terrorists who are trying to undermine the democratic government of Lebanon;
 - Funding the terrorist groups Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which murder the innocent, target Israel, and destabilize the Palestinian territories;
 - Sending arms to the Taliban in Afghanistan, which can be used to attack American and NATO troops and Afghan civilians; and
 - Sending arms to extremists in Iraq that are used against Coalition and Iraqi troops, and Iraqi civilians.

These Two Dangerous Strains Of Extremism Vying For Control Of The Middle East Have Now Closed In On Iraq In An Effort To Bring Down Its Young Democracy

Sunni Extremists, Led By Al Qaeda, Are Staging Sensational Attacks On Innocent Men, Women, And Children In Iraq In An Attempt To Stoke Sectarian Violence. These violent extremists' ranks include foreign fighters from a variety of countries in the region who travel to Iraq through Syria. Their operatives have killed those seeking to build a new future for the Iraqi people, and their operations seek to create images of chaos and carnage to break the will of the American people. Their targets include everyone they consider infidels – including Christians, Jews, Yezidis, Shia, and even fellow Sunnis who do not share their radical distortion of Islam.

Shia Extremists, Backed By Iran, Are Training Iraqis To Carry Out Attacks On Our Forces, The Iraqi Government, And The Iraqi People. Members of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force are supplying extremist groups with funding and weapons, including sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IEDs). With the assistance of Hezbollah, they have provided training for violent forces active inside Iraq.

- **The Attacks On Our Bases And Our Troops Using Iranian-Supplied Munitions Have Increased In The Last Few Months – Despite Pledges By Iran To Help Stabilize The Security Situation In Iraq.** Recently, Coalition forces seized 240-millimeter rockets that had

been manufactured in Iran this year and provided to Iraqi extremist groups by Iranian agents.

- **The Iranian Regime Must Halt These Actions At Once.** Some say Iran's leaders are not aware of what members of their own regime are doing. Others say Iran's leaders are actively seeking to provoke the West. Either way, Iranian leaders bear the responsibility for aiding attacks against Coalition forces and the murder of innocent Iraqis.

The Fight In Iraq Has A Direct Impact On The Safety Of Americans Here At Home. We have seen what violent extremists will do when American forces are actively engaged in Iraq, and we can envision what they would do if they were emboldened by American forces in retreat. For all those who ask whether the fight in Iraq is worth it, imagine an Iraq where militia groups backed by Iran control large parts of the country, and al Qaeda has established sanctuaries to safely plot future attacks on targets all over the world, including the U.S. Homeland – and they could use billions of dollars in oil revenues to buy weapons and pursue their deadly ambitions.

The Momentum Is On Now Our Side In Iraq – Our New Strategy Is Seizing The Initiative From Our Enemy, And Giving It To The Iraqi People

Our New Strategy Is Showing Results In Better Security.

- Sectarian violence has sharply decreased in Baghdad.
- Since January, we have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 al Qaeda terrorists and other enemies of Iraq's elected government each month
- Al Qaeda is being displaced from former strongholds in Baghdad, Anbar, and Diyala provinces.
- We have conducted operations against Iranian Qods Force agents whose group supplies lethal munitions to extremist groups.
- We have targeted Iranian-backed Shia militants and their supply networks – and Prime Minister Maliki has courageously committed to pursue them.

Our New Strategy Is Resulting In Encouraging Developments At The Local Level, And As Iraqis Take Control Over Their Lives At The Local Level, They Will Demand More Action From Their National Leaders In Baghdad. In the cities and neighborhoods where they live, Iraqis are increasingly reaching accommodations with each other, with the Coalition, and with the government in Baghdad. This reconciliation is coming from the bottom up; it is having an impact in the fight against the enemy; and it is building a solid foundation for a democratic Iraq.

- **In Anbar – The Province That Had Been Called "Lost" To The Enemy – Increasing Numbers Of Local Sunnis Have Turned Against Al Qaeda.** Local sheikhs have joined with American forces to drive the terrorists out of the capital city of Ramadi, and elsewhere, residents are providing critical intelligence, and tribesmen have joined the Iraqi police and security forces.
- **Many Iraqis Who Once Felt Marginalized Are Rejoining The Political Process.** Virtually every city and town in the province now has a mayor and a municipal council, and local officials are forming ties with the central government in Baghdad because these Sunni leaders now see

a role for their people in the new Iraq. In an encouraging sign, the central government is beginning to respond with funding for vital services and reconstruction, and with increased security forces.

- **In Other Provinces, There Are Also Signs Of Bottom Up Progress.** For example, in Diyala province, the city of Baqubah re-opened six of its banks, providing residents with capital for the local economy. And in Ninewa province, local officials have established a commission to investigate corruption, with a local judge empowered to pursue charges of fraud and racketeering.

Iraq's Government Still Has More Work To Do To Meet Many Of Its Legislative Benchmarks, But It Is Also Important To Note That Many Of The Goals Behind These Benchmarks Are Being Achieved Without Legislation. For example, the national government is already sharing oil revenues with provinces – despite the fact that no formal law has been passed.

- **The President Is Encouraged By The Agreement Reached Sunday Night By The Top Leaders In Iraq's Government.** These leaders agreed on several draft pieces of legislation that are at the core of national reconciliation – and are among the benchmarks identified by the United States Congress, including a draft law on de-Baathification reform and draft legislation on provincial powers. These measures still have to be passed by the Iraqi parliament, but the agreement shows that Iraq's leaders can put aside their differences, sit down together, and work out tough issues central to the fate of their country.
- **Iraq's Government Is Also Making Gains In Other Important Areas.** Electricity production is improving, and Iraq's parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation, including a \$41 billion budget that includes \$10 billion for reconstruction and capital investment.
- **It Makes No Sense To Respond To Military Progress By Claiming That We Have Failed Because Iraq's Parliament Has Yet To Pass Every Law It Said It Would.** Improving security is the precondition for making gains in other areas. In two weeks, General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker will return to Washington to deliver an interim assessment of the situation on the ground and the prospects for the future. This status report comes less than three months since the surge became fully operational. Congress should listen to it in its entirety and withhold conclusions until they can hear these men out.

Our Strategy Is Also Showing Results At The International Level. The international community increasingly understands the importance of a free Iraq, and we will continue to rally the world to this noble and necessary cause.

- **International Compact For Iraq:** The United Nations and Iraq – with support from the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and nations from around the globe – have finalized an International Compact for Iraq that will bring new economic assistance and debt relief in exchange for aggressive economic reform. So far, the Iraqis have made significant progress meeting IMF economic benchmarks.

- **Neighbors Conference:** The Iraqis have convened a Neighbors Conference that is bringing together nations in the region to help the Iraqis through specific security, economic, and diplomatic cooperation. As part of these diplomatic initiatives, Prime Minister Maliki has met with his counterparts in Turkey, Syria, and Iran to urge support for his nation.
- **United Nations:** The United Nations Security Council has decided to expand its mission in Iraq, and is seeking to help with local elections and reconciliation. The United Nations will soon name a new high-ranking envoy to Iraq, to coordinate the UN's expanded support for that country.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Saudi Arabia is looking to open a new embassy in Baghdad.

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