

FACT SHEET on the Iraq War, prepared at the request of both Democratic and  
Republican members of the U.S. Congress in June 8, 2007

*What is Iraq:* Iraq was created by Great Britain at the end of the First World War from three provinces of the defeated Ottoman Empire. While it is common to think of it as still those three parts – the Kurdish Muslims in the North, the Sunni Muslims in the middle and the Shia Muslims – it has become considerably integrated over the last century so all three communities are intermingled. It is also common to call Iraq “artificial,” and in part that is true, but the same could be said for virtually all countries. What is certain is that it is a small country, not quite two-thirds the size of Texas of which most is barren. Only an area about the size of Massachusetts and Connecticut combined can be farmed by rainfall. Elsewhere, agriculture depends on the rivers – The Euphrates at Baghdad is about the size of the Arkansas River at Little Rock and the Tigris is about as large as the Missouri River at Kansas City. Because of the intense solar radiation, agriculture is difficult to maintain. Thus, until recently, Iraq has always been a poor country. What changed Iraq was oil. Oil was discovered in 1927 is potentially very abundant but so far is largely undeveloped; such developed facilities as exist have been severely damaged. It was oil, however, that paid for Iraq in the 1980s to become one of the most advanced countries of the Middle East. While he was a brutal, aggressive dictator, Saddam Husain did encourage public health, education, the building of modern infrastructure and the growth of industry. The population benefited and grew to about 24 million with a high level of education. Today the population is in turmoil with millions of people leaving their homes or even leaving the country, but with about half the population below the age of fifteen, growth will continue to be rapid.

*What we were told about Iraq:* The litany of partial or misinformation is well known. Iraq did not support terrorism, did not have or even intend to get nuclear weapons, had an antiquated army and air force and could not possibly have been a danger to the United States. It did, however, have an ugly, tyrannical government – like many others in the world – but the United States government worked closely with, and supported, that government for many years during the Reagan and first Bush administration.

*The two American wars:* Relations between Saddam Husain’s regime and Kuwait hinged on debt that arose from the Iraq-Iran war. Kuwait pressed hard for repayment and Saddam concluded that it was attempting to overthrow his government. Arab efforts at mediation failed and the United States told Saddam that it had no position on the disagreement. Rightly or wrongly, Saddam took our statements as a “green light” and attacked Kuwait which had been regarded by every successive Iraqi government since the 1920s as part of Iraq. The attack was naked aggression and on behalf of the United Nations, the United States (under the first Bush administration) drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait. The U.S. did not attempt to conquer Iraq but imposed upon the country a severe program of sanctions that virtually crippled the economy and severely damaged the society. It did not, however, accomplish what most people believed to have been its objective, to overthrow the regime. That was done in the second American invasion of 2003. The American (and smaller British other troops) quickly defeated the Iraq army

and occupied the country. At that point, the U.S. government created an occupation authority that sought to replace the Saddam Husain regime.

*The cost of this policy to America:* During the years of the occupation, 2003-June 3, 2007, 3,493 servicemen and women have been killed; up to October 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs has determined that about one in five soldiers has been “at least partially disabled” with over 100,000 granted disability payments and another 100,000 expected to claim them; in December 2005, the U.S. Surgeon General estimated that more than one in three of the half million Marines and soldiers who had as of that date served in Iraq needed mental health treatment; at least 50,000 have suffered concussions that will affect them with memory loss, headaches and confused thinking for the rest of their lives to such an extent that they will not be able to function well in society and will be a burden on their families and on the public health system; another large number will develop cancer as a result of exposure to an aerosol mutation ( $U_3O_8$ ) of the depleted uranium used in artillery shells and bombs. (Some scientists believe this is the cause of so-called Gulf War Syndrome.) The monetary costs fall into two categories: actual allocations which now are well over \$500 billion and are increasing by more than 20% a year. That is to say, roughly \$10 million an hour. But according to Nobel Prize Laureate economists Joseph Stiglitz and former Assistant Secretary of Commerce Linda Bilmes, the *real cost* (by standard accounting methods) is between one and two *trillion* dollars. Beyond these costs is the damage to America’s reputation and capacity to exercise leadership in the world community.

*The cost to Iraq:* Almost certainly, more than 600,000 more Iraqis have died than would have without the war; about two million have fled the country; more than half a million have stayed inside Iraq but have lost houses, jobs, schools and neighbors; property damage has not been determined but surely runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. In sum, Iraqi society has been destroyed.

*What these costs have bought:* No well informed observer believes that the war in Iraq is approaching success by any definition; indeed, all signs indicate that the situation is deteriorating. What the war and occupation have actually accomplished the destruction of the previous balance between social groups so that today Iraq is embroiled in civil war.

*American options:* 1) stay the course. Some military analysts think that if America were willing to put half a million troops into Iraq (roughly three times as many as today), and could implement the sort of counterinsurgency (“COIN”) program advocated by Generals Petraeus and Amos, we could “win;” 2) others have argued that we must stay at least until there is “stability” and then we could get out “with honor,” whether or not we leave behind a government that could survive; 3) still others advocate that we encourage or at least allow Iraq to break into three pieces so that, presumably, the civil war would end and then we could get out; 4) some think that we should simply get out regardless of what happens (their opponents call this “cut and run”); 5) the Baker-Hamilton study set out what we *wish* would happen, to withdraw in a statesmanlike manner on our own schedule without serious damage; 6) together with former Senator George McGovern, I

have laid out a carefully constructed, fully costed, and mutually reinforcing plan to accomplish essentially what Baker-Hamilton advocated.

*Commentary and Recommendation:*

Option #1. The American public is extremely unlikely to approve adding 350,000 troops to the 150,000 now in Iraq; indeed, the polls all point in the opposite direction. The latest New York Times/CBS poll found that 72% thought our policy was “seriously off on the wrong track. Some of America’s best and most senior generals have damaged their careers in order to speak out on the folly of thinking that more troops will “win.” If not more troops, then using them more effectively? The COIN option that Generals Petraeus and Amos advocate is a technological solution to a political problem. Counterinsurgency has a 12-0 record of failure in modern insurgencies. As the Baker-Hamilton study argued, the war is stretching America beyond our capacity.

Option #2. In a recently completed analytical history of a dozen insurgencies (*Violent Politics: Insurgency, Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism*, New York: HarperCollins, to be published September 15, 2007), I have shown that stability has never been achieved before the foreign forces have evacuated the insurgent country. As long as they stay, the fighting continues. This is true despite tactical successes that wipe out large numbers of the insurgents. The record is absolutely clear.

Option #3. If Iraq were allowed or encouraged to break up, we would have created a new “Balkans” in the heart of the Middle East. Almost certainly, Turkey would extend its current (June 6, 2007) military incursions into Kurdistan and probably cause a major war; Iran would probably not invade the south but would enormously increase its influence there, and also down the Gulf. Internally, millions more people would have to be relocated with profound effects on the economy. If America were judged to have created this tragedy, it is almost certain that America’s critics and enemies will use it to damage American interests throughout the world.

Option #4. America will almost certainly (despite the opinion of the Secretary of Defense and others who advocate a virtually permanent – “a long and enduring presence” -- in Iraq) have to get out eventually. So the questions are when and under what circumstances. When the Nixon administration determined to get out of Vietnam, it sought to avoid the opprobrium of “cut and run” by doing it slowly and using the South Vietnam government as a “cut-out.” That policy cost an additional 21,000 American casualties and, at the end, the final American withdrawal was a humiliation. Obviously, America should seek both to avoid more casualties and wasted money and, at the end of the process, avoid humiliation.

Option #5. Baker-Hamilton did not offer a plan on how to accomplish the objectives it set out and was optimistic, even naïve on the hope that others would help us. Iran and Syria were identified as possible helpers but both governments know,

Option #6. The plan laid out below would cost \$12-14 billion and would save at least \$350 billion of what it would cost to stay an additional two years. More important, given the rate at which casualties are increasing, it would probably save the lives of 2-3 thousand young Americans and the bodies and minds of tens or scores of thousands of others.