
DEM LETTER TO BUSH: "WE STRONGLY ENCOURAGE YOU TO REJECT ANY PLANS THAT CALL FOR OUR GETTING OUR TROOPS ANY DEEPER INTO IRAQ".....

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AP

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The start of the new Congress brings us opportunities to work together on the critical issues confronting our country. No issue is more important than finding an end to the war in Iraq. December was the deadliest month of the war in over two years, pushing U.S. fatality figures over the 3,000 mark.

The American people demonstrated in the November elections that they do not believe your current Iraq policy will lead to success and that we need a change in direction for the sake of

our troops and the Iraqi people. We understand that you are completing your post-election consultations on Iraq and are preparing to make a major address on your Iraq strategy to the American people next week.

Clearly this address presents you with another opportunity to make a long overdue course correction. Despite the fact that our troops have been pushed to the breaking point and, in many cases, have already served multiple tours in Iraq, news reports suggest that you believe the solution to the civil war in Iraq is to require additional sacrifices from our troops and are therefore prepared to proceed with a substantial U.S. troop increase.

Surging forces is a strategy that you have already tried and that has already failed. Like many current and former military leaders, we believe that trying again would be a serious mistake. They, like us, believe there is no purely military solution in Iraq. There is only a political solution. Adding more combat troops will only endanger more Americans and stretch our military to the breaking point for no strategic gain. And it would undermine our efforts to get the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. We are well past the point of more troops for Iraq.

In a recent appearance before the Senate Armed Services Committee, General John Abizaid, our top commander for Iraq and the region, said the following when asked about whether he thought more troops would contribute to our chances for success in Iraq:

"I met with every divisional commander, General Casey, the Corps commander, General Dempsey. We all talked together. And I said, in your professional opinion, if we were to bring in more American troops now, does it add considerably to our ability to achieve success in Iraq? And they all said no. And the reason is, because we want the Iraqis to do more. It's easy for the Iraqis to rely upon to us do this work. I believe that more American forces prevent the Iraqis from doing more, from taking more responsibility for their own future. "

Rather than deploy additional forces to Iraq, we believe the way forward is to begin the phased redeployment of our forces in the next four to six months, while shifting the principal mission of our forces there from combat to training, logistics, force protection and counter-terror. A renewed diplomatic strategy, both within the region and beyond, is also required to help the Iraqis agree to a sustainable political settlement. In short, it is time to begin to move our forces out of Iraq and make the Iraqi political leadership aware that our commitment is not open ended, that we cannot resolve their sectarian problems, and that only they can find the political resolution required to stabilize Iraq.

Our troops and the American people have already sacrificed a great deal for the future of Iraq. After nearly four years of combat, tens of thousands of U.S. casualties, and over \$300 billion dollars, it is time to bring the war to a close. We, therefore, strongly encourage you to reject any plans that call for our getting our troops any deeper into Iraq. We want to do everything we can to help Iraq succeed in the future but, like many of our senior military leaders, we do not believe that adding more U.S. combat troops contributes to success.

We appreciate you taking these views into consideration.

Sincerely,

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi