How to Redeploy

Implementing a Responsible Drawdown of U.S. Forces from Iraq

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“Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.”
—Army Maxim

“No nation has ever benefited from protracted warfare.”
—Sun Tzu, The Art of War
It is time to redeploy our forces from Iraq. An overwhelming majority of the American people and a bipartisan majority of Congress believe that the costs and risks of continuing to pursue the Bush administration’s strategy in Iraq outweigh any potential benefits that might be achieved by keeping our military mired in Iraq’s multiple civil conflicts.

Undeterred, the Bush administration believes the latest surge strategy should be maintained well into next year and has already mapped out plans to keep large numbers of troops on the ground in Iraq through 2009. This is the wrong course. As the Center for American Progress has argued previously in “Strategic Reset,” Iraq is currently engaged in multiple internal conflicts that American military power cannot resolve. President Bush’s “surge” strategy has ignored this fundamental premise, hoping against hope that increased military security would enable Iraq’s fragmented political leadership to make compromises they ultimately cannot make.

It is time to stop recklessly extending our military presence in Iraq and regain control of our national security by redeploying our forces out of Iraq in an orderly and safe manner.

Yet there remains significant disagreement and confusion concerning the time necessary to withdraw all U.S. military forces from Iraq. The debate has gravitated back and forth between those arguing that there must be either a rapid, precipitous withdrawal or a long, drawn-out redeployment. Further clouding the issue are those who support an extended redeployment over several years simply in order to “stay the course” in Iraq, and as a result cherry-pick logistical issues to make the case for an extended U.S. presence.

Deciding between a swift or extended redeployment, however, is a false dilemma. While both options are logistically feasible, this report will demonstrate that an orderly and safe withdrawal is best achieved over a 10- to 12-month period. Written in consultation with military planners and logistics experts, this report is not intended to serve as a playbook for our military planners but rather as a guide to policymakers and the general public about what is realistically achievable. A massive, yet safe and orderly redeployment of U.S. forces, equipment, and support personnel is surely daunting—but it is well within the exceptional logistical capabilities of the U.S. military.
Those who argue for a rapid and immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces have often been accused of adopting an unrealistic approach. This, we believe, is a misplaced critique. It is certainly possible to conduct a rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces, in perhaps as short a time as three months if the U.S. military (in the words of Iraq war veteran and military analyst Phillip Carter) were to effectively conduct an “invasion in reverse.”

If the U.S. Army was ordered to withdraw to Kuwait, they could do so quickly and relatively safely. Such an exit, however, would sacrifice a significant amount of equipment and create an instantaneous political and security vacuum similar to that created by the initial overthrow of Saddam Hussein. While this option is certainly feasible, we do not believe that it is the best course of action.

Yet we must also caution that if the United States does not set a specific timetable our military forces and our overall national security will remain hostage to events on the ground in Iraq. Worse still, a startling new development such as the assassination of the Ayatollah Sistani or a large sectarian attack leading to an all-out civil war could well compel our forces to withdraw in as little as three months. We need to start planning now for redeployment.

Those who argue that a withdrawal will have to take place over a number of years, perhaps as many as four, base their analysis on the time it takes to complete a meticulous extraction and dismantling of all U.S. equipment and facilities. As this report will demonstrate, we believe that such an extended timeline increases the danger to U.S. forces and is not cost-effective from a logistical standpoint even though such an approach would presumably result in a complete extraction of all U.S. equipment.

The essential logistical point of disagreement between these approaches centers on the value placed on the equipment that is to be withdrawn. We believe that all essential, sensitive, and costly equipment must be safely withdrawn, but taking out non-vital equipment and the meticulous dismantling of certain facilities with no military value should not be an obstacle to redeploying our troops out of harm’s way in Iraq and back into the fight against terrorism, which national security experts from across the political spectrum agree threatens the United States more than at any time since 9/11.

A phased military redeployment from Iraq over the next 10 to 12 months would begin extracting U.S. troops from Iraq’s internal conflicts immediately and would be completed by the end of 2008. During this timeframe, the military will not replace outgoing troops as they rotate home at the end of their tours and will draw down force and equipment levels gradually, at a pace similar to previous rotations conducted by our military over the past four years. According to a U.S. military official in Baghdad involved in planning, a withdrawal could take place safely in this time period.

Such troop and materiel movements are also not without precedent. As this report will detail, the Pentagon was able to organize the rotation of nearly 235,000 soldiers and their accompanying equipment in the spring of 2004 in and out of Iraq as the forces who led the invasion reached the end of their one-year deployments.

Nor would we leave the region entirely. To maintain an offensive and deterrent capability in the region, U.S. troops would temporarily station 8,000 to 10,000 troops (two brigades plus support and command elements) in the Kurdish
region of northern Iraq for one year to prevent the outbreak of Turkish-Kurd violence and protect that region of the country from Iraq’s multiple civil conflicts. Marine Corps units would be tasked to provide security for personnel at the U.S. embassy. Another ground brigade and tactical air wing would be based in Kuwait.

These forces would be backed up by a carrier battle group and a Marine expeditionary force in the Persian Gulf. Logistical support will be provided by air to minimize the necessary ground footprint in northern Iraq. Our existing bases in Qatar, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates will also be maintained to ensure security in the region and reinforce our commitment to our allies.

The obligation to begin organizing the withdrawal requires the Bush administration to begin meticulous planning for our departure from Iraq—and to do so with much more care than they did the invasion and occupation. Yet there is concern over whether the Bush administration has prevented the military from undertaking such planning. When Sen. Hillary Clinton (D-NY) formally asked the Pentagon about U.S. contingency plans for withdrawal from Iraq, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Eric Edelman responded with a formal letter accusing Clinton of aiding enemy propaganda.6

Rather than continuing the president’s failed strategy in Iraq and criticizing those who question it, the Pentagon should immediately begin planning a strategic redeployment from Iraq. The time for half-measures and experiments is over; it is now time for a logistically sound strategic redeployment.
The Strategy: Phased Consolidation

The most effective strategy for removing American troops from Iraq involves gradually withdrawing troops from the outer geographic sectors of Iraq first, with the goal of reducing our military footprint and consolidating our presence before our final departure. A phased consolidation approach would resemble a slower and more deliberate approach than an “invasion in reverse.”

Units would move using a combination of their own ground transportation and intra-theater air support. The American military footprint would shrink from the outside to the center, starting first with withdrawal from the most northern bases—excluding the 3rd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division and the 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne, which would redeploy from around Kirkuk and Tikrit north of Baghdad to Iraq’s Kurdish region to support a temporary U.S. commitment to resolve outstanding Turkish-Kurd issues. The remaining units would then redeploy from the rest of northern Iraq followed by Diyala to the west and Anbar province to the east. Our forces would then be consolidated in Baghdad, from which they would withdraw until all American forces—save a temporary residual presence in Iraq’s Kurdish region—would eventually be gone (see map on page 5).

A vast movement of this size is not without precedent. Over 211,000 pieces of equipment and a quarter of a million people were rotated into and out of Iraq in spring 2004 for Operation Iraqi Freedom II. The Pentagon moved 130,000 troops out of Iraq and 105,000 into the country in the largest rotation since World War II. The vast movement of forces from December 2003 through May 2004 was described by the military itself as unprecedented in scope and risk.

Despite initial criticism and uncertainty surrounding the operations, the rotation was completed orderly and successfully without a large spike in casualties. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, then deputy director for coalition operations and now Assistant Secretary of State for Political Military Affairs, said after the rotation: “I think it’s a great credit not only to the logisticians who planned it, but the leaders who led it.” Even amid the rotation, Gen. Kimmitt recognized just how smoothly these logistical challenges were being met:

*The real proof of how well this is going is not just the fact that we’ve been able to do this somewhat seamlessly… but that we’ve also been able to maintain an offensive operational tempo during this time period. We have not had to stop the offensive operations to transfer the forces.*
In fact, during the six months of the troop rotation American forces suffered 15 percent fewer casualties than in the six months that followed the rotation. Such a movement of personnel and equipment demonstrated the Army’s tremendous logistics capabilities.

Moreover, the troops that carried out the 2004 rotation lacked sufficient quantities of up-armored Humvees and were without the new Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles that have since been introduced. At the time of the 2004 rotation, only one in eight of the thousands of Humvees then in use by the occupation forces were armored. As Lt. Col. Vincent Montera, commander of the Long Island-based 310th Military Police Battalion, commented at the time of the rotation, “We’re kind of sitting ducks in the vehicles we have.”

Today the vast majority of vehicles in use in Iraq are now armored and provide significantly more protection than in 2004. A large-scale movement of U.S. forces in a relatively short period of time is therefore well within the capabilities of our military and there is precedence for such a maneuver.

**Strategic Advantages of Phased Consolidation**

The redeployment of U.S. forces under a plan of phased consolidation also has three significant advantages.

*First, a phased withdrawal is a conventional operation that plays to the strength of the U.S. military.* The Army’s institutional and operational strengths rest in both advanced logistics and maneuver tactics—strengths that will be called upon in conducting redeployment. Redeployment would allow the United States to regain the initiative in Iraq by dominating the battlespace with overwhelming mass, firepower, and surveillance. As Army Field Manual 3-0: Operations notes, “retrograde operations” such as withdrawal are used to “create conditions to regain the initiative… Retrogrades improve the current situation or prevent a worse situation from occurring.”

Arguments that the United States will have to “shoot its way out” of Iraq, implying a high degree of danger, ignore that these operations are a form of conventional maneuver warfare at which the U.S. military excels. These operations play to the strengths of the U.S. military—its capability for maneuver in the open terrain of southern Iraq; its sophisticated intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems; and its ability to deploy airpower and artillery against any threat. Against this military juggernaut, insurgents employing improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, and small-arms ambushes would be significantly outmatched, much as they were during the April 2003 march to Baghdad. Indeed, the more rapid and decisive the withdrawal, the greater the advantage to U.S. forces during this kind of operation.

Second, phased consolidation does not leave a sudden and immediate power vacuum in the country. Withdrawing U.S. forces from the most stable parts of Iraq first would give the Iraqi government and local actors in contentious regions time to prepare for the eventual withdrawal of all U.S. troops. In fact, American commanders are currently planning to withdraw from now-stable areas such as Fallujah in Anbar province by spring 2008.
U.S. Troop Movements
### Phased Redeployment Schedule

#### IMMEDIATE MOVEMENTS
- **4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division** to redeploy to Diyala province
- **3rd BCT, 25th ID and 3rd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division** to redeploy to locations in Kurdish region following movement of 4th BCT, 1st Cavalry Division

#### OCTOBER 2007
- **3rd BCT, 2nd ID and 2nd BCT, 10th Mountain Division**

#### NOVEMBER 2007
- **3rd BCT, 25th ID and 3rd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division** (from Iraqi Kurdistan—to be replaced by other units)

#### DECEMBER 2007
- **4th BCT and 3rd BCT, 1st Cavalry Division**
- **Rotation of II MEF (RCT-2 and RCT-6) out of Iraq**
- **4th BCT, 2nd ID redeploy to Baghdad from Diyala**

#### JANUARY 2008
- **1st BCT and 2nd BCT, 1st Cavalry Division**

#### FEBRUARY 2008
- **2nd BCT, 1st ID and 4th BCT, 25th ID**

#### MARCH 2008
- **2nd BCT, 2nd ID and 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne Division**

#### APRIL 2008
- **RCT-1 and RCT-5, I MEF**

#### MAY 2008
- **1st BCT, 3rd ID and 4th BCT, 1st ID**

#### JUNE 2008
- **3rd BCT, 3rd ID and 4th BCT, 2nd ID**

#### JULY 2008
- **2nd BCT, 3rd ID and 1st BCT, 82nd Airborne Division**

#### UNITS TO BE EXTENDED ONE MONTH
- **2nd BCT, 1st ID; 4th BCT, 25th ID; and 2nd BCT, 2nd ID**
A more extended drawdown over 10 to 12 months during which the U.S. military carefully consolidated its force where it was most needed would avoid the situation created in April 2003, in which the sudden fall of the Hussein regime left a political vacuum that led to chaos. By setting a date certain and redeploying over the course of a year, we would give Iraqis time to prepare for our withdrawal.

Third, phased consolidation will enhance security for U.S. forces. Violence directed against American troops will most likely not significantly increase during the withdrawal timeframe. Internal Pentagon deliberations suggest that our exit from Iraq would face scant resistance. As an early August 2007 exercise involving military and Iraq experts determined:

U.S. troops would secure the exit route to Kuwait through largely Shi’a Muslim southern Iraq and face little fighting as they drove their equipment out. Any attacks, the panel judged, would be “harassment attacks,” most likely by a few Sunni members of Al Qaeda in Iraq who wanted to attack American troops one last time. “Why would they stop us? They have been telling us to leave,” said one participant.15

Of course, the rapidly fracturing Shi’a political landscape may create an unstable situation through which U.S. forces would have to withdraw, which is why prudent military planners know that they may hope for the best but must always plan for the worst. Contrary to the Bush administration’s naively optimistic and reckless approach following the invasion of Iraq, planning for a worst-case hostile environment must be the backbone of any withdrawal plan.

U.S. forces will not be barreling blindly down a highway out of Iraq. The route into and out of Iraq is currently in daily use to ferry supplies and equipment to and from Baghdad and Kuwait. A constant stream of U.S. forces and a dominant presence will deny insurgents freedom of movement along these roads.

Furthermore, American troops will have the advantage of surveillance and security patrolling the route. Unmanned aerial vehicles such as Predator drones and combat aircraft will be able to keep the route under constant surveillance, enabling U.S. forces to spot individuals planting IEDs, the roadside bombs that have caused roughly 40 percent of all troop deaths in Iraq.16 Electronic jamming and mine-sweeping equipment will allow our troops to detonate those IEDs that slip past aerial surveillance. Route security would also be provided by two brigades trained and equipped for this task, conducting a mix of checkpoints and route patrols to deny insurgents and militias the opportunity to attack withdrawing U.S. units.

Still, the threat of IEDs planted on the main route out of Iraq is probably the greatest danger U.S. troops will face when leaving Iraq. Making things more difficult, insurgents will likely be aware of the route our forces will take, particularly through constricted terrain like the Karbala Gap and urban areas straddling major road junctions like Nasariyah. Despite these risks, U.S. troops currently face equal if not greater peril from IEDs on everyday combat patrols throughout Iraq. The careful planning and execution of the withdrawal should ensure that the American military is able to prevent enemy forces from effectively using IEDs against our departing forces.
Implementing a Phased Consolidation

Implementing a redeployment that follows the phased consolidation strategy will be complex. There is an old military truism made popular by Admiral Ernest King, the chief of naval operations during World War II, that amateurs talk tactics while professionals talk logistics. Our military is capable of doing incredible things and in the past has consistently proven that it can carry out massive troop and equipment movement of this size, but such undertakings can only be done with a great deal of professional deliberation and planning.

It is important to note, however, two critical assumptions before elaborating on the details of our plan for a phased withdrawal:

- **The primary objective is to get to Kuwait.** Many advocates of a long, drawn-out withdrawal base their timetable on the fact that the United States is currently capable of moving only one combat brigade per month out of our ports in Kuwait. Many have therefore extrapolated this to argue that a complete withdrawal from Iraq will take at least 18 to 24 months or longer, given the amount of equipment in country. But it matters more to get soldiers and Marines to safety in Kuwait than it does to ensure one unit’s equipment is shipped out before another’s is able to. Once soldiers and Marines and their equipment are safely in Kuwait and in queue to board military transport ships or aircraft, the main objective will have been accomplished.

- **All equipment is not created equal.** The time that it takes to withdraw from Iraq will depend in large part on the amount of equipment the military decides to take with it. The military, however, does not need to remove every nut and every bolt out of every forward operating base in country. Sensitive equipment aside, at some point a cost-benefit analysis must be done. Such an analysis must consider what equipment will be taken with us. Since it currently costs more than $10 billion per month to sustain our presence in Iraq, extending our stay in order to extract all non-sensitive equipment—such as freezers, sinks, fuel, excess equipment, and x-ray machines—would not be cost-effective or worth risking the lives of our troops.

Redeploying U.S. Personnel

A phased consolidation withdrawal strategy can extract all U.S. troops and essential equipment (minus the residual presence in the Kurdish region) with a minimum risk within a 12-month timeframe. Our plan is to remove two combat brigades a month from Iraq while reducing proportionately the number of non-combat support personnel necessary to sustain them. The basic concept behind this strategy is to simply not replace American combat units currently deployed to Iraq. If such a policy were initiated immediately, American forces could be withdrawn from Iraq by the end of July 2008. Another Marine Expeditionary Force will rotate in for a seven month tour, after which they will rotate home without replacement (see deployment schedule on page 6).

**Don’t Replace Units.** Under our plan, the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division, which was deployed to Iraq in June
of 2006, and the 2nd Brigade of the 10th Mountain Division, which was deployed in August 2006, will be the first units to leave Iraq. They will do so in October 2007 (see schedule on page 6). Two units will continue to withdraw each month in the order of their initial deployment until all American troops are withdrawn in July 2008. In order to maintain a two-brigade-a-month flow out of Iraq, the tours of three brigades—the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, the 4th Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division, and the 2nd Brigade of the 2nd Infantry Division—will be extended by one month each.

While this additional hardship for our troops comes on top of already extended tours, it is necessary to keep the phased nature of the consolidation plan intact.

**Consolidate U.S. Presence.** The brigade currently stationed in Mosul, the 4th Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division, would redeploy down to Balad to consolidate U.S. forces remaining in the north to Diyala and Salah ad Din provinces. Two brigades currently stationed near the northern Iraqi cities of Kirkuk and Tikrit—the 3rd Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division and the 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne—would then redeploy to Iraq’s Kurdish region to support a temporary U.S. commitment to resolve outstanding Turkish-Kurd issues. All command and support personnel associated with these units would also redeploy south. At the beginning of January 2008, the last U.S. forces would be withdrawn from Diyala, consolidating America’s presence in Iraq to Anbar and Baghdad. Marines stationed in Anbar would remain until April, while the American forces consolidated in Baghdad would then withdraw to Kuwait by July 2008. Advisor teams embedded with Iraqi security forces units would withdraw with the conventional combat units in their area as well.

**Closing Forward Operating Bases.** There are currently 75 forward operating bases in Iraq, or FOBs, down from 106 in August of 2005. In 2005 U.S. forces were able to close down 13 bases in only five months by shifting U.S. troops and equipment to other locations and by turning over bases to Iraqi security forces. The closing of bases was commonly referred to as ‘BRAC for Iraq,’ in reference to the domestic Base Realignment and Closure Commission. The closures reflected then-commander General George Casey’s plan to eventually consolidate U.S. bases in Iraq into four major super-FOBs. “If we are going to withdraw,” commented one senior commander at the time of the closings, “we need a base plan.” We couldn’t agree more. The standard military procedure in Iraq requires at least 100 days to shut a FOB. However, this timeframe incorporates the time it takes to completely dismantle and move all of the equipment and facilities within a particular base, as well as complete the tens or hundreds of administrative procedures necessary to relieve commanders of accountability for property and transfer U.S. property to Iraqi personnel. FOBs can be dismantled much faster if the focus is on extracting vital and sensitive equipment, and if the Pentagon waives certain regulations in the interest of the mission.

**Protecting the Embassy.** As we recommended in *Strategic Reset*, the United States should downgrade the size of its embassy in Baghdad and disperse diplomatic and civilian personnel throughout the more stable areas of Iraq. We will
U.S. Bases in Iraq

Source: Map adapted from United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations Cartographic Section, Map No. 3835 Rev. 4.
maintain an embassy in Baghdad, but with a much smaller staff than current plans for a 1,000-strong embassy. As protecting our diplomats and civilians in Baghdad will be a top priority, we recommend stationing a Marine Expeditionary Unit, or MEU, at Baghdad International Airport to secure our diplomatic presence in the capital and elsewhere in Iraq. Marines have a long tradition of protecting American diplomatic facilities overseas, and MEUs have helicopter lift capabilities, enabling them to move quickly to protect our residual diplomatic presence if need be.

Secure the Route Out of Iraq. The main route from Iraq to Kuwait—Route Tampa, the military’s main road from Iraq—will be secured by two brigades. The 1st Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, which is already performing similar duties in Iraq, will be assigned to this mission. Another brigade, preferably a highly mobile Stryker brigade, such as the 2nd Cavalry Regiment which is currently deploying to Iraq, should be deployed or re-tasked to provide additional security for units moving south down Route Tampa. Military police units freed from the mission to advise Iraqi police units could assist as well.10 These security elements will secure the route by establishing checkpoints, logistical support areas, and by conducting patrols. Army doctrine endorses this type of route security over convoy escorts, which are typically reserved for high-value convoys, because it provides better security with fewer troops. Furthermore, only units capable of conducting such a ground assault mission themselves, such as those at the division level and below with vehicles, crew-served weapons, and communications gear—will drive out of Iraq.

Airlift Personnel Out of Iraq. Many personnel can simply be airlifted out of Iraq by the Air Force, the Civil Reserve Air Fleet, or chartered commercial airlift. Support forces, headquarters personnel, contractor and government civilians, and those combat personnel unnecessary to provide support for the movement of heavy equipment to Kuwait will be airlifted out in this fashion. The majority of these personnel will be flown from Iraq to Kuwait via intra-theater air transport; some will fly via strategic air transport directly back to American bases in Europe or the continental United States. U.S. rotary and fixed-wing aircraft will fly themselves out of the country, or in support of redeployment operations, as necessary.

Remaining Personnel will Escort Equipment Out Over Land. Most combat units at division level and below will move themselves to Kuwait by ground assault convoy, based on their capability to move themselves and their critical equipment. These units will also be used to escort heavy equipment which must be driven out, such as tracked vehicles on heavy-equipment transports and flatbed trucks.

Fulfill our Moral Obligation to Iraqi Contractors. As the United States withdraws from Iraq, it must find a way to ensure that Iraqis who have worked with the United States have a way out of Iraq. Currently, there are about 120,000 Iraqis working as contractors for the United States, including large numbers of Iraqis who have worked for American diplomatic and military forces as translators or in other capacities. The United States has a responsibility to begin planning to move those Iraqis and their families who have risked their lives to help us in Iraq.
while we plan our redeployment. The best way to serve our moral obligation to these Iraqis is to increase the number allowed into the United States as refugees from the current paltry total of 8,000 to 100,000, as laid out in our earlier report, Strategic Reset.

Officials at the State Department and the Department of Homeland Security are sure to say that the mere 8,000 refugees are all that can be physically accommodated in the system. In the first six months of 2007, just 200 Iraqi refugees were admitted due to the Department of Homeland Security’s inability to screen these refugees fast enough. We must do better.

U.S. intra-theater air transport could be used to transport these Iraqis who have worked for us to refugee camps in neighboring states such as Jordan, which have hosted many thousands of Iraqis since the war began in 2003. Once the refugees are outside of Iraq, the State Department should establish an infrastructure for the housing, screening, evaluation, and transportation of these men and women.

Julia Taft, a State Department official in the Ford administration who was responsible for resettling Vietnamese refugees in the 1970s, recently explained that after the fall of Saigon in 1975 more than 131,000 people were resettled over the course of eight months. Taft said of the effort: “It was a huge enterprise. But it never would have worked had there not been the sustained commitment on the part of the administration working with Congress to make it happen.”

She noted that “President Ford said, ‘Let them come. Let’s help them. This is what we must do for them. They deserve it.’” While we must screen all refugees entering the United States for security purposes, the United States simply must follow in the tradition of President Ford’s humanitarianism.

The Constraint of Equipment

Advocates of a quick drawdown argue that we can leave the bulk of equipment behind, taking only heavy war-fighting equipment back with us as we leave through Kuwait. Others argue that it will take anywhere from 18 to 24 months to completely withdraw all American equipment and property from Iraq. We take a more realistic view: The United States clearly wants to remove all equipment of value or sensitive nature from Iraq as it withdraws, but it does not need to remove every nut and bolt belonging to the U.S. government.

A 12-month timeframe should be sufficient to remove most heavy or sensitive American assets from Iraq while leaving behind non-essential equipment and supplies.

A withdrawal will force the United States to make hard choices on which equipment to bring back with our forces and which to leave behind or destroy in place.

The United States currently has 1,900 heavy vehicles—Abrams tanks, Stryker and Bradley fighting vehicles,—43,000 other vehicles, including more than 20,000 Humvees, and over 700 aircraft, mostly helicopters, in Iraq. In addition, we also have anywhere between 140,000 and 200,000 metric tons of equipment and supplies at our forward operating bases spread across Iraq.
A 10 to 12 month withdrawal will ensure that no critical supplies—arms and ammunition, sensitive equipment, such as computers, communications gear, or armored vehicles—will be left behind while non-essential equipment will remain or be destroyed. It is simply not cost effective, in terms of money and, most importantly, our troops’ lives, to delay withdrawal for the sake of totally dismantling our PXs, gymnasiums, housing trailers, headquarters buildings, maintenance facilities, fast food restaurants, and other non-essential facilities and associated equipment. Ours is not a “no FOB left behind” policy.

Get the equipment to Kuwait. Many who argue that a longer timeframe for withdrawal is necessary do so on the basis that the pace of cleaning and inspecting equipment for sealift will be the greatest and most time-consuming obstacle to a more rapid withdrawal. Outgoing Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace noted that under normal circumstances the United States is capable of moving about one brigade (about 3,500 troops and their equipment) in or out of the country in any given month. From this baseline, many have extrapolated that a complete withdrawal from Iraq will take at least 18 months to 24 months, or perhaps longer, given the amount of equipment in country. This, however, misses the point: it matters less how long it takes to load forces once they are safe in Kuwait than it does to get our ground forces and their equipment to Kuwait safely in the first place. Once soldiers and their equipment are safely in Kuwait and in queue to board military transport ships or aircraft, the hard part is over. As Lt. General R. Steven Whitcomb, commanding general of the 3rd Army noted, Kuwait has the capability to handle tens of thousands of troops and equipment that would stream out of Iraq during a U.S. withdrawal.

Once in Kuwait, our equipment can wait as long as necessary to be transported back to the United States. What is important is getting our troops and equipment out of Iraq’s hostile environment. If tanks and other equipment are forced to sit in the Kuwaiti desert a few extra months due to a port backlog then so be it. Security for our equipment backlog in Kuwait is undoubtedly important, but it can be taken care of with relative ease and will be more cost-effective than unnecessarily lengthening the withdrawal from Iraq. A further objection will be raised that units usually drive their equipment onto transport ships in port. But in this case the troops that bring their equipment out of Iraq can be flown out of Kuwait while a different unit can be assigned the sole task of loading equipment for the sealift home. Much of this equipment will not return to the unit anyway, as it will likely be diverted for depot-level maintenance or refit because of wear and tear from combat duty.

Increase Capacity of Facilities in Kuwait. To accelerate the process of cleaning and loading our equipment in Kuwait for shipment, our port capacity in Kuwait must be expanded. Currently, the United States military is allowed two port facilities at Shuaiba, about 40 miles south of Kuwait City. These are the military’s only ports of entry and exit for heavy equipment such as tanks and armored vehicles. The United States must make it a priority to begin negotiations immediately with the Kuwaiti government to augment this capacity by one additional facility, thus decreasing our drawdown time. This facility will include an addi-
tional port that can accommodate the military’s roll–on, roll-off sealift ships as well as a cleaning station.

Get Vital Equipment Out. There are two primary ways to bring equipment and personnel out of Iraq: airlift and ground transport.

- **Airlift:** The United States has four major air bases in Iraq: Balad, Al Asad, Tallil, and the Baghdad International Airport. In addition, many FOBs are collocated on airfields, such as Contingency Operating Base Speicher near Tikrit and FOB Warrior near Kirkuk, and even these airfields are capable of handling C-130 and C-17 aircraft. Most sensitive equipment, ammunition, and personnel not necessary for escorting convoys of heavy equipment can simply be flown out of Iraq on America’s 700-plus strong military airlift fleet (see graphic on page 15). For efficiency purposes, and because civilian airliners should not be used to fly in and out of Iraq, these military aircraft can shuttle equipment and personnel between the airfields in Iraq and Kuwait. If necessary, the Civil Reserve Air Fleet can be activated to assist the airlift of personnel and equipment out of Kuwait. CRAF consists of over 1,300 civilian airliners that can be activated for military service within 24 to 48 hours. Given proper planning, however, such short-notice activation will not be necessary for redeployment from Iraq. Corps and division headquarters units will be airlifted out when the time comes to withdraw them. Most helicopters will be able to fly themselves down to Kuwait, where they will await preparation for sealift back to the United States. Air Force and Marine combat aircraft (primarily F-16 and F/A-18 fighters) can fly themselves out of Iraq. Their associated support and maintenance personnel and equipment can be airlifted out of country as well.

- **Ground Transport:** Heavy equipment such as tanks and other armored vehicles will have to be transported to Kuwait overland on Route Tampa, the military’s main road from Iraq. Many of these vehicles will drive, as part of combat units redeploying themselves to Kuwait. Some, however, will be transported on Army Heavy Equipment Transporters, or HETs, to reduce wear and tear. Each HET can carry one M1 tank or two Bradley Fighting Vehicles at a time, which will necessitate large convoys to travel down Route Tampa. HETs and up-armored Army cargo trucks such as the Medium Tactical Vehicle can also carry shipping containers with valuable equipment, and as necessary, contractors can join these movements too. Once this heavy equipment is in Kuwait, it can be cleaned, inspected, and prepared for sealift back to the United States.
## U.S. Airlift Capabilities

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<td>92</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEIGHT CAP</td>
<td>270,000 lbs</td>
<td>170,900 lbs</td>
<td>42,000 lbs</td>
<td>140,000 lbs payload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARM HUMVEE</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3 (realistically 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRYKER CAP</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRADLEY CAPABILITY</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MI CAPABILITY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PALLET CAP</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contraction to assertions on the part of some that withdrawal from Iraq will take two years or more, we believe it is possible to conduct an orderly and relatively complete redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq in roughly a year. Using all elements of U.S. military power, focused on our land forces’ proficiencies—maneuver warfare and logistics—we believe that our military can accomplish such a task should it be assigned.

Rather than waiting for the helicopters on the embassy roof, the Bush administration should retake the initiative and immediately begin planning for an orderly and relatively quick withdrawal from Iraq. If it does not do so, Congress must be prepared to force the issue.

The plan we have presented should not and must not occur in a vacuum. Strategic Reset, our earlier Iraq policy report, laid out several diplomatic, political, and military steps to be taken ahead of and in conjunction with the redeployment of U.S. forces from Iraq. The United States must be prepared to contain Iraq’s conflicts through targeted assistance within Iraq as well as through tough and effective diplomacy with Iraq’s neighbors. In order to stabilize the broader Middle East, the United States needs to re-engage in resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict in addition to containing Iraq’s conflicts.

In the final analysis, redeployment from Iraq is crucial to a broader reset of the United States’ position in the Middle East and the world. For this reason, we need to begin planning now for the deliberate drawdown of our military forces in Iraq.
Endnotes

9 Ibid.
10 In the six months during the 2004 troop rotation there were an average of 62 casualties per month, while in the 6 months following the 2004 troop rotation there were an average of 73 casualties per month. Data available at http://icasualties.org.
12 Ibid.
18 Under Army doctrine, different kinds of units are trained and equipped to provide route security, including armored cavalry regiments, military police, scouts, infantry, and armor units. See Army Field Manual 17-98, Scout Platoon Operations; Field Manual 3-19.1, Military Police Operations. The withdrawal of military police from the mission to advise the Iraqi police would free at least one brigade of forces for this mission; withdrawal of forces from operations elsewhere in Iraq could provide the additional forces for this mission.
21 Ibid.
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR AMERICAN PROGRESS

The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”