

U.S. House: Legislative: Bill files:
109th Congress: H.J. Res. 55,
Withdrawal of U.S. Armed Forces
from Iraq Resolution of 2005:
Miscellaneous (3 of 3): Frequently
asked questions on the
Abercrombie-Jones Iraq resolution

Neil Abercrombie Papers

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Frequently Asked Questions on the Abercrombie-Jones Iraq Resolution

Question: Why does this resolution set a “date certain” for the US withdrawal?

- The resolution does not set a date for the completion of a withdrawal, only the beginning of a withdrawal, which we feel leaves the President with sufficient flexibility to conduct the withdrawal in a way that protects US troops and allows the Iraqis to pick up the fight.
- Deadlines force actions, as we’ve seen when we set a date for the end of the CPA and the Iraqi elections. Setting a date will force the United States to accelerate training of Iraqi forces and encourage the Iraqi government to cut the deals necessary for peaceful power-sharing between the various groups in Iraq.
- If we do not set a date the war will continue on autopilot, and more American lives and money will be consumed. Without a target date for initiating the US withdrawal the easiest thing to do is just keep doing what we are doing now and hope things work out for the best. That is not a strategy. It is an excuse for not moving toward a resolution of US military involvement in Iraq. I refuse to accept that we should leave US troops in a shooting gallery because the Bush Administration can’t come up with a plan to get them out.
- The President and other have already stated that at some point the Iraqis will have to take over this fight. We have been in Iraq for 26 months. This resolution gives the Administration 15 more months before an American withdrawal must begin. We feel that is ample time – based on the Administration’s own plans – to train large numbers of Iraqi Security Forces and to get the Iraqi government up and running.

Question: What do you say to families who have lost loved ones in Iraq? Does the United States leaving mean their sons and daughters died in vain?

- The dead of this war did not die in vain. The troops who have died took part in ridding the world of the Saddam Hussein regime and giving the Iraqis a chance for a better future. However, there is only so much our military can

do and they have done it. It is time to set a schedule for pulling out our troops and putting the Iraqis on the front lines.

- Our commanders in Iraq are now saying that there will be no military conclusion to this conflict and that political factors will be what brings an end to the insurgency. We do not need 140,000 US troops there to accomplish that mission. We are already training Iraqis to take the lead, and by October 1, 2006 – 15 months from now – there will be ample Iraqi forces trained and ready to take the lead. At that point, our troops will have done what they have been asked to do in regard to preparing the Iraqis.

Question: Does setting a date “send the wrong message” to the insurgents and terrorists in Iraq?

- We need to stop worrying less about “sending messages” and more about what we are actually going to DO on the ground in Iraq. We can’t control what the insurgents think. We can control what we do with our troops, and this resolution is about putting Iraqis on the front lines and getting US troops out in a responsible manner.
- The mission of the US military in Iraq is NOT to defeat the insurgency. It is to train Iraqi Security forces to be self-sufficient.
- The insurgents already know we are leaving. We’ve told them many times.
- Ending the US occupation will remove the insurgent’s excuse that they are fighting “crusaders.” Once we leave, the insurgency will have to try to gain support by fighting against a legitimately elected and broad-based Iraqi government. They will likely find far less support from the population or foreign groups if their cause is to overthrow a democratic regime.
- If the enemy decides to lay low until 2007, then that gives the indigenous Iraqi security forces 18 months of breathing room to recruit, train, equip and organize and better prepare themselves for the final battles.

Question: Will setting a date undermine the morale of US troops in Iraq?

- No. US troops have done a fine job in Iraq and will continue to do the best they can in tough conditions. The troops already know that our plan is to

train the Iraqis so US troops can leave. They know that our presence is not going to be permanent. Setting a date gives the troops and their families some hope that the endless rotations will end. It will improve morale.

- No. On the contrary, providing a light at the end of the tunnel will improve US morale.

Question: Will setting a date show that the United States doesn't have the fortitude to stick it out in Iraq?

- Three and a half years of combat, the sacrifice of thousands of lives, and hundreds of billions of dollars is an ample demonstration of American resolve.
- We have already said that we are leaving. We are not committed to staying forever. The Iraqis know that they will have to take over the fight. All this resolution does is set a date for an event that we've already announced.
- The President has repeatedly said that Iraqis will take over the fight at some point and will have to win the war on their own. All this resolution does is reinforce that plan and require it to happen in late 2006 – which is ample time to get the Iraqis in a position to take over.

Question: Does setting a date for a US withdrawal give "aid and comfort" to the enemy in Iraq?

- No. We have already said we are leaving, so if the enemy's plan was to "wait us out" we aren't telling them anything they don't already know. If anything the insurgents know that their excuse for fighting and killing will evaporate once we leave – there will be no "occupier" to blame for everything in Iraq any longer.
- The resolution still allows the United States to support the Iraqi government in a variety of ways, including training Iraqi forces outside Iraq, providing funding support to the Iraqi government, and providing intelligence support.

Question: What would you say to people who think that now that we are in Iraq we have to stay until we win?

- I would say two things. First, what is winning? Why do American troops have to win the war for the Iraqis? Haven't we already said that ultimately they will have to win it for themselves?
- The mission of the US military in Iraq is NOT to "win" anything. The mission given to US commanders in Iraq is to train Iraqi security troops to be "self-sufficient." We feel that mission does not require 140,000 American troops.
- We beat Germany and Japan in 40 months and this resolution calls for beginning a withdrawal after 41 months. How can 41 months not be enough time to establish an Iraqi government and military that can take over?
- Finally, the Administration has no plan to win the war. If it did, we would have more troops in Iraq and truly mobilize the country to make the sacrifices necessary to win. So far the only Americans asked to sacrifice anything for this war are the troops and their families. The rest of America's contribution is yellow bumper stickers and spending our big tax cuts. I don't see the slightest inclination from the Administration to do what it takes to win, so I therefore see no reason to leave US troops in a shooting gallery because the President and his henchman can't think of a way out.

Question: Does this resolution mean the war in Iraq will be over?

- No. It simply means that US involvement in Iraq after October 2006 will begin to end.
- This resolution says nothing about continuing to provide the Iraqi government forces support in the form of money or continued training outside Iraq, both of which would be preferable to what we are doing now. I would rather pay the Iraqis \$10 billion a year to fight the war than have 140,000 US troops in constant danger at a cost of \$2 billion a week.

Question: How would the US troops leaving Iraq impact the broader fight against terrorism?

- It will put the United States in a better position to win the "hearts and minds" of moderate muslims worldwide – which is the real center of gravity in this war. This resolution allows for the continued US involvement in

Afghanistan, as well as aggressive intelligence and special operations missions against terrorists worldwide.

- Getting US troops out will increase the chance that a truly home-grown Iraqi democracy will emerge. Only that kind of democracy – and not one imposed by US troops – will be an ally in the struggle against terrorism.
- Getting US troops out will also stop the serious damage we are doing to our military's readiness. It will give us time to repair the damage before another crisis occurs.