



Update from Congressman NEIL ABERCROMBIE

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Year 4 in Iraq: Time to rethink U.S. policy

Dear Friend:

The Hawaii National Guard and Reserve troops who recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan made our community proud. They performed with bravery, professionalism and commitment. They and other U.S. troops- including those from Kaneohe and Schofield- did everything we asked of them.

We've now just passed the third anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. It is an appropriate time to ask some searching questions about the policy choices made by our country's leaders. Asking these questions has nothing to do with supporting our troops—we all support and honor those courageous men and women and their families. The issue is whether the policies sending them so far from their homes are worthy of their efforts.

The stated reasons for invading Iraq in the first place were mistaken at best. Iraq did not have weapons of mass destruction, as we were told. Nor did Iraq have any role in the September 11 terrorist attacks. Attempts to justify the war on the basis of overthrowing a dictator are flimsy at best—other countries (including some U.S. allies) are ruled by dictators, but no one in the current Administration sees any reason to attack them.

Clearly, the Administration's policies have not brought peace, prosperity or stability to Iraq. Every day brings more bad news as that country spirals downward into civil war. A look at statistical trends tells the story:

	Feb. 2004	Feb. 2005	Feb. 2006
Iraqi civilians killed	280	750	1,000
Est. number of foreign terrorists in Iraq	400	800	1,300
Average daily attacks by insurgents	21	54	75
Oil production (millions of barrels per day) (Prewar= 2.5 million barrels per day)	2.3	2.1	1.8
Cumulative cost of U.S. military operations (billions)	160	265	390

(Feb. 2006 fig. includes \$75 billion approved by House, currently pending in Senate)			
Percentage of Iraqis favoring a firm U.S. withdrawal timeline	30	76	87

These numbers make it clear that this Administration's policies are not making Iraq a better place for Iraqis, nor are they doing anything to curb the growth of terrorism. Clearly, it is time to develop and implement a timetable for bringing U.S. troops home from Iraq.

That's why I joined other Members of Congress in introducing House Joint Resolution 55, a bipartisan measure to set a timetable for bringing home U.S. troops from Iraq. It calls on the President to set an exit timetable and to begin the withdrawal no later than October 1, 2006.

Unfortunately, those who believe our troops should stay in Iraq indefinitely are keeping the resolution bottled up in committee. We who support the measure are circulating a discharge petition which, if signed by 218 Representatives, will bring House Joint Resolution 55 to the floor for a vote- and a full and open debate about every aspect of our Iraq policy. I am confident that will make clear the wisdom of bringing home our troops as speedily as practicable.

By keeping our troops in Iraq indefinitely, we're asking them to resolve political and social issues that need to be resolved by Iraqis themselves. That's unfair to the troops, their families, and the country. It's particularly unfair to the Reserves and National Guard who put their lives on hold to answer the nation's call. And it jeopardizes the capacity of our military to meet the full range of its responsibilities throughout the world.

Advocating a timetable for bringing our troops home from Iraq does not mean lack of support for our troops. They have earned our thanks for a job well done. But supporting the troops does not mean keeping them in Iraq with no end in sight, which is exactly what the current policy does. House Joint Resolution 55 gives us- and democratic forces in Iraq- a chance to create an opening for peace and stability to emerge in a context of the existing realities.

Sincerely,



Neil Abercrombie
Member of Congress

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