

STEP: Building a Consensus for Withdrawal of U.S. Military Presence from Iraq

Meeting U.S. obligations to restore security, to rebuild Iraq, and to return sovereignty to the Iraqi people requires the removal—not the build-up—of U.S. forces. The implication that U.S. military troops will remain in Iraq indefinitely fuels the insurgency and fosters anti-American sentiment, and it is contrary to the U.S. responsibility to return Iraq to the Iraqi people.

The Sensible Transition to Enduring Peace or STEP resolution proposed by the Friends Committee on National Legislation and embodied in **HR 3142** and **H Con Res 197** would address the need for Congress to enact a clear statement of U.S. policy and intentions that will:

1) Send an important message to the people of Iraq, the United States, and the rest of the world that the U.S. does not have imperial intentions in Iraq and that the U.S. does not plan to occupy Iraq permanently.

- U.S. military presence has become a rallying cry for the Iraqi insurgency, and so long as the people of Iraq view the United States as an occupying force in their country, they will fight to expel the U.S. General George Casey, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, told Congress that the large American military presence in Iraq "feeds the notion of occupation" and "extends the amount of time that it will take for Iraqi security forces to become self-reliant." General John Abizaid, the top American commander in the Middle East, said at the same hearing that it was vital for the U.S. to "reduce our military footprint" in the region, adding, "We must make clear to the people of the region that we have no designs on their territory and resources."
- Many insurgent groups have expressed that they would participate in a political dialogue if the U.S. made it clear it does not intend to occupy Iraq permanently.

2) Provide an opportunity for constructive dialogue in Congress, bridging the false dichotomy between “staying the course” and “immediate withdrawal.”

- A majority in this country believe that the U.S. should not have a permanent role in Iraq, and national consensus exists that the US should not presume to take Iraqi oil and should not project US military power from permanent bases in Iraq.
- If “success” in Iraq means creating a strong, democratic, central government that can provide safety and security for all Iraqis and prevent Iraq being used by "terrorists," then that project requires spending at least a billion dollars a week for the next five to ten years to deploy 250,000 to 500,000 US and allied troops. Congress won't fund it, and the American public won't back it. Congress must work with the Administration to chart a workable course that values the lives of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi citizens.
- A clear statement of U.S. policy in Iraq would force a shift in thinking and planning so that the administration and the military would be focused primarily on returning real sovereignty to Iraq, rather than becoming further mired in violence.
- With the US declaring publicly that it will make an orderly withdrawal from Iraq to bring US forces and military bases home, the situation in Iraq will change. Nationalist insurgents can back off armed resistance and move to the political arena. Authentic Iraqi political figures can ascend to political leadership and begin the challenge of restoring access to electricity and water, and provide for public safety.

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Sample Iraq STEP Resolution

Here is a sample resolution for your organization or faith community to discuss and to adopt. We encourage you to add to or change the text to best suit your organization's needs and perspectives.

Iraq STEP Resolution (Sensible Transition to an Enduring Peace)

Whereas President George W. Bush stated on April 13, 2004 that "as a proud and independent people, Iraqis do not support an indefinite occupation and neither does America" and that the U.S. will remain in Iraq "as long as necessary and not one day more";

Whereas Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld assured the Senate Armed Services Committee on February 17, 2005, that "we have no intention, at the present time, of putting permanent bases in Iraq";

Whereas the Wall Street Journal reported in February 2005 that 60% of the people in the United States think that the Bush administration should set a public or private timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq;

Whereas former Secretary of State James Baker, former Pentagon official Anthony Cordesman, the International Crisis Group, and other respected leaders and analysts have said that it is critical that the U.S. government declare now its intention to fully withdraw from Iraq;

Whereas political parties opposed to the ongoing U.S. military presence won the overwhelming majority of votes in Iraq's January 2005 election and a clear majority of voters interviewed in exit polls cited their desire to see an end to the military occupation as a major impetus for voting;

Whereas the perception that the U.S. intends to permanently occupy Iraq aids insurgent groups in recruiting supporters and fuels violent activity;

Whereas many insurgent groups have expressed a willingness to engage in political dialogue if the U.S. clearly states its intention to withdraw from Iraq;

Whereas we can best honor the lives and memories of all who have died in Iraq by expediting the end of the war, bringing U.S. troops home as quickly as possible, and supporting the Iraqi people in rebuilding their country;

Whereas a clear statement of intent to fully withdraw U.S. troops and bases does not imply the setting of a particular deadline, time frame, or exit strategy;

Whereas such a statement would send a strong signal to the people of Iraq and the international community that the United States does not have imperial intentions in Iraq and affirms that the Iraqi people will regain through their elected representatives the full exercise of national sovereignty, including control over security and public safety;

Therefore, be it resolved that this congregation/meeting/organization holds in our prayers the people of Iraq, the U.S. troops and international troops and humanitarian workers in Iraq, the leaders of Iraq and the United States, and all others affected by this war;

Be it also resolved that this congregation/meeting/organization calls on the United States Congress to adopt a sense of the Congress resolution declaring: **"It is the policy of the United States to withdraw all U.S. military troops and bases from Iraq"**;

Be it also resolved that this congregation/meeting/organization will present a copy of this resolution to the members of Congress who represent the district in which the congregation is based;

And be it also resolved that this congregation/meeting/organization will send a copy of this resolution to the local media.

Resolution Notification Form

Yes! My organization has adopted a resolution supporting Iraq STEP.

Contact person _____

Name & title of president/chairperson/responsible officer _____

Organization _____

Please describe (ex. national organization, faith community, town council, local citizen group)

Number of members _____

Street address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email address _____

Telephone _____ Fax _____

Check off:

FCNL has permission to quote this resolution, to convey it to Congress, or to report it in public.

Thank you for your support.

Please return this form to Laura Weis - laura@fcn.org, 202-547-6019 (fax), or mail to

Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict
Friends Committee on National Legislation
245 Second Street NE
Washington DC 20002-5795

For more information, call Laura at 800-630-1330, x2516.

Put the STEP Resolution to Work

Lobbying your members of Congress and building support for STEP in your community are even more important than adopting a local version. Congress needs to know that constituents want a clear statement of policy in Iraq, and a signal that the U.S. military will not remain in Iraq indefinitely.

Spread the Word

Notify your organization's members and partners through your newsletter, website or email list.

Lobby Members of Congress

- Set up a delegation to meet with your member of Congress or their staff in the nearest local office to present your resolutions. Work through local interfaith peace networks to build support, and remember that some denominations have peace and social concerns staff in their regional offices. See Meeting with Members of Congress http://www.fcnl.org/getin/resources/meet_congress.htm for details on how to hold a lobby visit on the Iraq resolution.
- Faith groups can lobby with interfaith delegations. Consider including local leaders from the faith community your member of Congress belongs. To find out their religious affiliation, see the FCNL Legislative Action Center <http://capwiz.com/fconl/home/>.

Reach Thousands Through the Media

- Submit the resolution to your local newspaper, particularly the religious page, and to religious press, or hold a press event such as a briefing by congregational leaders.
- Pitch the story to a reporter or place an op-ed or letter-to-the-editor. See our Grassroots Toolkit <http://www.fcnl.org/getin/indx.htm> for details on getting media coverage. Remember your neighborhood, suburban and free alternative weekly newspapers as well; they are often looking for stories.
- Set up a meeting with your local newspaper's editorial board to present the resolution and see if the paper would support it.
- Send any news clippings to your Congress members' local offices by mail or to their Washington offices by fax. Press coverage demonstrates your congregation's reach with constituents. (Mail sent to the Washington congressional offices is treated for anthrax, delaying and sometimes destroying the mail.)

Congregations/Houses of Worship

- Share the resolution with sister congregations and encourage them to adopt one as well. Offer to do a brief presentation about the resolution and why your congregation adopted it.
- Transmit the resolution to any appropriate regional and national denominational bodies. Find an advocate in a position to introduce the resolution to a decision making group.

Get a City Council Resolution

Schedule a meeting for congregational leadership with a helpful city council member to suggest a city council resolution. See the Cities for Peace toolkit for details on how to get a resolution passed. <http://www.ips-dc.org/citiesforpeace/toolkit.htm>

Please Remember: Important Followup

Carry through the "therefores" in the resolution, making sure all the listed actions were taken, and send a copy to FCNL plus a report on how your resolution was put to use.

Please consider supporting FCNL's Iraq STEP campaign with a contribution. You can make a secure

donation online to help support our FCNL's Iraq STEP campaign, or you can call 1-800-630-1330 to make a credit card donation over the phone.