



Sen. John McCain, Arizona Republican, believes success requires seven steps.

# Finishing the Job in Iraq

*Sen. John McCain is a retired naval aviator, former Vietnam War POW, and current member of the Senate Armed Services Committee. He at times has been a critic of Bush Administration foreign policies. However, in an April 22 address to the Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C., the Arizona Republican gave his support to the Administration's military operation in Iraq and explained why he sees it as "the test of a generation." What follows are excerpts of his remarks.*

## **Wake-Up Call**

"America faces today our biggest foreign policy test in a generation. The deteriorating security situation in Iraq in the past several weeks vividly emphasizes the difficulties inherent in bringing stability to that country and is a wake-up call to policy-makers in Washington.

"Given events on the ground, and the resulting debate that has taken place in this town, it is worth reviewing why we needed to go to war in the first place, why we must prevail, and how our conduct in Iraq fits with America's broader foreign policy principles. The way in which we handle Iraq today will impact the Iraqi people, America, and the world for a generation or more. The costs of failure in Iraq are unacceptably high. The benefits of success, on the other hand, are extraordinary."

## **Why Strike Saddam**

"By early 2003, the status quo on Iraq was crumbling. ... The international sanctions regimen no longer constrained Saddam's ability to spend money as he wished, and [Saddam's] regime was growing stronger, not weaker, under the existing sanctions. At the same time, critics around the world were demanding that those sanctions that remained be lifted. US and British warplanes patrolled the no-fly zones, taking fire from anti-aircraft guns on a weekly basis. ... The renewed inspections in 2002 and 2003 took place only when Saddam was confronted with coalition troops deployed to his borders—an obviously unsustainable situation—and even then he refused to cooperate fully. ...

"Some have argued that the US exaggerated Saddam's WMD programs, and, therefore, Iraq posed no threat. ... We must also recall the facts as we knew them in March 2003. US intelligence agencies concluded that Saddam possessed chemical and biological weapons and might

be pursuing a nuclear weapons program. European intelligence services concluded that Saddam likely had active WMD programs. Eight years of UNSCOM inspections concluded Iraq was lying. Even Hans Blix and the UN inspectors assumed the regime was concealing weapons of mass destruction. If Saddam had secretly destroyed these weapons, he had numerous opportunities to document this destruction, but he did not do so. ...

“The world was painfully familiar with Saddam’s use of WMD in the past, including his barbaric chemical attacks on Iranians and Kurds. We knew that Saddam was by far the most belligerent leader in the region, having invaded and pillaged Kuwait, launched missiles at Saudi Arabia and Israel, killed hundreds of thousands of his own people, and attempted to assassinate a former US President. We also knew of Saddam’s past involvement in terrorism and his hatred of America.”

### Three Choices

“We had three choices—deal with Saddam early, while we could; deal with Saddam later, after sanctions had lost force and he had furthered his weapons ambitions; or simply sit back and hope for the best. The 9/11 Commission has spent months investigating who might be at fault for failing to connect disparate dots and for inaction in the face of grave threat. In Iraq, the dots were connected.

“Even those in Iraq who claim that all WMD were destroyed suggest that Saddam planned to restart his programs once the time was right. ... But let us assume for the sake of argument that Saddam had forever abandoned his WMD ambitions. Is it then wrong to have toppled the dictator?”

“I supported humanitarian intervention in order to stop genocide in Kosovo. I wish that the US had acted—with force if necessary—to stop genocide in Rwanda. In neither of these places was America’s vital national security interests at stake, though our national values were. ... Time and time again, the world has witnessed vast brutality, done nothing, and then said, ‘Never again.’ ... With the final erosion of sanctions, how long would the Kurdish population of Iraq have remained beyond Saddam’s reach? How many more mass graves would he have filled, how many more women raped, critics’ tongues cut out, children tortured? The US, which on three occasions encouraged Iraqis to revolt, had a responsibility to take up this charge, and we have liberated 25 million Iraqis from a state of near slavery. ...

“Now that we have toppled Saddam and liberated the Iraqi people, we must succeed in our ambition to help bring freedom and democracy to the country. We are not trying to turn Iraqis into Americans. We are promoting values that are universal. Iraqis are no more willing than Americans to endure beatings, terror, and a lack of freedom.”

### Requirements for Success

“First, we need a constructive domestic debate. ... We must show bipartisan resolve to prevail in Iraq and not allow the insurgents to believe that they are winning minds in Washington. Our troops, the Iraqi people, and the world need to see unified American political leadership.

“Second, the President must make clear to the American people the scale of the commitment required to prevail in Iraq. He needs to be perfectly frank: Bringing

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peace and democracy to Iraq is an enormous endeavor that will be very expensive, difficult, and long. The American people understand that we are fighting for the freedom of others, and I believe they are willing to sacrifice. ... Part of this sacrifice starts here with lawmakers in Washington. We need to make tough decisions about where our wartime priorities lie, and this means that we have to reassess our domestic priorities. As the appropriations season starts up, it is clear that we simply cannot have it all—tax cuts, pork for the special interests, ever-growing entitlement programs, and war in Iraq. Congress cannot demand discipline and sacrifice only of the men and women fighting in the desert. We need it at home as well.

“Third, it is painfully clear that we need more troops. Before the war, the US Army Chief of Staff said that several hundred thousand troops would be necessary to keep the peace. While criticized at the time, Gen. [Eric K.] Shinseki now looks prescient. ... Our military presence is insufficient to bring stability to the country. We should increase the number of forces, including Marines and Special Forces, to conduct offensive operations. There is also a dire need for other types of forces, including linguists, intelligence officers, and civil affairs officers. We must deploy at least another full division and probably more. ...

“Fourth, we must ensure that our understandable efforts to minimize collateral damage in Fallujah are not seen as a victory for the hardest of the hard-core killers. Our goal in places like Fallujah, where unreconstructed Baathists, former intelligence officers, and foreign jihadists converge, should be to capture or destroy them. We face implacable enemies who reject a peaceful role in the new Iraq. We must be careful not to be seen by Iraqis as responding to direct attacks with accommodation.

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“Fifth, while the burden in Iraq will be primarily ours, we must do more to reinforce our friends and allies who are sharing the burden, risks, and responsibilities in Iraq. Bulgarians, Britons, Spaniards, Italians, and many other nationalities have been wounded and killed in Iraq. Our enemies seek to divide our coalition. They do it through bombs in Madrid and through kidnappings in Iraq. Every leader who has sent personnel to join the coalition in Iraq has done so out of principle, not out of political expediency. ... Those who sacrifice with us in adversity are our truest friends.

“Sixth, we need to stop any irresponsible third country interference in Iraq. We must make clear to Syria and Iran that any meddling in Iraq will have dangerous consequences for the security of their own fragile regimes. In addition, we must be exceedingly cautious about Iranian government involvement in a political settlement. Iran’s interests in Iraq and American interests in Iraq are not, to put it mildly, the same. ...

“Finally, and perhaps most importantly, we need a political strategy. We do not currently have one. With no one identified to lead Iraq after the transfer of sovereignty, ... there is a political vacuum in Iraq today. We need to reduce the uncertainty. ... We must also ... make clear that these new leaders, however chosen, are transitional and will see the country through to elections. An Iraqi government will only have full legitimacy when it is freely chosen by the people.”

### **Must Not Leave Prematurely**

“We have toppled Saddam, and we have the responsibility to finish the job—to place true sovereignty in the hands of the Iraqi people. But what if we fail? ... We are now helping the Iraqi people construct a new order, but we aren’t there yet. If we leave, violence will fill the

vacuum as groups struggle for political power, and we risk all-out civil war. At the very least, ... the violence we see today will pale in comparison to the bloodletting, and we will repeat, in much starker terms, the mistake we made in 1991.

“If we leave, we will pay a dear price as Americans. For years, al Qaeda used our withdrawal from Somalia as an example of our lack of resolve. The lesson was clear—inflict enough pain on Americans, and you will achieve your aims. If our enemies succeed in Iraq, they will have taught the world the lesson of Mogadishu a hundredfold.

“If we leave, we doom reform in the Arab world. Why should other Arabs embrace democracy and freedom when it cannot take root even after a wholesale regime change in Iraq? If we leave, we risk turning Iraq into a failed state, handing its neighbors—including leading terrorist sponsors Iran and Syria—a prime opportunity to expand their influence in the region and creating a breeding ground for terrorism.”

### **If We Succeed**

“If we succeed in stabilizing the country, in building a new government to which we hand sovereignty, in establishing a political system based on freedom and democracy, ... we will have affirmed the universal values upon which this country was founded and on which our foreign policy must be based: ... that people everywhere in the world, not just in the West, deserve the same rights and freedoms we enjoy. ...

“If we succeed, we send a message to every despot in the region that their day is done—that no people will tolerate forever leaders who deprive them of liberty. If we succeed, we help create in the center of the Middle East a representative and humane government that provides an example to the region. We help bring an end to the political repression and economic stagnation in which extremist roots grow.”

### **Use of Power**

“I know the debate over what to do in Iraq is part of the larger debate over how to use the pre-eminent position of the United States in the world. No one can foretell how long we will stand astride the world with unmatched power. We must use our power now to shape the world for the future, to guarantee that future generations here and abroad will live in freedom, democracy, and prosperity.

“We do not use American power to establish empire. We do not spend our blood and treasure for territorial gain, nor for oil, nor to enrich our corporations. We act in Iraq as we should act in the world—to bring lasting liberal order to the globe. Our power must be directed in ways that bolster freedom, democracy, economic prosperity, [and] international institutions and rules.

“In Iraq, our national security interests and our national values converge. Iraq is truly the test of a generation, for America and for our role in the world. Faced with similar challenges, previous generations of Americans have passed such tests with honor. It is now our turn to demonstrate that our power, ennobled by our principles, is the greatest force for good on Earth today. Iraq’s transformation into a secure democracy and a force for freedom in the greater Middle East is the calling of our age. We can succeed. We must succeed.” ■