

# Congressman Kucinich's Iraq Strategy

October 9, 2003

An Open Letter to Ohio's Tenth Congressional District:

The war in Iraq is over and the occupation of Iraq has turned into a quagmire. The US troops have become the targets of criminals and terrorists who are flowing into Iraq for the chance to shoot Americans. The cost of the occupation keeps rising: The President has already asked for more than \$150 billion to pay for it. And there is no end in sight. The UN is now in an impossible situation, where most of the members view the war and occupation of Iraq to be a US folly. Under these circumstances, the UN can't help. The US is stuck, mostly alone, with a costly, unpopular and unending occupation of Iraq. If we stay the course, it will do damage to American security. Iraq was not and is not a threat to the US, yet the demands of an occupation will overstretch our armed forces. And the extended deployment of reserve forces make us vulnerable at home because the reserve call ups include large numbers of firemen, policemen and other first responders who are needed for the homeland defense mission.

People are asking, is there a way out? I believe there is. I am writing to share with you a plan that will get the UN in Iraq and the US out. This plan could bring the troops home by New Year's day, it will cost much less than the President's, and it will increase American security.

The President must go to the UN and announce the US intention to hand over all administrative and security responsibilities to the UN. The UN would help Iraqis move quickly toward self-determination.

The UN, not the US, will administer Iraq's oil revenues. It will be necessary to renounce clearly and unequivocally any interest in controlling Iraq's oil resources.

The UN will administer contracts to repair Iraq. War profiteering will no longer be practiced by the White House. It will be necessary to suspend all reconstruction contracts and close the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, because of the suspicion caused by the sweetheart deals that the Administration has given to large American corporations. In its place, the UN would help Iraqis administer funds to employ Iraqis to repair the damage from the invasion.

Bring US troops home as UN peacekeeping troops rotate into Iraq: The goal is to bring all US troops home by the new year, but in any case, to bring them home as quickly and as safely as possible with a planned and orderly withdrawal.

As soon as practicable after this address, the UN Security Council would ratify a new resolution on Iraq that would deploy a multinational force under UN mandate to keep the peace in Iraq while the interim Iraqi government receives UN support and a new Iraqi government is elected. It is my hope that within one month, the first UN troops and support personnel will arrive in Iraq, and the first US troops will be sent home. UN peacekeeper troops and Iraqis who are commissioned as police and military will replace the US (at a rate of two UN peacekeepers for every three US troops). In place of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority, the UN will open an office to provide administrative support to the Iraqi Governing Council, which will direct the repair to infrastructure

damaged by US invasion in the immediate term. In two months, the UN will begin to conduct a census of the Iraqi population to lay groundwork for national elections. At the same time, new temporary rules for the election will be promulgated, guaranteeing universal suffrage on a one-person –one vote basis. During the transition period, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the American and UN force commanders for a turnover period will settle the question of who commands the troops. The MOU will specify who is to be in charge in case an incident happens during that period. These might be local agreements such as have been used before or they might be for the entire area of operations. By the end of month three, all US troops will have returned home.

In month four, a major milestone will be reached when Iraqi sovereignty is established for the first time. A nationwide election will take place to elect representatives to a Constitutional Convention. The Constitutional Convention will have two duties: 1) elect a temporary Prime Minister who appoints a cabinet to take over responsibility from the Iraqi Governing council, and 2) draft a national constitution. Accountability of this Prime Minister is achieved by virtue of the fact that he can be recalled by a majority of the Convention.

In one year, there will be nationwide elections pursuant to the new Constitution, which will install an elected government in Iraq.

The US owes a moral debt to the people of Iraq for the damage caused by the US invasion. The US will also owe a contribution to the UN to help Iraq make the transition to self-government. American taxpayers deserve that their contributions be handled in an accountable, transparent manner. However, Americans are not required to build a state-of-the-art infrastructure as the Administration is planning. The Administration is ordering for top shelf technology from US corporations for Iraq and paid for by US taxpayers. Sweetheart deals have been awarded with billions of dollars to top corporations and political contributors. That is precisely what corrupts the Administration's reconstruction efforts today. Instead, Iraqis should be employed to repair Iraq, and US taxpayers should pay only for the damage caused by the US invasion, including compensation for its victims. US taxpayers should not be asked, however, to furnish for Iraq what we do not have here.

The war and occupation in Iraq have been costly in other ways too. One price the Administration has forced the US to pay is America's moral authority in the world. The Administration launched an unprovoked attack on Iraq, and the premises of the war are proving to be false. This has cost our credibility and done serious harm to America's standing in the world. After the attacks of 9-11, the world felt sympathy for us. But this war and the occupation have squandered that sympathy, replacing it with dangerous anti-American sentiment in most of the world's countries. And, perhaps most costly of all, the US occupying force serves as a recruiting cause for terrorists and people who wish us ill.

All we can do now is to make a dramatic reversal of course: we must acknowledge that the continued US military presence in Iraq is counterproductive and destabilizing. We have a choice in front of us: either we change course, withdraw our troops and request

that the UN move in, or we sink deeper into this occupation, with more US casualties, ever higher financial costs, and diminished security for Americans.

We need a real change. My plan will bring the troops home by the new year, transfer authority to the UN with provisions made toward a rapid transition to Iraqi sovereignty, and it will save billions over the Administration's occupation. It will enable the US to think creatively about how the US will deal with threats that come not from established countries with conventional armies (our armed forces are more than adequate to that task), but rather threats that come from networks of terrorist and criminals, who use unconventional means to injure Americans. We must also apprehend the criminals who masterminded the 9-11 attacks on this country, a goal that is hindered by the occupation of Iraq. Lastly, it will also enable the US to redirect scarce resources to rebuild America.

Sincerely,  
Dennis J. Kucinich  
Member of Congress