



Weapons of Mass Destruction resolve

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- Mr. Hegseth begins the video by speculating that, “The Iraq War was an absolute disaster. A historic mistake. That’s probably what most Americans – not to mention most people around the world – would say.” Why do you think that most people would agree with the grim assessment of the Iraq War? Do you think that it was a disaster? Why or why not?
- Later, Mr. Hegseth explains that, “As 2007 dawned, President Bush faced a near total collapse in both public and political support for the war. He had to make an impossibly difficult decision: Accept strategic defeat and leave Iraq in chaos. Or send even more troops into battle. He chose the latter - a decision that came to be known as ‘The Surge.’” What specific factors do you think influenced President Bush to make the decision that he did? Do you think that it was the right decision? Why or why not? If you had to make the same decision, what choice would you make and what reasoning would you use to defend your choice?
- Mr. Hegseth then reminds us of what happened after President Obama pulled the U.S. troops out of Iraq- “Islamist terror, which US soldiers had successfully crushed, returned with a new vengeance, most prominently in the form of ISIS. And the fragile peace between Sunnis and Shia fell apart. With America nowhere to be seen, Iraq’s neighbor to the east and America’s mortal enemy, Iran, filled the political vacuum, while ISIS brutally exploited the security vacuum.” Why do you think that President Obama valued fulfilling a campaign promise over valuing winning the war, long-term stability in Iraq, and the lives of U.S. soldiers and Iraqi civilians? Explain. Do you think that President Obama made the right decision in this case? Why or why not? Would you have made the same decision if you were president at the time? Explain.
- “Initially dismissed by President Obama as the ‘jayvee team,’ ISIS took control of a large part of the country. Its black flag soon flew over Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi, and many other cities that American troops had secured at such great cost. The war that George W. Bush had won Barack Obama had lost.” What exactly was the ‘great cost’ that American troops secured those cities with? Do you agree with Mr. Hegseth’s claim that President Bush had effectively won the war but that President Obama lost it? Why or why not?
- Mr. Hegseth concludes the video by stating, “The painful lesson is this: Resolve works and retreat doesn’t. When America commits to military victory, as it did during the Surge, it can defeat its enemies. But when America retreats for political reasons, it loses. And so do millions of others.” In what ways does America ‘lose’ if it retreats? Who do you think the ‘millions of others’ are that Mr. Hegseth refers to here, and in what ways do they ‘lose’?

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: U.S. Troop Pullout

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “U.S. troop withdrawal let Islamic State enter Iraq, military leaders say,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What are a number of current and former military experts saying about the U.S. withdrawal of troops from Iraq? Who is Ray Odierno, and what does he have to say about the matter? What were his recommendations? Who is Leon Panetta, and what did he have to say on the subject? Who is Jack Keane, and what is his view regarding the withdrawal?
- Why do you think that the Obama administration did not use diplomacy to do what was in the best interest of America and Iraq? What do you think would have happened if the U.S. had left troops and intelligence capability in Iraq? Explain.
- Specifically, how does this article support the points made in the video? Do you think that the current and future administrations will heed the lesson of ‘resolve, not retreat?’ Why or why not?



QUIZ

HOW IRAQ WAS WON AND LOST

1. Most people around the world would probably say the Iraq War was an absolute disaster.
 - a. True
 - b. False

2. When President George W. Bush decided to invade Iraq in 2003, _____.
 - a. his choice was based on economic gain
 - b. the war struggled to gain the support of the international community
 - c. the war had overwhelming bi-partisan support in the House and Senate
 - d. it was in response to a “Status of Forces Agreement”

3. What was “The Surge?”
 - a. The acceptance of strategic defeat in Iraq.
 - b. The choice to send even more troops into Iraq.
 - c. A coordinated attack on Iraq by ISIS.
 - d. An overwhelming withdrawal of international support for the war.

4. What was the result of “The Surge?”
 - a. Attacks on US forces were down 90%.
 - b. Al Qaeda in Iraq was decimated.
 - c. Iraq held new elections.
 - d. All of the above.

5. What is the painful lesson learned from Iraq?
 - a. Resolve works, and retreat doesn't.
 - b. You can't win a war without allies.
 - c. It's best to leave the Middle East to its own devices.
 - d. Keep your enemies close.



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/jul/26/us-troop-withdrawal-let-islamic-state-enter-iraq-m/>

U.S. troop withdrawal let Islamic State enter Iraq, military leaders say



Gen. Raymond T. Odierno said that had the U.S. military stayed in Iraq longer, the Islamic State situation might be under more control. (Associated Press)

By Rowan Scarborough - The Washington Times - Sunday, July 26, 2015

A number of former and current military leaders who were in power when all U.S. troops left Iraq are saying today that the complete exit left the door open for the Islamic State's land grab.

The assessment comes from the Army chief of staff, a former Marine commandant, a former U.S. Central Command chief, a former defense secretary and, privately, from the officer now running the war in Iraq against the Islamic State, also known as ISIL and ISIS.

The question is: Will these lessons-learned public comments sway the presidential campaign debate on what should be done to defeat the terrorist army?

The military officials say a residual American air-and-land combat force could have steered Iraqi Security Forces and blunted the Islamic State's invasion of northern and western Iraq last winter and spring. The U.S. could have prevented the harm done to Iraq's command structure by Nouri al-Maliki as prime minister and helped quell bickering among Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

Army Gen. Raymond T. Odierno was the top commander in Iraq in the post-troop-surge era that all but eliminated al Qaeda's vicious franchise. When the last troops went home in December 2011, he sat among the Joint Chiefs as the Army's chief of staff, his current position.

Gen. Odierno recently told Fox News: "If we had stayed a little more engaged, I think maybe it might have been prevented. I've always believed the United States played the role of honest broker between all the groups, and when we pulled ourselves out, we lost that role."

He had recommended keeping 35,000 troops in place in 2011. "I think it would have been good for us to stay," he said.

Marine Corps Gen. Joseph Dunford, a commander in Iraq's Anbar province, in his July 9 confirmation hearing to be the next Joint Chiefs chairman, differed with those who said the U.S. had no choice but to leave because Iraq's prime minister was not meeting U.S. demands.

"I'm not sure I'd say that that meant we had no option to stay," he told the Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Gen. Dunford's predecessor as Marine commandant, and one of Gen. Odierno's colleagues on the Joint Chiefs at the time, was Gen. James Amos.

Last summer, as the Islamic State shocked the Obama administration by consolidating gains in Anbar province and Mosul, Iraq's second-largest city, Gen. Amos traveled to the Brookings Institution.

"I have a hard time believing that, had we been there, and worked with the government, and worked with parliament, and worked with the minister of defense, the minister of interior, I don't think we'd be in the same shape we're in today," he said.

He also said the U.S. must remain committed overseas — a view that could be read as criticizing the complete Iraq pullout.

"We may think we're done with all of these nasty, thorny, tacky little things that are going on around the world — and I'd argue that if you're in that nation, it's not a tacky, little thing for you. We may think we're done with them, but they're not done with us," said Gen. Amos, who was a few months away from retirement at that time.

'Maintain a presence'

For some, making the case that leaving Iraq was a mistake bolsters the argument that the U.S. needs to do more than the limited Obama-approved mission of airstrikes and advising and training the beleaguered Iraqi Security Forces.

Michael Rubin, a military analyst at the American Enterprise Institute, said the Iraq withdrawal statements set up a presidential campaign debate on whether President Obama's foreign policy is "an outlier in the scheme of things, or will it be the new normal?"

"There is consensus among military practitioners — traditionally, the last people in the world who want to go to war — that leaving Iraq was a mistake," Mr. Rubin said. "The question now is whether potential candidates from both parties are content to simply blame the mess on Obama, or whether they are prepared to do something about it."

"Alas, I'm afraid, at this point, that many of those who wish to succeed Obama are more about posture than committed action."

Two months after Gen. Amos spoke at Brookings, an even more powerful voice emerged. Leon E. Panetta, the defense secretary at the time of the Iraq withdrawal, told "60 Minutes" on CBS the exit was a mistake.

He said that as the American flag was wrapped up for the trip home, he was not confident it was the right move.

"I really thought it was important for us to maintain a presence in Iraq, and the decision was we ought to at least try to maintain [8,000] to 10,000 U.S. troops there, plus keeping some of our intelligence personnel in place to be able to continue the momentum in the right direction," Mr. Panetta said.

Marine Gen. James Mattis headed U.S. Central Command during the pullout. When asked at a 2013 hearing if a residual force could have made a difference in Iraq, he said it was unclear.

In retirement, he appeared in January before the same Senate Committee on Armed Services and offered a clearer opinion.

"I would tell you that the military, the senior military officers, we all explained that the successes we'd achieved by 2010-2011 were — and this is a quote — 'reversible,' that the democratic processes and the military capability were too nascent to pull everyone out at one time," Gen. Mattis testified.

Status of forces agreement

Retired Army Gen. Jack Keane was a key architect of the Iraq troop surge, which replaced a strategy of U.S. warriors being generally confined to bases while the Iraqis were being trained to take over.

Today, he is one of the most vocal critics of the decision to leave, as he saw all the gains made in 2007 to 2011 washed away in a wave of Islamic State terrorists taking territory and committing mass killings.

“As we pulled out of Iraq in 2011, just think of this: We had all our intelligence capability there. We knew where the enemy was. We were flying drones. We’re tracking them. We have signals intelligence pouring in, eavesdropping on phone conversations and the rest of it. We’re using our counterterrorism forces to bang against these guys. We’re passing that to the Iraqis so their commandos can do the same,” Mr. Keane told The Washington Times in a 2014 interview. “On a given day in 2011, that screen went blank. The Iraqis went from a significant amount of intelligence on what was taking place, and the screen just went blank.”

There is also a hidden voice of dissent. At the time of the withdrawal, Army Gen. Lloyd Austin III was the last U.S. commander in Iraq. He viewed the gains in Iraq as reversible and recommended keeping about 20,000 troops in country.

But his words, and those of other military advisers, were not heeded as Mr. Obama celebrated the last service members leaving Iraq as an end to the war.

“We’re leaving behind a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people,” the president said in December 2011.

Gen. Austin today is in charge of U.S. Central Command and, as such, directs the new war in Iraq.

Why was the Bush administration’s 2008 status of forces agreement allowed to take final effect in Dec. 2011 as military leaders recommended a continued American commitment? It is fair to say that then-Prime Minister al-Maliki, his relations with Washington going from bad to worse, was not greatly interested in rewriting the agreement. Mr. Obama was not either, and made no diplomatic push to iron out differences.

“In the end, the Iraqi leadership did not try to get an agreement through their parliament that would have made possible a continued U.S. military presence after Dec. 3,” Robert M. Gates, the defense secretary during the troop surge, wrote in his memoir, “Duty.” “Maliki was just too fearful of the political consequences. Most Iraqis wanted us gone. It was a regrettable turn of events for our future influence in Iraq and our strategic position in the region. And a win for Iran.”

He added, “President Obama simply wanted the ‘bad’ war in Iraq to be ended.”