

# WebMemo



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## Senate Rejects Iraq Withdrawal While House Continues on a Dangerous Course

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Yesterday the Senate narrowly rejected a resolution proposed by Majority Leader Harry Reid that would have restricted President Bush's ability to wage war in Iraq and imposed a deadline of March 31, 2008, for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. The chamber subsequently passed, in an 82 to 16 vote, a resolution sponsored by Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH) that affirmed Congress's strong support for troops deployed in the field and rejected a reduction or cut off of funding for them. Taken together, these votes were a significant victory for the Bush Administration in its intensifying struggle with the Democrat-controlled Congress over U.S. Iraq policy. But the House of Representatives, which has a stronger Democratic majority than the Senate, next week will consider a supplemental appropriation bill that would attach dangerous conditions to war funding and restrict the President's constitutional powers as commander in chief.

While the Senate rejected the siren song of withdrawal from Iraq and supported funding the mission, House Democrats remain determined to use the emergency spending bill to sabotage the Bush Administration's surge strategy and force a rapid withdrawal. Yesterday, the House Appropriations Committee approved a \$124 billion emergency spending bill for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that would end the involvement of U.S. troops in Iraq next year. The bill passed in a party line vote of 36 to 28, with Representative Barbara Lee (D-CA) the only Democrat voting against it.

The bill provides \$95.5 billion for military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, adding \$4 billion to

President Bush's request for items such as military healthcare and readiness. It also adds funding for a wide variety of other programs unrelated to the wars, such as assistance for victims of Hurricane Katrina, levee repairs, agricultural assistance, wild-fire fighting, and aviation, border, and port security.

The bill would restrict the President's ability to conduct the war in Iraq by imposing strict benchmarks for progress that the Iraqi government would have to meet, including disarming sectarian militias, reducing sectarian violence, passing a law that mandates the equitable sharing of Iraq's oil revenues, and holding local elections. If President Bush cannot certify progress in these areas by July 1, the troops would be required to withdraw by the end of 2007. Even if the President can certify progress, troops would be required to withdraw by September 1, 2008.

The bill also puts conditions on war financing, including a requirement that troops deployed to Iraq must first receive certain levels of training, equipment, and a period of rest between deployments. This is a cynical attempt—designed to appear to be an effort to improve military readiness—to block the Bush Administration's surge strategy.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1399.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/MiddleEast/wm1399.cfm)

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This kind of congressional micromanagement undermines the war effort by taking battlefield decisions away from the generals who are best qualified to make them. Moreover, by restricting the flow of reinforcements, Congress could inadvertently put the troops already deployed in Iraq at greater risk.<sup>1</sup>

The restrictions attached to the supplemental war-funding bill also infringe on the President's constitutional authority as commander in chief.<sup>2</sup> Its passage could lead to a clash over constitutional powers that could end up in court, further undermining the clarity of U.S. policy regarding Iraq.

Finally, the House bill would harm the U.S. war effort in Iraq by imposing an artificial timetable for withdrawing U.S. troops. This would fatally undermine the Iraqi government, allow Iraq to slide into a much more bloody sectarian civil war, and hand Iran, Syria, and al-Qaeda a major victory.<sup>3</sup>

A rapid American withdrawal would allow al-Qaeda and other Islamic radical groups to turn Iraq into a base for exporting terrorism that would greatly increase the threat to Americans and American allies. A rush-to-exit strategy also would abandon Iraqis to a humanitarian catastrophe that would push tens of thousands of refugees into neighboring countries, further destabilizing the region. The end result would be a strategic setback for American foreign policy, the global war against terrorism, and efforts to contain Iran.

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1. See James Carafano, "Congress's Unprincipled Proposals on Iraq Could Put Lives and Nation at Risk," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1371, February 26, 2007.
2. See Todd Gaziano, Steven Groves, and Brian Walsh, "Congress's Iraq Resolutions: Without Resolve or Constitutional Purpose," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1347, February 6, 2007.
3. See James Phillips, "House Iraq Vote Spells Trouble Ahead for War Effort," Heritage Foundation *WebMemo* No. 1364, February 17, 2007.