

## Term

# The Petraeus Report

## Definition

The term 'Petraeus Report' refers to the personal testimony of Multinational Force Commander (MFC) in Iraq, General David H. Petraeus, regarding the progress of the United States and its allies in their military operation in Iraq. Petraeus delivered his assessments to Congress in September 2007 (10-11/9).

## Background

At the beginning of 2007, the US government decided to embark on a new military operation in Iraq, known as the 'Surge'. The new policy was based on the Bush administration's idea of a 'New Way Forward'. Its goal was to improve security and prepare the ground in Iraq for stabilization of the political system. To this end, the US increased its military presence in Iraq.<sup>1</sup>

Concurrent to the comprehensive military operation, debate in the US over its presence in Iraq intensified. Democrats in Congress demanded immediate withdrawal from Iraq and acted to change US strategy.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, General Petraeus testified before Congress on September of 2007.

## Content of the Report

The 'Petraeus Report' assesses the military achievements of the US and its allies in Iraq as well as their reconstruction and stabilization efforts there. It extensively discusses the Surge's positive results in terms of combating resistance and insurgency forces in the country.

The report emphasizes the following:

- **The Surge is achieving its goals** – Findings show significant US achievements, since January of 2007, in operating against insurgency groups in Iraq.<sup>3</sup> There has been success in relation to both Sunni and Shiite insurgencies, although the issue of terrorism in Iraq has yet to be fully resolved.
- **Nature of the continued US presence in Iraq** – Concerning the future character of US presence in Iraq, Petraeus recommends:
  1. **Gradually reducing military presence in Iraq** – Reducing the number of US military divisions to the levels which preceded the Surge implementation.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See: [US Department of State document](#) regarding the 'New Way Forward'.

<sup>2</sup> See: Elisabeth Bumiller, "A General Faces Questions From 5 Potential Bosses", [New York Times](#), 9/12/07.

<sup>3</sup> Positive results derived from the application of heavy military pressure on Al-Qaeda in Iraq, and a wide series of arrests in its leadership. In addition, the results are derived from the decision of Sunni sheiks, particularly in the Anbar province, to stop supporting Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Concerning the Shiite insurgencies, the report notes that the coalition forces performed a number of important arrests of Hizbullah leaders and Iranian Revolutionary Guards operating with their allies in Iraq (the [Petraeus Report](#), 9/10-11/07).

<sup>4</sup> According to Petraeus' plan, 30,000 US soldiers (5 divisions) will return to the US by July 2008. With this, US deployment in Iraq will return to the levels prior the Surge ([New York Times](#), 9/11/07).

October 11, 2007

2. **Continuing current patterns of action** – The report supports continuing defensive operations in order to improve civilian security. It also recommends a slow and gradual transfer of authorities to Iraqi military officers.
3. **Setting a future date for monitoring and evaluation** – According to the nature of the military campaign in Iraq and in light of the difficulties in long term planning, Petraeus recommends an additional assessment of the military operation in Iraq in March 2008. Based on this evaluation, the military echelon will determine the appropriate pace for redeployment in Iraq.

## Implications for the Future

Petraeus' recommendations include two influential points concerning Iraq's stability and the future of American presence in the region:

- **Continued US presence in Iraq** – The report reinforces the assumption that an ill-timed withdrawal from Iraq will imply failure of US policy.<sup>5</sup> The report exhibits flexibility concerning a gradual reduction of US military forces in Iraq, but asserts that a significant presence of forces must be maintained in the coming years.
- **“From Leading to Partnering to Overwatch”<sup>6</sup>** – The Petraeus Report suggests a model for a gradual transfer of authority to the Iraqi military. At each stage, the US presence would be reduced and Iraqi presence increased. According to Petraeus, gradual progress will be determined according to the capacity of Iraqi security mechanisms to ensure order and stability in the country.<sup>7</sup>

End.

---

<sup>5</sup> See: "Why They Should Stay", [Economist](#), 9/13/07.

<sup>6</sup> "The essence of the approach I recommended is captured in its title: 'Security While Transitioning: From Leading to Partnering to Overwatch.' This approach seeks to build on the security improvements our troopers and our Iraqi counterparts have fought so hard to achieve in recent months. It reflects recognition of the importance of securing the population and the imperative of transitioning responsibilities to Iraqi institutions and Iraqi forces as quickly as possible, but without rushing to failure" (the [Petraeus Report](#), 9/10-11/07).

<sup>7</sup> In fact, this model enables a gradual decrease in the amount of US forces in Iraq and prevents the possibility of a sudden, one-time withdrawal.