

# 5 YEARS TOO MANY!

**[Montana Peace Seekers Network Statement  
as presented to  
Senator Max Baucus, Representative Denny Rehberg and Senator Jon Tester  
in Helena, Montana March 19, 2008]**

Cities across Montana have passed referenda and resolutions calling for a rapid and orderly withdrawal from Iraq. Subsequently, citizens have met with and written to the Montana Congressional Delegation requesting that they vote against funding for the Iraq occupation. In response, the citizens have heard arguments for continuing funding and the occupation. We will address those arguments here. In addition, there are definite alternatives to maintaining a U. S. presence in Iraq.

## ALTERNATIVES

Call on all the nations of the world, including Asia and the Middle East, to join in a diplomatic effort for peace. Kofi Annan demonstrated such a solution in Kenya. Create a Peace Action Group that will implement conclusions of the Iraq Study group. Draw on individuals such as George Mitchell and Nobel Peace Laureates Muhammed Yunus, Shirin Ebadi and John Hume. All have proven their ability to organize large population segments, achieve human rights goals and bring peace and economic stability to troubled countries.

Redirect funding from military actions to NGO organizations such as Doctors without Borders, CARE International, World Vision, Save the Children, MBAs without borders, etc. These organizations can have a significant role in rebuilding and stabilizing Iraq. We can call on the community of nations, through the United Nations, through separate diplomatic missions, or both, to become fully involved in providing security in Iraq and in developing Iraq's own police and military capability.

None of these interventions require U. S. military involvement.

We know that American military action spreads violence and creates terrorists where there were none. Let's try it the other way, with diplomacy and involvement of all nations in reconstruction and security.

These are just a few suggestions for alternatives. There are more, and endless possibilities that will emerge if we draw on the best minds and experienced diplomats. We are requesting that these alternatives and others be implemented before any further consideration of U. S. involvement in Iraq.

## ARGUMENTS

- *If we leave Iraq, the Iraqi government will not keep the country stable and secure.*

This is speculation. In fact, we do not know what will happen if the U. S. no longer maintains combat troops in Iraq. There is no evidence that chaos will ensue if the U. S. withdraws troops.

This argument demonstrates the mindset that the U. S. is the savior of the world and U. S. military violence is the only way to enforce U. S. security. This is Bush-Cheney propaganda. They are selling fear to willing buyers in Congress. Their corollary is that the world is a dangerous place and we must be in constant fear of attack from all sides. They have concocted enemies, rogue states and unstable regimes that need changing into their image. They have propped up governments that are unpopular in their own countries — Nouri Al Maliki and Pervez Musharraf. These are U.S.-backed regimes that do not represent their people. This is U.S. dictatorship by proxy.

- *If Congress denies funding for the Iraq occupation, the president will take funding from other military missions worldwide, and this will endanger the security that the U. S. presence provides across the globe.*

The U.S. is not necessarily providing the only barrier between the world and chaos. Just as in Iraq, it is not a case of “after the U. S., the deluge.” The U. S. has demonstrated that, far from security, its presence brings violence. Violence continues in Iraq. Just because there may be a lid on the pressure cooker does not prevent all of the steam from escaping, and it certainly does nothing to turn off the heat source.

There is also no certainty about what the president would do, or what the congress could do to prevent the president from shuffling military assets. Whenever there are threats of closing bases in the U. S., individual congressmen develop the power to prevent base closures in their districts. This, despite the powers of the Commander in Chief to redistribute military assets.

It is just more speculation, and fear, to predict what the president will do, especially as the election draws nearer.

- *Voting against funding the occupation will not bring the troops home.*

Voting **FOR** funding will not bring the troops home.

Voting for funding props up the Bush regime and Bush propaganda.

It supports the madness wherein Pres. Bush accuses Congress of second guessing

commanders in the field when Congress passes a bill calling for military withdrawal. Then, when the commanders in the field counsel withdrawal, Pres. Bush fires them.

Sen. Obama explains his decision to vote against funding:

"I came to a difficult conclusion that, given George Bush's general view that he was going to double-down — actually send more troops in and continue this process — that the only way to get him to negotiate and sit down at the table was to not give him a blank check. But that was a very difficult decision — not one that I came to easily at all."—March 14, 2008 NPR interview.

Voting for funding is giving George Bush a blank check.

- *Voting against funding will deprive the troops of weapons and protective gear needed to keep them safe.*

This is just speculation. There is no evidence this will happen. There have already been outcries against the initial lack of preparedness in prosecuting the invasion of Iraq under Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld lost his job over it. If the military runs short of money, the commanders can inform Washington they can no longer manage the occupation. They will simply have to cease offensive operations and come home.

In addition, there is a sufficient time lag between a vote to stop funding and the time that the military actually spends the money to allow for adequate planning for a safe and orderly withdrawal. If Congress votes on March 20 to cut off funding, there will be several months before the funding actually stops. The troops will not be bereft of necessities in all that time. It is more than enough time for military commanders to plan a return to the U. S. that will bring all the troops home safely.

Withholding Iraq funding from the supplemental defense bill in HR 2471 was a positive step. The funding issue will arise again in April. It is time now to institute serious conditions that require diplomatic, non-military solutions and will result in withdrawal of U. S. troops. We ask our Senators and Representative to let the administration know that Congress will not produce blank checks in advance of empty promises.