

closely aligned with the United States. Elsewhere, the United States' "tough talk" toward Syria has led the Israeli government to warn that U.S. actions threaten to destabilize the region. The massive number of civilian casualties in Iraq are caused by heavy weapon attacks and flesh-burning compounds such as white phosphorus, particularly devastating in urban areas. Such attacks greatly damage U.S. credibility and political influence in the Middle East, as well as respect from the international community. The many U.S. bases in Iraq are seen as a long-term threat to the region and the future of Iraq. They should be removed when the troops leave.

9. Humanitarian aid is crippled by the occupation.

The U.S. military seeks to win Iraqis' support by delivering food and medicine and implementing reconstruction projects. Such activities are also used to gather intelligence, blurring the lines between the military and humanitarian efforts. As a result, civilian humanitarian aid is confused with military-led operations, creating the misperception that relief workers are part of the occupying forces and a legitimate target. These conditions have forced almost all NGOs and UN agencies to leave. Coupled with lack of progress by the U.S. military in rebuilding Iraq, this severs the lifeline of international humanitarian aid to Iraqis. Ending the U.S. occupation would reduce tensions and clear the way for humanitarian organizations to support Iraqis in rebuilding their country.

10. The global community wants the war and occupation to end now.

The United States cannot afford to ignore the voices and sentiments of the many other countries that oppose the occupation. Bridges need to be rebuilt between the United States and the international community. The past three years show that unilateral militarism, with disregard for our allies, leads to isolation and failure. Iraq needs political and diplomatic support from the international community—including its immediate neighbors—to get back on its feet and keep peace internally and externally.

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Photo by John Humphries, 2002 AFSC delegation to Iraq

**Ten
Reasons
Why
the U.S.
Must
Leave
Iraq**



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1. The human cost of war is unacceptable.

The U.S. decision to invade and occupy Iraq comes with a horrific price tag: deaths of an estimated 100,000 Iraqis and more than 2,345 occupation troops, including 2,140 U.S. military personnel. The numbers rise daily. Hundreds of thousands have been physically wounded or traumatized by chronic violence and insecurity. This path will not lead to victory. There are no winners, and there is no military solution. In spite of this, the U.S. continues to embrace military rather than diplomatic approaches. An immediate end to hostilities is essential to stem the carnage and loss of human life.

2. The U.S. occupation is a catalyst for violence.

The longer the U.S. occupation continues, the more Iraqis will join the resistance, which primarily opposes the foreign presence. Conservative estimates say the number of resistance fighters in Iraq increased from 5,000 in November 2003 to 20,000 in November 2005. Violence is aggravated at all levels by the U.S. presence: in neighborhoods, among militant extremists, and between ethnic groups. When the brutality of occupation — raiding homes and hospitals, detaining people without charge or due process, torturing detainees, imposing curfews on communities, using military force to suppress demonstrations — ends, the majority of resisters will lay down their weapons.

3. U.S. actions inflame divisions and the chance of civil war.

The occupation and its divisive policies deepen tensions within Iraqi society. Three major mistakes the United States made from the beginning of the occupation were: (1) dissolution of the Iraqi army and police, leading to insecurity, looting, and violence; (2) failure to dismantle militias, allowing the number of armed combatants to increase; and (3) support for Shi'a demands for regional autonomy, fueling the possibility of a break-up of the country along ethnic lines. Problems from these mistakes will continue as long as the United States controls Iraq politically and militarily. If U.S. troops leave, an independent Iraqi government, free of external control, could open the door to discussion and reconciliation between groups.

4. Iraqis want the United States to leave now.

Recent polls reveal that Iraqi opinion coalesces on four demands: (1) an end to foreign occupation, (2) compensation to Iraqis for damages caused by the U.S. invasion, (3) release of Iraqi prisoners, and (4) establishment of political and military institutions independent of outside influences. A survey in Iraq commissioned by the British military in September 2005 found that 82 percent of Iraqis "strongly oppose" the continuing presence of coalition troops, and 45 percent feel attacks against coalition troops are justified. The battle for hearts and minds has been lost.

5. Democracy cannot flourish under an occupation.

For Iraqis, the key issues in the December 2005 election for the first permanent government were security, economic opportunity, and removal of foreign occupation. The mechanics of voting worked — the third election for Iraqis during 2005. However, the election is only a milestone in the country's difficult journey toward self-determination, with great challenges ahead. The new government must now move beyond artificial deadlines set by outsiders, determine its own goals, and see the process through.

6. The United States has failed to rebuild Iraq or provide for Iraqis' basic needs.

Twelve years of economic sanctions (1991-2003) nearly crippled Iraq. Malnutrition became widespread. Life-sustaining systems such as water and sewage treatment, electricity, and health care were severely degraded. These problems led to deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraq's most vulnerable citizens, many of them children. Since the beginning of the occupation, U.S. forces not only failed to reverse these trends, but also failed to restore services disrupted by war and looting. This is not due to a lack of funds, but to a perversion of priorities. While the United States spends \$6 billion a month fighting the war (a total of more than \$226 billion so far), it has not spent even half of the \$18 billion allocated for reconstruction. Much of the money evaporates due to corruption and ballooning security costs. Plus, awarding major contracts to U.S. corporations who fail to complete their work takes money out of the economy and creates little benefit to Iraqis. The money that is spent on war and occupation should be spent on meaningful Iraqi-led reconstruction.

7. The Iraq war and occupation waste resources needed for U.S. domestic programs.

Community programs are being cut in every corner of the United States — from public schools to libraries to hospitals to transportation. Meanwhile, the U.S. deficit continues to skyrocket, building a massive debt for future generations of Americans. Money that could be used for domestic needs instead goes into the war and occupation. Furthermore, using National Guard troops in Iraq leaves states shorthanded when disasters strike at home. Hurricane Katrina, in particular, highlighted the need for massive reallocation of resources from armaments into disaster preparedness and infrastructure at home.

8. The U.S. occupation of Iraq destabilizes the Middle East.

The rash, ill-advised, and nearly unilateral invasion of Iraq and subsequent U.S. occupation has profoundly damaged the United States' relations with other Middle East governments, including those it considers to be allies. U.S. actions have galvanized militants in the region to join the insurrection in Iraq and attack other countries, such as Jordan, considered to be too