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**Obama's Plan for Iraq
By David Swanson**

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator

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Senator Obama published a sketch of a plan for Iraq in the [New York Times](#) today, and it's about the same as his plan has always been, clearly superior to Bush or McCain and yet horribly muddled, vague, and militaristic, until he gets to the highly encouraging last few lines. Obama begins by fudging Maliki's call to withdraw troops into his own longstanding call to withdraw "combat troops", but not to actually withdraw them, rather to move them elsewhere in the region. He joins in this op-ed, as usual, in hyping false threats from Afghanistan, Al Qaeda, and Iran. He proposes increased war in Afghanistan and possibly Pakistan, as part of what he embraces as "the war on terrorism". And, yet, while he always says "redeploy" rather than "withdraw," the number of troops he proposes sending to Afghanistan is much smaller than the number he proposes taking out of Iraq. This would suggest that he wants to bring a lot of troops home and is just too scared and politically tone-deaf to say so. (Although he does not explain why the U.S. military would still be constrained to shift troops around the empire if he pursues his plan to drastically enlarge the largest military the globe has known. Nor, of course, does he explain why that's needed.)

Obama would end the "war," but what about the occupation? Obama also parrots rightwing rhetoric about "encouraging the Iraqis to step up," as if the vast majority of

Iraqis haven't wanted the United States to leave for years now, as if the Iraqis share with the United States the mission of occupying their country with a foreign force and just haven't been willing to pick up their share of the work. Obama proposes to leave behind a "residual force" of Americans in Iraq following his withdrawal of "combat troops," to be completed two years from now. He does not say how large that force will be, explain what a "non-combat troop" would consist of, or explicitly indicate that the "residual force" will ever leave or come home. He also hedges even on his commitment to reach his unspecified goal two years from now. And, of course, he does not explain how the "war" will end as he withdraws the troops, any more than McCain explains how he will withdraw the troops after the violence ends. (A credible announcement of a withdrawal would certainly reduce the violence, but it would do so to the extent that the announcement was credible and the announced withdrawal was to be swift and complete. A 16-month partial withdrawal announcement might not create complete peace.)

But then come some encouraging lines: "I would not hold our military, our resources and our foreign policy hostage to a misguided desire to maintain permanent bases in Iraq... I would make it absolutely clear that we seek no presence in Iraq similar to our permanent bases in South Korea."

That conclusion to Obama's plan is encouraging, but will he put a date on it? When will he close the non-permanent bases, or - better - restore to Congress its Constitutional right to do so? And why, following his Fourth Amendment flip-flop should we believe his date if he ever does provide it? Sadly, if Congress continues to wriggle spineless on the floor during the coming months, our judgment of Obama's willingness to end aggressive wars will have to be based primarily on how loudly or quietly he cheers for the bombs falling on Iran, and whether he finally supports the impeachment of a dictatorial president or the elimination of the Congress.

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator, David Swanson, is co-founder of the AfterDowningStreet.org coalition and a board member of Progressive Democrats of America. His website is www.davidswanson.org. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Swanson.

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