

The Kucinich 12-Point Plan for Iraq

Introduced by Congressman Kucinich in the House of Representatives on January 9, 2007

1 The US announces it will end the occupation, close military bases, and withdraw. The insurgency has been fueled by the occupation and the prospect of a long-term presence as indicated by the building of permanent bases. A US declaration of an intention to withdraw troops and close bases will help dampen the insurgency which has been inspired to resist colonization and fight invaders and those who have supported US policy. Furthermore this will provide an opening where parties within Iraq and in the region can set the stage for negotiations towards peaceful settlement.

2 US announces that it will use existing funds to bring the troops and necessary equipment home. Congress appropriated \$70 billion in bridge funds on October 1st for the war. Money from this and other DOD accounts can be used to fund the troops in the field over the next few months, and to pay for the cost of the return of the troops, (which has been estimated at between \$5 and \$7 billion dollars) while a political settlement is being negotiated and preparations are made for a transition to an international security and peacekeeping force.

3 Order a simultaneous return of all US contractors to the United States and turn over all contracting work to the Iraqi government. The contracting process has been rife with world-class corruption, with contractors stealing from the US Government and cheating the Iraqi people, taking large contracts and giving 5% or so to Iraqi subcontractors.

Reconstruction activities must be reorganized and closely monitored in Iraq by the Iraqi government, with the assistance of the international community. The massive corruption as it relates to US contractors, should be investigated by congressional committees and federal grand juries. The lack of tangible benefits, the lack of accountability for billions of dollars, while millions of Iraqis do not have a means of financial support, nor substantive employment, cries out for justice.

It is noteworthy that after the first Gulf War, Iraqis reestablished electricity within three months, despite sanctions. Four years into the US occupation there is no water, nor reliable electricity in Baghdad, despite massive funding from the US and from the Madrid conference. The greatest mystery involves the activities of private security companies who function as mercenaries. Reports of false flag operations must be investigated by an international tribunal.

4 Convene a regional conference for the purpose of developing a security and stabilization force for Iraq. The focus should be on a process which solves the problems of Iraq. The US has told the international community, "This is our policy and we want you to come and help us implement it." The international community may have an interest in helping Iraq, but has no interest in participating in the implementation of failed US policy.

A shift in US policy away from unilateralism and toward cooperation will provide new opportunities for exploring common concerns about the plight of Iraq. The UN is the appropriate place to convene, through the office of the Secretary General, all countries that have interests, concerns and influence, including the five permanent members of the Security Council and the European community, and all Arab nations.

The end of the US occupation and the closing of military bases are necessary preconditions for such a conference. When the US creates a shift of policy and announces it will focus on the concerns of the people of Iraq, it will provide a powerful incentive for nations to participate.

It is well known that while some nations may see the instability in Iraq as an opportunity, there is also an even-present danger that the civil war in Iraq threatens the stability of nations throughout the region. The impending end of the occupation will provide a breakthrough for the cooperation between the US and the UN and the UN and countries of the region. The regional conference must include Iran, Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

5 Prepare an international security and peacekeeping force to move in, replacing US troops who then return home. The UN has an indispensable role to play here, but cannot do it as long as the US is committed to an occupation. The UN is the only international organization with the ability to mobilize and the legitimacy to authorize troops.

The UN is the place to develop the process, to build the political consensus, to craft a political agreement, to prepare the ground for the peacekeeping mission, to implement the basis of an agreement that will end the occupation and begin the transition to international peacekeepers. This process will take at least three months from the time the US announces the intention to end the occupation.

The US will necessarily have to fund a peacekeeping mission, which, by definition will not require as many troops. Fifty percent of the peacekeeping troops must come from nations with large Muslim populations. The international security force, under UN direction, will remain in place until the Iraqi government is capable of handling its own security. The UN can field an international security and peacekeeping mission, but such an initiative will not take shape unless there is a peace to keep, and that will be dependent upon a political process which reaches agreement between all the Iraqi parties. Such an agreement means fewer troops will be needed.

According to UN sources, the UN the peacekeeping mission in the Congo, which is four times larger in area than Iraq, required about twenty thousand troops. Finally the UN does not mobilize quickly because they depend upon governments to supply the troops, and governments are slow. The ambition of the UN is to deploy in less than ninety days. However, without an agreement of parties the UN is not likely to approve a mission to Iraq, because countries will not give them troops.

6 Develop and fund a process of national reconciliation. The process of reconciliation must begin with a national conference, organized with the assistance of the UN and with the participation of parties who can create, participate in and affect the process of reconciliation, defined as an airing of all grievances and the creation of pathways toward open, transparent talks producing truth and resolution of grievances. The Iraqi government has indicated a desire for the process of reconciliation to take place around it, and that those who were opposed to the government should give up and join the government. Reconciliation must not be confused with capitulation, nor with realignments for the purposes of protecting power relationships.

For example, Kurds need to be assured that their own autonomy will be regarded and therefore obviate the need for the Kurds to align with religious Shia for the purposes of self-protection. The problem in Iraq is that every community is living in fear. The Shia, who are the majority fear they will not be allowed to govern even though they are a majority. The Kurds are afraid they will lose the autonomy they have gained. The Sunnis think they will continue to be made to pay for the sins of Saddam.

A reconciliation process which brings people together is the only way to overcome their fears and reconcile their differences. It is essential to create a minimum of understanding and mutual confidence between the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds.

But how can a reconciliation process be constructed in Iraq when there is such mistrust: Ethnic cleansing is rampant. The police get their money from the US and their ideas from Tehran. They function as religious militia, fighting for supremacy, while the Interior Ministry collaborates. Two or three million people have been displaced. When someone loses a family member, a loved one, a friend, the first response is likely to be that there is no reconciliation.

It is also difficult to move toward reconciliation when one or several parties engaged in the conflict think they can win outright. The Shia, some of whom are out for revenge, think they can win because they have the de facto support of the US. The end of the US occupation will enhance the opportunity for the Shia to come to an accommodation with the Sunnis. They have the oil, the weapons, and support from Iran. They have little interest in reconciling with those who are seen as Baathists.

The Sunnis think they have experience, as the former army of Saddam, boasting half a million people insurgents. The Sunnis have so much more experience and motivation that as soon as the Americans leave they believe they can defeat the Shia government. Any Sunni revenge impulses can be held in check by international peacekeepers. The only sure path toward reconciliation is through the political process. All factions and all insurgents not with al Qaeda must be brought together in a relentless process which involves Saudis, Turks and Iranians.

7 Reconstruction and Jobs. Restart the failed reconstruction program in Iraq. Rebuild roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, and other public facilities, houses, and factories with jobs and job training going to local Iraqis.

8 Reparations. The US and Great Britain have a high moral obligation to enable a peace process by beginning a program of significant reparations to the people of Iraq for the loss of lives, physical and emotional injuries, and damage to property. There should be special programs to rescue the tens of thousands of Iraqi orphans from lives of destitution. This is essential to enable reconciliation.

9 Political Sovereignty. Put an end to suspicions that the US invasion and occupation was influenced by a desire to gain control of Iraq's oil assets by A) setting aside initiatives to privatize Iraqi oil interests or other national assets, and B) by abandoning efforts to change Iraqi national law to facilitate privatization.

Any attempt to sell Iraqi oil assets during the US occupation will be a significant stumbling block to peaceful resolution. The current Iraqi constitution gives oil proceeds to the regions and the central government gets nothing. There must be fairness in the distribution of oil resources in Iraq. An Iraqi National Oil Trust should be established to guarantee the oil assets will be used to create a fully functioning infrastructure with financial mechanisms established protect the oil wealth for the use of the people of Iraq.

10 Iraq Economy. Set forth a plan to stabilize Iraq's cost for food and energy, on par to what the prices were before the US invasion and occupation. This would block efforts underway to raise the price of food and energy at a time when most Iraqis do not have the means to meet their own needs.

11 Economic Sovereignty. Work with the world community to restore Iraq's fiscal integrity without structural readjustment measures of the IMF or the World Bank.

12 International Truth and Reconciliation. Establish a policy of truth and reconciliation between the people of the United States and the people of Iraq. In 2002, I led the effort in the House of Representatives challenging the Bush Administration's plans to go to war in Iraq. I organized 125 Democrats to vote against the Iraq war resolution. The analysis I offered at that time stands out in bold relief for its foresight when compared to the assessments of many who today aspire to national leadership. Just as the caution I urged four years ago was well placed, so the plan I am presenting today is workable, and it responds to the will of the American people, expressed this past November. This is a moment for clarity and foresight. This is a moment to take a new direction in Iraq. One with honor and dignity. One which protects our troops and rescues Iraqi civilians. One which repairs our relationship with Iraqis and with the world.