



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on August 4, 2010

Obama Claims “End” of Combat Operations in Iraq (Sort of)

President Barack Obama announced “America’s combat mission in Iraq would end” in an August 2 address to the Disabled American Veterans, but the details of the announcement have revealed that American soldiers will continue to fight and die in Iraq for at least another 18 months, if not longer.

Obama announced in that August 2 [address](#):

As a candidate for President, I pledged to bring the war in Iraq to a responsible end. Shortly after taking office, I announced our new strategy for Iraq and for a transition to full Iraqi responsibility. And I made it clear that by August 31st, 2010, America’s combat mission in Iraq would end. And that is exactly what we are doing — as promised and on schedule.



However, even in that address — with its dramatic announcement — glimpses of the truth emerged. “As agreed to with the Iraqi government,” Obama [announced](#), “we will maintain a transitional force until we remove all our troops from Iraq by the end of next year.” Obama also admitted Americans among the 50,000 man transitional force will continue to fight and die in Iraq. “These are dangerous tasks,” he told the DAV convention, “And the hard truth is we have not seen the end of American sacrifice in Iraq.”

As AntiWar.com [explained](#): “This will mark the formal end to America’s combat mission in Iraq, but the combat won’t actually end, nor will the troops stop engaging in it. Rather, the administration has decided to redefine the 50,000 combat troops that will still be in Iraq, still engaging in combat, as a ‘transitional’ force.”

As such, Obama’s August 2 claims of ending “combat mission” in Iraq can only be called [Clinton-esque](#). What is the meaning of the slogan about the end of the “combat mission” if Americans will continue to fight and die in Iraq?

Even this removal of “combat” troops from Iraq by August 31 — taken at face value — is a violation of his [campaign pledge](#) to remove troops from Iraq within 16 months of attaining the office of President, a time marker that passed back in May.

On his campaign website, Obama [promised](#):

The removal of our troops will be responsible and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Military experts believe we can safely redeploy combat brigades from Iraq at a pace of 1 to 2 brigades a month that would remove them in 16 months.



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But he also added a [codicil](#) on that campaign website that allowed the war to continue:

Under the Obama-Biden plan, a residual force will remain in Iraq and in the region to conduct targeted counter-terrorism missions against al Qaeda in Iraq and to protect American diplomatic and civilian personnel. They will not build permanent bases in Iraq, but will continue efforts to train and support the Iraqi security forces as long as Iraqi leaders move toward political reconciliation and away from sectarianism.

By the time Obama had become President, that 16 months had been extended to 19 months. "Let me say this as plainly as I can: by August 31, 2010, our combat mission in Iraq will end," Obama told soldiers at Camp Lejeune on February 27, 2009.

But a White House ["Fact Sheet"](#) explains that the war will continue, and it included a hint at how it will continue:

The reduction in troops does not mean a reduction in the U.S. commitment to Iraq — it means a change in the nature of our commitment from one led by the military to one that is civilian-led.

Part of that "transition" to civilian control is the construction of a new U.S. army in Iraq managed by the State Department rather than the Defense Department. The U.S. military's *Stars and Stripes* magazine [announced](#) on July 21: "Already, however, the State Department's requests to the Pentagon for Black Hawk helicopters; 50 mine-resistant ambush-protected vehicles; fuel trucks; high-tech surveillance systems; and other military gear has encountered flak on Capitol Hill."

And Obama's announced withdrawal does not include the army of private security contractors employed by the United States in Iraq. National Public Radio [reported](#) on August 3 that the "Pentagon estimates about 86,000 private contractors in Iraq and more than half of those contractors are American."

As AntiWar.com [explained](#): "The State Department says the creation of the new force is necessary for a 'smooth transition,' but it leaves open the question: transition from what to what?"

The question is, does the "combat mission" really end because a number of the U.S. soldiers fighting and dying in the war change their badges and insignia from U.S. Army and Marines to the U.S. State Department or a private contractor such as the former Blackwater USA?

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