



Obama Claims End to “Combat Operations” in Iraq

President Barack Obama claimed August 31 in an Oval Office address to the nation that “tonight, I am announcing that the American combat mission in Iraq has ended. Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, and the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country.”



But President Obama [stressed](#) that armed U.S. intervention in Iraqi affairs is a long way from over. Obama stressed that even after the Iraqis choose a new coalition government, “there should be no doubt: The Iraqi people will have a strong partner in the United States. Our combat mission is ending, but our commitment to Iraq’s future is not.”

Obama emphasized that he had engaged in a plan for a “redoubling our efforts to strengthen Iraq’s Security Forces and support its government and people. That’s what we’ve done.” More specifically, Obama has organized [an unprecedented militarization of the State Department, which has purchased armored personnel carriers and attack helicopters](#) as part of its growing “non-combat” role in Iraq. Tens of thousands of supposedly non-combat U.S. soldiers are remaining behind in Iraq, but Obama pledged that “all U.S. troops will leave by the end of next year.” He added: “As our military draws down, our dedicated civilians — diplomats, aid workers, and advisers — are moving into the lead.” This official transition from warfare in Iraq to welfare in Iraq, which will be managed by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, will still include a lot of warfare. The militarized “advisers” and “diplomats” will be more numerous than at present and will often be toting heavy military equipment.

President Obama also [blamed](#) much of the deficit spending over the past decade on the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. “Unfortunately, over the last decade, we’ve not done what’s necessary to shore up the foundations of our own prosperity. We spent a trillion dollars at war, often financed by borrowing from overseas. This, in turn, has short-changed investments in our own people, and contributed to record deficits.” Of course, the \$1 trillion that Obama mentioned for the entire seven year war is less than the \$1.4 trillion deficit for this year alone.

But President Obama used the financial costs of the war to transition the speech to a call for taking control of private industry as his “central responsibility as President.” Obama [told the nation](#): “We must jumpstart industries that create jobs, and end our dependence on foreign oil. We must unleash the innovation that allows new products to roll off our assembly lines, and nurture the ideas that spring from our entrepreneurs. This will be difficult. But in the days to come, it must be our central mission as a people, and my central responsibility as President.” But with the United States remaining “committed” to Iraq under the State Department, a peace dividend seems out of the question.

Photo: AP Images



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