

U.S. Public Opposes Permanent Military Bases in Iraq but Majority Thinks U.S. Plans to Keep Them

March 15, 2006

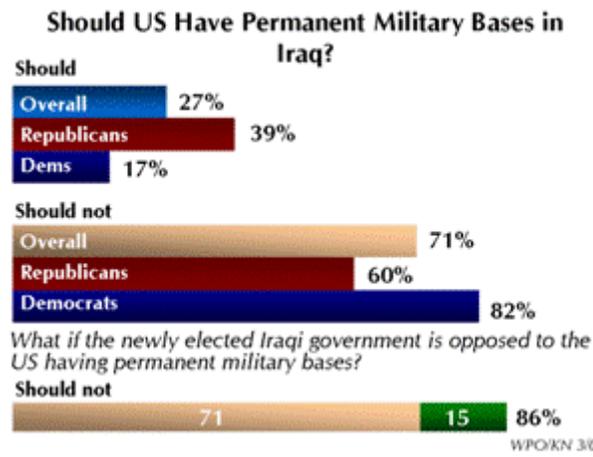
If New Iraqi Government Sets Timeline for U.S. Withdrawal, Public Thinks U.S. Should Comply

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A large bipartisan majority of Americans oppose permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq and believe that most Iraqis are opposed as well, but a modest majority believes that the United States nonetheless plans to have permanent bases, according to a new poll by WorldPublicOpinion.org. A large majority thinks that the United States should be willing to accept a new Iraqi government setting a timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, and thinks that most Iraqis want such a timeline, but an overwhelming majority thinks that the United States would refuse to agree to such a timeline. At this point, a large bipartisan majority favors reducing—though not completely withdrawing—U.S. troops.

The poll of 851 Americans was conducted by WorldPublicOpinion.org and fielded by Knowledge Networks March 1-6, 2006. The margin of error was plus or minus 3.4 - 4 percent.

Permanent Bases

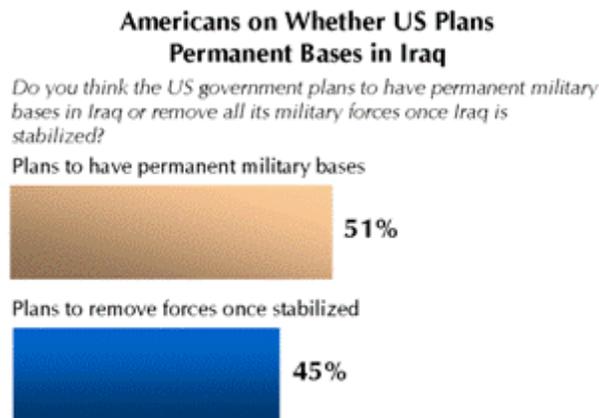


Seventy-one percent of respondents said that the United States should not have permanent military bases in Iraq, up slightly from 67 percent who had this view in 2004. This is a bipartisan position, with 60 percent of Republicans as well as 82 percent of Democrats holding this view. The majority rises to 86 percent “if the newly elected Iraqi government is opposed to the US having permanent military bases.”

However, a modest majority (51%) believes that “the U.S. government plans to have permanent military bases in Iraq,” while only 45 percent believe that the United States “plans to remove all its military forces once Iraq is stabilized.”

An overwhelming majority—77 percent—thinks that the majority of the Iraqi people are opposed to the United States having permanent military bases in Iraq. In general, Americans tend to be fairly responsive to the wishes of public opinion in countries that are hosting U.S. troops.

Timeline for Withdrawal of Troops



WPO/KN 3/06 If the new Iraqi government were to set a timeline for the US to withdraw within six months or two years, a large majority believes that the United States should agree to do so. However, most think the United States would not comply with such a request. Most assume that the Iraqi people want such a timeline.

Asked, “if the new Iraqi government were to tell the U.S. to withdraw all of its forces within six months,” 69 percent said that it should, with only 31 percent saying the United States “should not withdraw until the United States thinks the time is right.” This is virtually unchanged from January 2005, when 73 percent said the United States should follow the Iraqi government’s lead.

However, Americans do not assume that the United States would be responsive to the direction of the new Iraqi government, at least not within a six-month timeframe. Asked, “if the new Iraqi government were to tell the US to withdraw all of its forces within six months do you think the United States would or would not do so?” an overwhelming 76 percent said they thought the United States would not comply.

If Iraqi Government Tells US to Withdraw:

If the new Iraqi government were to tell the US to withdraw all of its forces within six months, do you think the US:



If the new Iraqi government were to tell the US to withdraw all of its forces within six months, do you think the US would or would not do so?



WPOX/N 3/06 When respondents were asked, “if the

newly elected Iraqi government asks the United States to establish a timeline for withdrawing its forces within the next two years” an even larger majority—71 percent—said that the United States should agree to do so, while 28 percent said that the United States should “only reduce U.S. forces as the security situation improves in Iraq.”

Americans appear to assume that this is a significant likelihood, as they perceive most Iraqis favoring such a timeline. Sixty percent assume that the majority of the Iraqi people want the United States to “commit to withdraw U.S. forces according to a timeline of no more than two years” while 38 percent assume that the majority want the United States to “only reduce U.S. forces as the security situation improves in Iraq.”