

Iraq War Continues under a New Name: “Operation New Dawn.” U.S. Troops Still Fighting and Dying in Iraq

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In the week since the much publicized withdrawal of “combat” troops from Iraq it has become more evident that the Iraq War continues under a new name: “Operation New Dawn.”

The first off-message comments came from the Department of Defense. [Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said](#) shortly after the “end” of the war, “I don’t think anybody has declared the end of the war as far as I know. Counter-terrorism will still be part of their mission.” He said the more than 50,000 remaining troops will be well armed and that among their responsibilities will be counter-terrorism which will mean taking on Islamist militants in combat situations. The former head of the Central Command who had been in charge of military operations in Iraq echoed the Pentagon sentiments when [Petraeus told CBS News](#), “We’re not leaving” Iraq and that the troops remaining behind will have “an enormous capability.”

To make matters worse, [General Ray Odierno said](#) it was possible that U.S. combat troops would return to Iraq if the security situation worsened. Odierno also said that he was certain the U.S. would consider staying in Iraq after 2011 if invited. There is more talk of the U.S. staying beyond the 2011 deadline for withdrawal of all troops. [Iraq’s top military officer said](#) last week that American forces may be needed for another decade, something to which Secretary of Defense Robert Gates says the U.S. is open.

[Army Times reported that combat brigades remain in Iraq](#) but their name has been changed to “Advise and Assist Brigade, the Army’s designation for brigades selected to conduct security force assistance.” There are seven Advise and Assist Brigades in Iraq, as well as two additional National Guard infantry brigades “for security” and two combat aviation brigades also remain in Iraq. Combat Brigades are the source for the Advise and Assist Brigades “to retain their inherent capability to conduct offensive and defensive operations, according to the Army’s security force assistance field manual, which came out in May 2009.”

As the [Washington Post reports](#) combat is still on the agenda for America’s no longer labeled combat troops: “American troops in Iraq will still go into harm’s way. They will still accompany Iraqi units on combat missions — even if only as “advisers.” American pilots will still fly combat missions in support of Iraqi ground forces. And American special forces will still face off against Iraqi terrorist groups in high-intensity operations. For that reason, when American troops leave their bases in Iraq, they will still, almost invariably, be in full “battle

rattle” and ready for a fight.”

And sadly, the war’s “end” does not mean an end to deaths of U.S. soldiers in Iraq. [An American soldier was killed](#) in a rocket attack in southern Iraq on Sunday, the U.S. military said, marking the first American fatality since the last “combat” unit in Iraq was pulled out of the country. The military did not provide a lot of information on what the soldier was doing but said he was conducting operations in Iraq’s southern province of Basra.

It also does not mean an end to deployments of new troops to Iraq. [Five peace activists blockaded six buses](#) carrying Fort Hood Soldiers deploying to Iraq. The buses were slowed to a halt; while police made no arrests, they forced the activists out of the street using automatic weapons and police dogs so the deploying soldiers could proceed.

In addition to soldiers remaining in Iraq, the country remains in miserable condition. [Foreign Policy in Focus reports](#): “Iraq has between 25 and 50 percent unemployment, a dysfunctional parliament, rampant disease, an epidemic of mental illness, and sprawling slums. The killing of innocent people has become part of daily life.” They also report that half the urban residents in Iraq live in slums, up from 20% before the U.S. invasion.

But the deception continues. President [Obama is planning a speech on Iraq](#) when he returns from summer vacation. Reportedly the speech will highlight Obama keeping his promise to end the war. In fact, keeping troops in Iraq was always part of Obama’s plan. During the campaign he called them “residual” troops and would never say how many tens of thousands would remain after he “ended the war.”

Please [join me in writing President Obama](#) and urging him to level with the American people. Tell him the disaster Iraq continues to be and that more than 100,000 U.S. troops and mercenaries remain, continuing to engage in combat and continuing to die. Let him know that Americans can handle the truth and do not want to be lied to. You can send a letter by [clicking here](#).

And, then join efforts to really end the Iraq War, bring home all the troops and hand over all military bases. The U.S. needs to get out of Iraq – as well as Afghanistan.

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