

Iraq War Ends, an Uncertain Future Begins



AP
U.S. Army soldiers load trucks as they begin their journey home to their base in Texas

This story comes from VOA Special English, Voice of America's daily news and information service for English learners. Read the story and then do the activities in the worksheet at the end.

This is IN THE NEWS in VOA Special English.

This week, the war in Iraq officially ended. American troops lowered their command's flag on Thursday (December 15) in a ceremonial close to nearly nine years of conflict. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta spoke at the ceremony at a heavily protected area of an airport in Baghdad.

LEON PANETTA: "To be sure, the cost was high -- the blood and treasure of the United States and also for the Iraqi people. But those lives have not been lost in vain. They gave birth to an independent, free and sovereign Iraq."

Tens of thousands of Iraqis died in the military campaign known as Operation New Dawn. So did more than four thousand Americans. The American-led invasion quickly ousted Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein. But violence between competing groups grew and pushed Iraq toward civil war. The violence has decreased sharply. But insurgents, some of them operating with Iranian support, continue attacks.

Some American officials wanted to keep several thousand troops in Iraq after December thirty-first. The two countries agreed to that withdrawal date three years ago, when George W. Bush was still president. But the Obama administration failed to reach an agreement with Iraq on legal protection for American troops. A small number of troops will remain, mainly to protect diplomats.

This week, some Iraqis celebrated the withdrawal of American troops. Others expressed worry, including Mohhamed Abbad Hussein, who is recovering from a bomb explosion.

ABBAD HUSSEIN (IN ARABIC): "It's never going to end. People are going to continue to suffer. As long as there is a political crisis, it's never going to end."

Murtadha Homadi, a guard with a local security company, had mixed feelings about the war.

MURTADHA HOMADI (IN ARABIC): "We were really happy that Saddam Hussein fell. But, after that, many bad things happened, especially when al-Qaida started setting off bomb."

Eleven-year-old Gohfran Yassir of Baghdad says she is always afraid.

GOHFRAN YASSIR: "I am scared that a bomb will go off, explosions and we will die, or we will be kidnapped or killed."

Many Iraqis worry that their country will fail if it is controlled only by politicians and religious militias. Human rights activist Sundus Abass says Iraq's future may depend more on the will of its people.

SUNDUS ABASS: "I am like other Iraqis, I am worried about this. I am worried. Honestly yes, I am worried. Because there is no, nothing who can tell us that it will be fine after the Americans troops withdraw from Iraq. I think yes there will be more violence in Iraq."

The invasion took place in March of two thousand three. Soldiers from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, were among the first to enter Iraq. They also helped lead the troop increase in two thousand seven. This week, President Obama visited Fort Bragg to thank returning troops.

BARACK OBAMA: "So as your commander in chief, and on behalf of a grateful nation, I am proud to finally say these two words, and I know your families agree: Welcome home. [Cheers] "

Mr. Obama spoke of the sacrifices made by service members.

BARACK OBAMA: "More than 1.5 million Americans have served in Iraq -- 1.5 million. Over thirty thousand Americans have been wounded. Those are only the wounds that show. Nearly forty-five hundred Americans made the ultimate sacrifice."

Mr. Obama called the results of the war "an extraordinary achievement."

BARACK OBAMA: "Iraq is not a perfect place. It has many challenges ahead. But we are leaving behind a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq, with a representative government that was elected by its people."

Now do the worksheet ...

Level: intermediate

Time: 20 -30 minutes

This worksheet will help you learn new vocabulary about world conflicts. You will answer questions about the end of the Iraq war, and write a short paragraph about your opinion on this war.

1. Match the words on the left with the words on the right to make four phrases. Write the phrase on the line. The phrases are in the article.
- | | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------|
| a. military | 1. date | _____ |
| b. civil | 2. troops | _____ |
| c. withdrawal | 3. war | _____ |
| d. American | 4. campaign | _____ |
2. What word means the same as *conflict*?
- fighting
 - troops
 - bomb
3. Look again at the title of the article: *Iraq War Ends, an Uncertain Future Begins*. What is the article about?
- how the war in Iraq started
 - the future of Iraq after the war
4. What two countries is this article about?
- _____
5. How many years did the war in Iraq last?
- _____

6. Leon Panetta is the U.S. Defense Secretary. What did he say about the people who died in the Iraq war? Complete the following sentence with his words.

“They gave birth to an _____ , _____ and _____ Iraq.”

7. Read paragraph 3 again. Put the following sentences in the order in which they happened.

_____ The violence has decreased sharply, but insurgents continue attacks.

_____ Saddam Hussein was ousted.

_____ Violence between competing groups grew.

_____ There was a civil war.

8. Why will a small number of U.S. troops stay in Iraq?

9. Read the sentence below. Is it *true* or *false*? If it is false, correct the sentence.

All Iraqis celebrated the withdrawal of American troops.

10. What are some Iraqis worried about?

OVER TO YOU

What do you know about the Iraq war? Has your country been involved in this conflict? Do you think the U.S. should bring troops home now?

Write 5-8 sentences explaining your answer.

ANSWER KEY

1. military campaign; civil war, withdrawal date; American troops; local behavior
2. fighting
3. the future of Iraq after the war
4. Iraq and the U.S.
5. nearly nine years
6. "They gave birth to an independent, free and sovereign Iraq."
7. Saddam Hussein was ousted.; Violence between competing groups grew.; There was a civil war.; The violence has decreased sharply, but insurgents continue attacks
8. mainly to protect diplomats
9. False; Some Iraqis celebrated the withdrawal of American troops. Others expressed worry.
10. students' own answers [Many Iraqis worry that their country will fail if it is controlled only by politicians and religious militias. "I am scared that a bomb will go off, explosions and we will die, or we will be kidnapped or killed."]

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