

The costs to our nation of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—in lives lost, resources expended, domestic priorities deferred, and our standing the world diminished—have been unfathomable. Our military efforts have not been entirely in vain, striking decisive blows against the perpetrators of the September 11, 2001 attacks and laying the foundations for greater self-determination in the Middle East and South Asia. After more than a decade of nonstop conflict, however, I believe it is time for our country to bring its military involvement in Afghanistan to an end—and, more broadly, to bring our national defense strategy in line with the needs and realities of today's world.

I was a strong and vocal opponent of the war in Iraq from its very beginning, voting against its authorization and authoring legislation to require an exit strategy from the conflict as early as 2005. I strongly supported President Obama's plan to end U.S. military operations in Iraq by the end of 2011 and was pleased that he made good on his promise. As Iraq assumes full responsibility for its future, I believe it will be critical for the United States to continue providing encouragement and support for the country's political and economic development. To this end, as Co-Chair of the [House Democracy Partnership](#), I am working directly with the Iraqi Council of Representatives to help strengthen the country's still-fragile democratic institutions. I have also supported efforts to enhance regional diplomacy by the United States, recognizing that Iraq's neighbors will play a critical role in providing long-term stability for the country.

I supported the initial effort to drive al-Qaeda and its Taliban sponsors from Afghanistan in the wake of September 11 and understand the stake our country has in Afghanistan and Pakistan developing the capacity to avoid becoming terrorist havens and to defend and govern themselves. Our commitment cannot be open-ended, however, and we must weigh the costs and benefits of going forward. I have supported President Obama's plan to accelerate the transition to Afghan rule by redeploying most coalition forces by the end of 2014. The President's strategy recognizes that the solution to the conflict in Afghanistan is not primarily military in nature, calling for expanded support for Afghanistan's civilian government, reconciliation with the Afghan insurgency, and a renewed diplomatic effort with Pakistan. As in Iraq, I have played a direct role in this effort through my work with the House Democracy Partnership, which works with the legislatures of Afghanistan and Pakistan to strengthen their effectiveness and independence.

At the same time, I believe Congress must hold the President accountable to his strategy. I am a cosponsor of the McGovern-Jones Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Act and have signed several letters in recent months urging the President to abide by his commitments. Although I have not been willing to endorse a complete cutoff of funding for military operations, I have supported amendments to reduce or restrict funding for activities I believe are no longer justified

during the annual appropriations process.

Ultimately, the challenges we face in Iraq and Afghanistan underscore the fact that our nation's security lies not in the size of our military but in the strength of our national character and the depth of our international relationships. As your Member of Congress, I will continue to advocate for a national defense strategy that recognizes this reality and conforms to our nation's role in today's world.

### **Additional Information:**

- More about the House Democracy Partnership's work in [Afghanistan](#) , [Pakistan](#) , and [Iraq](#) .
- [President Obama's 2012 National Defense Strategy](#)
- [Military and Veterans issues page](#)
- [Casework page for military veterans](#)