

September 9, 2008

**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Matt Bennett, Vice President for Public Affairs and Scott Payne, Policy Advisor, National Security Program  
**RE:** President Bush's Speech Today at National Defense University

With President Bush's announcement today that U.S. forces in Iraq are going to remain above pre-surge levels for the remainder of his term, he recklessly is putting his legacy and John McCain's electoral fortunes ahead of the national security interests of the United States, and he has once again shown that he and McCain are out of touch with the real threats America faces.

By contrast, Barack Obama and progressives in Congress have forcefully argued that we must shift our focus with a tough and smart policy that reinforces our troops in Afghanistan and pursues al Qaeda along the Afghan border.

## **Bush's Decision is Reckless and Out of Touch**

This summer, the situation in Afghanistan has gone from bad to worse. Violence has increased by 40 percent. More coalition forces have died in Afghanistan than in Iraq. And insurgents are making hundreds of millions of dollars cultivating poppies.

During the same period, we have seen the Iraqi government demand a timeline to withdraw U.S. forces out of Iraq, because the Iraqis believe they can govern on their own. The C.I.A. Director has declared that al Qaeda in Iraq is essentially defeated and told reporters that if an attack on America were to occur, it would come from the Afghan-Pakistan border region. American officers in Afghanistan have requested 10,000 troops to reinforce those currently in Afghanistan, but Pentagon officials have made it clear that this can only happen if troop levels are reduced in Iraq.

President Bush's response to the crisis brewing in Afghanistan is breathtakingly reckless and out of touch with the national security concerns of the United States. He is announcing today that he will maintain part of the surge in Iraq by keeping 10,000 more troops in the country than were there prior to the surge last year. He also is saying that he will send just half of the Army combat brigades requested by his generals in the field to Afghanistan, and that he will actually *reduce* the number of Marines in Afghanistan by about 2,000.

As the seventh anniversary of 9/11 approaches, President Bush is showing that he still can't find the central front in the war on terror. Rather than pursue our enemies in Afghanistan who are planning more attacks against America, the

President is still recklessly giving short-shrift to the battle there, focusing instead on his legacy in Iraq and McCain's electoral fortunes.

## **A Tough and Smart Approach to Afghanistan-Pakistan**

Unlike President Bush and John McCain, progressives in Congress and Barack Obama recognize the real threats we face in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Obama and other progressives have called for a continued drawdown in U.S. forces in Iraq so that we can send at least two full combat brigades to Afghanistan and reset our military to meet future threats. Further, he argued for a tough approach to the terrorist safe havens in Pakistan, saying that if he were President and had intelligence about "high level terrorist targets and [Pakistan] won't act, we will."