

Endangered Advisers

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Articles & Testimony

The New York Times invited several experts with unique personal experience in Iraq to comment on the Iraq Study Group Report. Andrew Exum is currently a Soref fellow at The Washington Institute; in 2003 he led a platoon of Army Rangers in Iraq.

The fates of 26 million Iraqis and the 141,000 American troops in Iraq have long been intertwined. Wednesday, their shared fate was inexorably altered by the report put out by the Iraq Study Group, a panel made up of nine lawyers and a mathematician.

Some of the recommendations are sensible, but a few of the military suggestions could spell disaster.

The recommendation to increase the number of soldiers training the Iraqi military is, in general, a good one. Officers serving in Iraq have told me in recent days that the efforts to train and equip the Iraqi Army have not proceeded with the sense of urgency they deserve. The military understands this and last summer established a school in Fort Riley, Kan., where the Army's foremost counterinsurgency expert is training more advisers to be sent to Iraq.

But to increase the number of advisers while simultaneously decreasing the number of combat brigades is a recipe for disaster. The adviser teams embedded with Iraqi units will become increasingly vulnerable, and a smaller force left behind in Iraq will find itself called upon to fight the inevitable worsening of violence with far fewer troops.

Given that the panel consulted with five times as many politicians as military officers, such oversights shouldn't come as a surprise. But the mathematician on the panel, former Secretary of Defense William Perry, should have known better. ❖

New York Times

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