

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE WEEKLY UPDATE

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This week, President Obama marked the end of U.S. combat operations in Iraq with a trip to visit soldiers in Fort Bliss in Texas and an Oval Office address to the nation. Also this week, President Obama commemorated the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Louisiana, and met with Middle East leaders at the White House. In addition, this week the DNC celebrated the anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington.

What's Happening?

The End of Combat Operations in Iraq: On Tuesday, President Obama marked the end of U.S. combat operations in Iraq with a trip to Fort Bliss in Texas followed by an Oval Office address commemorating the occasion. In Texas, President Obama met with troops who had served in Iraq during every stage of the war and thanked them for their service. In remarks to the troops, the President said:

"I wanted to come down to Fort Bliss mainly to say thank you and to say welcome home...The fact of the matter is that there has not been a single mission that has been assigned to all of you in which you have not performed with gallantry, with courage, with excellence. And that is something that the entire country understands."



Back at the White House, the President discussed the topic of the war in Iraq more broadly. In an address to the nation from the Oval Office he not only thanked America's service members for their sacrifices, he also focused on the road ahead and the importance of overcoming our challenges here at home in order to continue to lead abroad. He said:



"Tonight I am announcing that the American combat mission in Iraq has ended. Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, and the Iraqi people now have lead responsibility for the security of their country.

"This was my pledge to the American people as a candidate for this office. Last February, I announced a plan that would bring our combat brigades out of Iraq, while redoubling our efforts to strengthen Iraq's Security Forces and support its government and people.

"That's what we've done. We've removed nearly 100,000 U.S. troops from Iraq. We've closed or transferred to the Iraqis hundreds of bases. And we have moved millions of pieces of equipment out of Iraq. This completes a transition to Iraqi responsibility for their own security.

"Ending this war is not only in Iraq's interest -- it's in our own. The United States has paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people. We have sent our young men and women to make enormous sacrifices in Iraq, and spent vast resources abroad at a time of tight budgets at home. We've persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people -- a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization. Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it's time to turn the page...

"And so at this moment, as we wind down the war in Iraq, we must tackle those challenges at home with as much energy, and grit, and sense of common purpose as our men and women in uniform who have served abroad. They have met every test that they faced. Now, it's our turn. Now, it's our responsibility to honor them by coming together, all of us, and working to secure the dream that so many generations have fought for -- the dream that a better life awaits anyone who is willing to work for it and reach for it."

Commemorating the Anniversary of Hurricane Katrina: On Sunday, President Obama traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana to mark the fifth anniversary of the day Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast. At Xavier University in New Orleans, the President marked the progress made to date to repair the damage caused by the storm and reiterated his commitment to ensuring that the Gulf Coast is fully restored. He said:



"It's been five years since Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast. There's no need to dwell on what you experienced and what the world witnessed. We all remember it keenly: water pouring through broken levees; mothers holding their children above the waterline; people stranded on rooftops begging for help; bodies lying in the streets of a great American city. It was a natural disaster but also a manmade catastrophe -- a shameful breakdown in government that left countless men, and women, and children abandoned and alone...

"In the years that followed, New Orleans could have remained a symbol of destruction and decay; of a storm that came and the inadequate response that followed. It was not hard to imagine a day when we'd tell our children that a once vibrant and wonderful city had been laid low by indifference and neglect. But that's not what happened...Instead this city has become a symbol of resilience and of community and of the fundamental responsibility that we have to one another...

"Now, I don't have to tell you that there are still too many vacant and overgrown lots. There are still too many students attending classes in trailers. There are still too many people unable to find work. And there are still too many New Orleanians, folks who haven't been able to come home. So while an incredible amount of progress has been made, on this fifth anniversary, I wanted to come here and tell the people of this city directly: My administration is going to stand with you -- and fight alongside you -- until the job is done...

"We're helping this city, and this state, and this region to recover from the worst natural disaster in our nation's history. We're cutting through the red tape that has impeded rebuilding efforts for years. We're making government work better and smarter, in coordination with one of the most expansive non-profit efforts in American history. We're helping state and local leaders to address serious problems that had been neglected for decades -- problems that existed before the storm came, and have continued after the waters receded -- from the levee system to the justice system, from the health care system to the education system. And together, we are helping to make New Orleans a place that stands for what we can do in America -- not just for what we can't do."

Middle East Talks: On Wednesday, President Obama met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel, President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to discuss the Middle East peace process.

Following those meetings, the President spoke openly about the challenge of reaching a Middle East peace agreement, but emphasized that the opportunity to achieve such an agreement cannot be missed. He said:



"At the beginning of my administration, I stated that it was our policy to actively and aggressively seek a lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as a comprehensive peace between Israel and all of its Arab neighbors...

"We've always made it clear that the only path to lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians is direct talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Tomorrow, after nearly two years, the parties will relaunch those direct talks...

"The purpose of these talks is clear. These will be direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. These negotiations are intended to resolve all final status issues. The goal is a settlement, negotiated between the parties, that ends the occupation which began in 1967 and results in the emergence of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian state, living side by side in peace and security with a Jewish state of Israel and its other neighbors. That's the vision we are pursuing.

"Now, I know these talks have been greeted in some quarters with skepticism. We are under no illusions. Passions run deep...But we know that the status quo is unsustainable -- for Israelis, for Palestinians, for the region and for the world. It is in the national interests of all involved, including the United States, that this conflict be brought to a peaceful conclusion. So even as we are clear-eyed about the challenges ahead, so, too, do we see the foundation for progress."

Remembering the March on Washington: Last Saturday, August 28, was the 47th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, which drew more than a quarter of a million people to the capital in advance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous "I Have a Dream" speech. In recognition of that anniversary, DNC Chairman Tim Kaine said:

"Forty-seven years ago, Martin Luther King, Jr. laid out his dream for America: that our nation would one day recognize true equality for all Americans, that our country would guarantee justice and opportunity for all Americans, and that all Americans would one day come together – regardless of each other's race or background – in common spirit and kinship. The quarter million people who had gathered on the National Mall in Washington, DC to hear Dr. King speak shared in that dream – as did millions more who heard him on television or read of his speech in the papers the next day.

"In the almost fifty years since that day, our nation has made tremendous progress toward realizing Dr. King's dream – and the dream of all those hopeful Americans who marched and demonstrated in common cause with him. Our country has done away with the most grievous remnants of the legacy of slavery, including segregation, and we have passed laws protecting civil rights and stating that Americans of all races and backgrounds are equal in the eyes of the law. The American people have made progress not only toward removing racial biases in our laws, but also toward removing their own racial blinders – toward a world in which, in the words of Dr. King, we are able 'to stand up for freedom together.' Let us continue to work together to meet Dr. King's goal of making 'justice a reality for all of God's children.'

"As a long-time civil rights attorney, I know that inequality and injustice persist, but I take heart in how far our country has come and I have faith that, under the leadership of President Obama, our country will continue to move forward toward becoming a more perfect union for all."

Holding Republicans Accountable

"Drop the Blockade": On Monday, the President delivered Rose Garden remarks calling on Republicans in Congress to stop blocking the progress of America's economic recovery. Specifically, he urged Republicans to join with Democrats to pass critical legislation targeted at boosting job growth by supporting small businesses. He said:



"It's been nearly two years since that terrible September when our economy teetered on the brink of collapse...And while we have taken a series of measures and come a long way since then, the fact is, that too many businesses are still struggling; too many Americans are still looking for work; and too many communities are far from being whole again.

"And that's why my Administration remains focused every single day on pushing this economy forward, repairing the damage that's been done to the middle class over the past decade, and promoting the growth we need to get our people back to work..."

"There's currently a jobs bill before Congress that would do two big things for small business owners: cut more taxes and make available more loans.

"Unfortunately, this bill has been languishing in the Senate for months, held up by a partisan minority that won't even allow it to go to a vote. That makes no sense. This bill is fully paid for. It will not add to the deficit. And there is no reason to block it besides pure partisan politics.

"The small business owners and the communities that rely on them, they don't have time for political games. They shouldn't have to wait any longer...So I ask Senate Republicans to drop the blockade. I know we're entering election season, but the people who sent us here expect us to work together to get things done and improve this economy."

Organizing for America

“Moving America Forward” Canvass: Last weekend, OFA volunteers across the country kicked off the campaign season in earnest – knocking on thousands of doors from Alaska to Florida during the 48 hour “Move America Forward” canvass. On porches and doorsteps, the volunteers spoke with voters about the importance of electing Democrats this year and asked them to commit to vote on November 2nd. One volunteer, summarizing her experience taking part in the canvass, said:



“We had a marvelous day. Beautiful sunny weather, great, enthusiastic volunteers and encouraging conversations with voters. We know we made a difference, and we’ll be back to talk to these people again and again through Election Day.”

Another added:

“When people see me or you knocking on the door, in the rain or the sun, they get it. They see it matters. It matters to me, it matters to them. If they’ve forgotten how much it matters, maybe they’ll remember it. That’s what I love about it and it’s the best part of the day. That’s what I’ll carry with me during the work week until I hit the doors again next weekend.”

You can read more about the “Moving America Forward” canvass at <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/ericasagrans/gGMz4Q>. If you want to find out more about how you can get involved and help elect Democrats this fall, please visit: <http://my.barackobama.com/>

New Canvassing Tool: On Thursday, the DNC unveiled a groundbreaking new OFA canvassing tool that gives volunteers everything they need to talk face-to-face with voters in their neighborhoods about the upcoming midterm election—in the palm of their hand. Building on the innovative iPhone applications launched by the DNC and OFA in June, the new tool is a major update to the Organizing for America application and provides users with lists of neighbors to talk to as well as real-time reporting that helps keep track of how many doors they’ve knocked and how their conversations went.

Said Mitch Stewart, OFA National Director:

“We already know the best way to engage voters is through neighbor-to-neighbor, friend-to-friend contact—and the new canvassing tool enhances a volunteer’s ability to do just that. The canvassing feature we’re adding to our iPhone application uses incredible new technology to help our volunteers do face-to-face organizing in a faster, more efficient way—giving them information to contact voters at their fingertips.”

You can find out more about the new canvassing tool at <http://my.barackobama.com/iphoneupdate>.

Key Issues in the News and Background

Talking Points: Making the Economy Stronger

- From the day President Obama was sworn into office, he has been focused on reversing almost a decade of failed Republican policies – the policies that helped to create the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. President Obama has done what was necessary to get our economy back on track, get Americans back on the job, and lay a more solid foundation for future economic growth and prosperity.
- Our country has come a long way since the economic crisis struck. After 22 consecutive months of job losses, private sector employers have now added jobs for seven consecutive months – and new jobs have totaled more than 600,000 so far this year. But there is still unquestionably more to be done. And there are a number of actions we can take that could stimulate growth and jump-start hiring in the short term and increase America’s economic competitiveness for the long term.

- To that end, President Obama is fighting to extend middle class tax cuts. He's taking steps to double American exports – thereby supporting American companies and jobs here at home. And he's investing in those economic sectors that have the biggest potential for job creation, like the clean energy sector.
- In addition, the President recognizes how important it is that our government provides American small businesses, which are a critical part of our economy and our economic recovery, with needed relief. Small businesses have been particularly hard hit by the recession – and small business job losses accounted for three of every five jobs lost in the last months of 2009.
- That's why the President has called for a number of things to help small businesses grow, thrive, and hire new workers. This Administration has enacted 8 tax cuts for small businesses. And it has supported almost 70,000 new loans to small businesses, loans that provide small business owners with the money they need to grow their businesses.
- But there's still more that can be done for small businesses. To that end, President Obama is calling on Congress to quickly approve a new set of tax breaks and lending incentives for small businesses that will promote growth and job creation. Those tax breaks and incentives will give small businesses needed credit, eliminate capital gains taxes on critical small business investments so that small businesses have a greater incentive to invest today, and speed up \$55 billion worth of tax relief directed at encouraging American businesses of all sizes to invest in growth during the next 14 months. In addition, the bill moving through Congress is fully paid for – it won't increase the deficit.
- Unfortunately, this critical legislation is stalled in the Senate because a Republican minority refuses to vote on the bill. President Obama is calling on Republicans to end their obstruction of this legislation – because small businesses shouldn't be held hostage to partisan politicking.
- Our country is climbing out of the recession. President Obama has confidence in our country's economy, and in the American people. And he will keep working every day to rebuild our country's economy.

Talking Points: The President's Oval Office Address on the Iraq Drawdown

- During his presidential campaign, President Obama promised to bring the war in Iraq to a responsible end. Shortly after the President took office, he announced a new U.S. strategy for Iraq and outlined his plan for transitioning to full Iraqi responsibility. At that time, he made it clear that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would come to an end by August 31 of this year. And he has kept his promise – combat operations are ending on schedule.
- Since the President took office, nearly 100,000 U.S. troops have left Iraq. Today, our combat mission in that country is ending.
- America will continue to be a strong partner to Iraq. And we will continue to pursue another goal set by the President: ensuring that Iraq is sovereign, stable, and self-reliant. But the people of Iraq will now have responsibility for their country's future, its security, and its stability.
- Even as we recognize the important achievements that have made this day possible, we also recognize that those who oppose progress in Iraq will continue to promote violence and undertake attacks in that country. But, on the whole, security incidents have been close to their lowest levels since the war began. And this environment has been sustained by the Iraqi Security Forces as U.S. troops have withdrawn.
- Ending this war is in the interests of both Iraq and the United States. America has fulfilled its responsibility in Iraq. Although this war has been a contentious issue here at home, it is important that we all now move forward together. Some patriots supported this war and others opposed it. But all Americans appreciate the brave men and women who served in Iraq and all share hope for Iraq's future.
- Without the sacrifices and achievements of our service members, today would not be possible. America's service members have done an exemplary job – they helped to reduce violence in Iraq; helped to increase the capacity and capability of the Iraqi Security Forces; and oversaw the reduction of U.S. troops and

equipment in Iraq, one of the biggest logistical operations undertaken by the U.S. military since World War II.

- As America welcomes home so many of those who have fought in Iraq, President Obama intends to speak about the ongoing critical fight against al Qaeda, in Afghanistan and around the world. Now that we have drawn down our operations in Iraq, we have the resources required to go on offense. To that end, President Obama will not allow al Qaeda to have any safe place from which to plan future attacks on America, and he remains steadfastly dedicated to al Qaeda's defeat.
- In Afghanistan, American service members are fighting to stop the Taliban's momentum and give Afghans the space they need to build their capacity and take control of their future. But next July, we will start a conditions-based transition to Afghan responsibility. Make no mistake: that transition will commence, because open ended wars aren't in America's interests or in the interests of Afghanistan, and America's global influence is not merely a function of our military strength.
- America's strength around the world is built upon our prosperity here at home. So as the war in Iraq comes to an end, it is important that we tackle the challenges Americans face here at home. That means rebuilding our economy, creating jobs for the millions of Americans who have lost theirs, and building a solid foundation for growth and prosperity. To that end, we must invest in job-creating economic sectors, end America's dependence on foreign oil, and give all our children a quality education.
- At the same time, as the President said tonight, this Administration continues to focus on efforts that will benefit our veterans. Those efforts include building a 21st century Veterans Administration that provides veterans with efficient, timely care and funding a post-9/11 GI bill that provides education opportunities to returning troops and their families. Because one part of responsibly ending a war is continuing to stand by those men and women who fought in it.