

John McCain's Record Of Bad Judgment On Iraq



John McCain is often wrong but rarely in doubt. A review of his statements before and during the course of the Iraq war demonstrates that the senior senator from Arizona has tried desperately to square the facts on the ground with his theories of an “easy” victory. As the course of reality has proven his predictions wrong time and again, McCain has waffled, prevaricated, and dissembled about his true record. A review of the McCain’s bad judgment on Iraq follows:

PRE-WAR ASSESSMENT: ‘We Will Win It Easily’

“You know, when you say it won’t be difficult, whenever you send young Americans into harm’s way, it’s going to be difficult. And we will lose American lives. So that said, I believe that it will not be nearly as difficult as some allege.” [NBC, 9/22/02]

“Because I know that as successful as I believe we will be, and I believe that the success will be fairly easy, we will still lose some American young men or women.” [CNN,9/24/02]

“I think most Iraqis would greet the removal of Saddam Hussein with relief and pleasure.” [CNN, 9/24/02]

“We’re not going to get into house-to-house fighting in Baghdad. We may have to take out buildings, but we’re not going to have a bloodletting of trading American bodies for Iraqi bodies.” [CNN, 9/29/02]

“Our technology, particularly air-to-ground technology, is vastly improved. ... I don’t think you’re going to have to see the scale of numbers of troops that we saw, nor the length of the buildup, obviously, that we had back in 1991.” [CNN, 12/9/02]

“If there is a success, and I predict there will be, that the countries in the region will breathe a sigh of relief because an individual who’s invaded neighboring countries is out of power, and perhaps people all over the Middle East will heave a sigh of relief and hope because — and feel a sensation of hope because we will instill a democracy in Iraq.” [MSNBC, 1/22/03]

“But the point is that, one, we will win this conflict. We will win it easily.” [MSNBC, 1/22/03]

“It’s going to send the message throughout the Middle East that democracy can take hold in the Middle East.” [Fox News, 2/21/03]

“I have no qualms about our strategic plans. . . . I thought we were very successful in Afghanistan.” [Hartford Courant, 3/5/03]

“When the people of Iraq are liberated, we will again have written another chapter in the glorious history of the United States of America.” [Senate Floor, [3/18/03](#)]

“Proponents of containment claim that Iraq is in a box,” McCain said. “But it is a box with no lid, no bottom, and whose sides are falling out. . . . Containment failed yesterday in Iraq. Containment fails today. And containment will fail tomorrow. We would be placing hope before experience to think otherwise.” [Chicago Tribune, 2/14/03]

“I don’t think whether we invade Iraq or not will [cause] any diminution or increase in their zeal or efficiency to orchestrate an attack on the United States.” [National Journal, 2/15/03]

MATTHEWS: Are you one of those who holds up an optimistic view of the post-war scene? Do you believe that the people of Iraq or at least a large number of them will treat us as liberators? MCCAIN: Absolutely. Absolutely. [MSNBC, [3/12/03](#)]

THE WAR BEGINS: ‘Iraqis Will Greet Us As Liberators’

“I believe [Iraqis] admire, respect and want to emulate the United States of America.” [CNBC, 3/19/03]

“But I believe, Katie, that the Iraqi people will greet us as liberators.” [NBC, 3/20/03]

“I think it’s unlikely house to house fighting in Baghdad, but I don’t think there are many Iraqi soldiers that would like to engage in that kind of activity.” [NBC, 3/20/03]

MATTHEWS: Do you think it’s working? Do you think we’ll shake them — shake them to the roots so they will give up eventually and avoid a huge bloodbath of people?

MCCAIN: I don’t know how long they’ll hang out. It doesn’t take a large number of people to cause difficulties in house to house fighting we’ve just seen that in southern Iraq. But there’s no doubt in my mind that we will prevail and there’s no doubt in my mind, once these people are gone, that we will be welcomed as liberators. These guys are the real bad guys and they’re telling everybody, we’re going to shoot you and so, of course, we’re not being welcomed cause they’ve got people that will kill them if they do. Once that’s done, I’m confident. [Hardball, [3/24/03](#)]

“I believe that these people have the same yearnings for freedom and democracy and independence and self-determination that every person on Earth does, and once this Gestapo is off of their backs, then I think you will see great joy and pleasure that we were able to free them and that will not come until they are sure that they don’t have Saddam Hussein return again.” [NBC, 3/30/03]

“I think we may have underestimated the hatred that the Iraqi people felt for this regime and, and their desire for a democratic form of government and the fundamental liberties that we want all people to enjoy. So I think it may not be as difficult as some we, as some envisioned.” [ABC, 4/9/03]

“There’s not a history of clashes that are violent between Sunnis and Shiah. So I think they can probably get along.” [MSNBC, 4/23/03]

“And the Shiites have been repressed and oppressed for a long time. Some of this is a natural manifestation of their ability to express themselves.” [MSNBC, 4/23/03]

“And second of all, there was this belief that somehow the, quote, ‘Arab street’ would rise up and there would be bloody demonstrations. None of those happened. And one of the reasons is because of the rapidity of the victory.” [MSNBC, 4/23/03]

“I have said a long time that reconstruction of Iraq would be a long, long, difficult process. ... But the conflict, the major conflict is over ... The regime change is accomplished.” [Fox News, 6/11/03]

“Their morale could not be higher. This is a mission accomplished. They know how much influence Saddam Hussein had on the Iraqi people, how much more difficult it made to get their cooperation.” [This Week, ABC, 12/14/03]

MCCAIN BACKPEDALS: ‘I Never Believed It Was Going To Be [Easy]’

“The difficulty, the job, the size of the challenge. Part of it is what you said, the Ba’athists, the whole situation was underestimated by the administration and, frankly, the military, as well.” [Hardball, 2/25/04]

“I think the initial phases of it were so spectacularly successful that it took us all by surprise.” [CBS, 10/31/04]

“I think that one of the many mistakes that have been made is to inflate the expectations of the American people beginning three years ago that this was going to be some kind of day at the beach, and I never believed it was going to be.” [NBC, 12/4/05]

“I do believe we were greeted as liberators in many respects in many parts of Iraq. We really were. I remember the statue coming down and people being freed from prisons, etc. But it was not only overly optimistic; it was wrong.” [NBC, 12/4/05]

“There was a gross misunderestimation of the challenge we faced in the post-conflict aspect of Iraq.” [NPR, 12/6/05]

“We never should have said ‘Mission Accomplished,’” McCain told me. “We never should have said ‘a few dead-enders.’ We never should have said ‘last throes.’ Part of it is our own making, by creating expectations which obviously didn’t come to fruition.” [The Hill, 12/8/05]

MR. RUSSERT: Go back, Senator, to 2002 — the administration saying we’d be greeted as liberators, John McCain saying that you thought success would be fairly easy.

SEN. MCCAIN: It was.

MR. RUSSERT: In all honesty, hasn’t this...

SEN. MCCAIN: Well, it was easy. It was easy. I said we — a military operation would be easy. It was easy. We were greeted as liberators. [Meet the Press, 1/10/07]

“I have been saying for 3 1/2 years that we would be in this sad situation and this critical situation we are in today.” [South Carolina campaign stop, [2/20/07](#)]

“For several years I and a number of others have bemoaned and complained and criticized and been saddened as we’ve watched this train wreck in Iraq.” [[Senate Floor Speech on Casey Nomination](#)]

MCCAIN ON IRAQ WMD: ‘I Am Confident We Will Find Those Weapons’

“[Saddam Hussein] has developed stocks of germs and toxins in sufficient quantities to kill the entire population of the Earth multiple times. He has placed weapons laden with these poisons on alert to fire at his neighbors within minutes, not hours, and has devolved authority to fire them to subordinates. He develops nuclear weapons with which he would hold his neighbors and us hostage.” [Press Release, [10/10/02](#)]

“Saddam Hussein is on a crash course to construct a nuclear weapon.” [Press Release, [10/10/02](#)]

“I think that Blix’s report will be fairly definitive. But Mr. Blix has made a lot of reports over the years, and I think the judgment made by the United States of America will—and the president of the United States will prevail here.” [NBC, 2/12/03]

“I think we will find weapons of mass destruction. I think it’s important that we do.” [MSNBC, 4/23/03]

COSBY: Are you frustrated that we haven’t necessarily found weapons of mass destruction? We believe some of these mobile labs were used for that, but we haven’t found the actual WMD?

MCCAIN: I think all of us are to some degree frustrated. But to my mind, the overthrow of Saddam Hussein was justified by the evidence we have now about the brutality of his regime. I still believe we’ll find weapons of mass destruction because there was so much there in 1998, according to published reports. But of course we are frustrated and this gives ammunition to people who opposed our intervention in Iraq. [Fox News, 5/31/03]

“I am confident we will find those weapons because, look, he had them in the 80s, when he used it against his own people and others, he had them in 91 after the Gulf War, he had them in 98 — that was President Clinton’s opinion and — as well as the inspectors’ opinion. I am — I am confident that we will find those weapons.” [ABC, 6/1/03]

“I’m satisfied that Saddam Hussein not only had weapons of mass destruction, but if we hadn’t overthrown him, he would have gone back to pursuing the development of weapons of mass destruction.” [CNN, 6/3/03] “I personally always believed that there was a chance of us finding weapons of mass destruction. Iraq is the size of the state of Texas.” [Fox News, 3/31/04]

MATTHEWS: But you were quoted as saying that, even if there hadn’t been any WMD there, you still think the war was worth it.

MCCAIN: I think we did the right thing, yes.

MATTHEWS: Even without a WMD case.

MCCAIN: Because — because I believe that Saddam Hussein, it is clear, had used weapons of mass destruction. If he had remained in power, he would have attempted to acquire and use them. And the

sanctions were not working and were breaking down. The status quo was not prevailing in Iraq, yes. [MSNBC, 5/23/05]

“The fact is that anybody that says the President of the United States is lying about weapons of mass destruction is lying.” [Southern Republican Leadership Conference, [3/10/06](#)]

DE-BAATHIFICATION: ‘We’ve Got To de-Baathize Iraq’ ... I’m ‘Optimistic They Will Pass A Reverse de-Baathification Law’

“We’ve got to de-Baathize Iraq. We cannot allow the old regime people to come in to restore law and order. That would be a terrible betrayal of the Iraqi people.” [Fox News, 4/10/03]

“Now we are succeeding militarily. On the ground there is progress politically. There is the process of reconciliation. I think - I’m guardedly optimistic that they will pass a reverse de-baathification law through the Iraqi government.” [This Week, 11/25/07]

“In January, the Iraqi parliament passed the long-awaited de-Baathification law that restores the eligibility of thousands of former party members for government jobs lost because of their Baathist affiliation...these significant achievements come coupled with remaining challenges.” [Town Hall, [2/26/08](#)]

PRO-CHALABI: ‘[Ahmed Chalabi] Is A Patriot’

MATTHEWS: Suppose [Saddam Hussein] thumbs his nose at us and says, “No way. I’m not letting those guys in,” or he starts pussy footing around about it. What do we do then? Do we — do you think an active war is then appropriate, an American attack or any kind of military campaign against him is appropriate, at that point?

MCCAIN: No. I would support the Iraqi National Congress. They have significant support, in my view, within Iraq. [MSNBC, 2/12/02]

“I would like to see support for the Iraqi National Congress and aid and assistance to elements both within and without — inside and outside of Iraq to accomplish.” [CNN, 3/3/02]

“[Ahmed Chalabi] is a patriot who has the best interests of his country at heart.” [Washington Post, 11/24/03]

VIETNAM: ‘Iraq Is Not Vietnam’ ... ‘It Could Evolve Into Vietnam’

“I don’t believe that we would be in any conflict comparable to the Vietnam War.” [CNN, 9/24/02]

“Comparisons with Vietnam are grossly overdrawn.” [NBC, 10/19/03]

“Iraq is not Vietnam,” McCain said. But Vietnam holds “cautionary lessons.” [Newsweek, 11/17/03]

“We lost in Vietnam because we lost the will to fight, because we did not understand the nature of the war we were fighting, and because we limited the tools at our disposal.” [Newsweek, 11/17/03]

“It could evolve into Vietnam if we lose completely the support of the people.” [Charlie Rose, 4/19/04]

“We were able to walk away from Vietnam. If we walk away from Iraq, we’ll be back — possibly in a context of a wider war in the world’s most volatile region.” [ABC, 11/12/06]

EVOLVING VIEW OF DICK CHENEY: ‘One Of The Most Capable Vice Presidents’ ... Bush Was ‘Very Badly Served’ By Cheney

“As Vice President Cheney has said of those who argue that containment and deterrence are working, the argument comes down to this: Yes, Saddam is as dangerous as we say he is.” [Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2/13/03]

“I think that Dick Cheney is a totally, completely thorough, honest man. A man of integrity. Unimpeachable integrity, in my view. And I’ve known him for more than 20 years.” [MSNBC, 10/15/03]

[On Cheney, at campaign rally for Bush in 2004]: “one of the most capable, experienced, intelligent and steady vice presidents this country has ever had.” Adopting one of the central selling points of the Bush campaign, McCain said that Cheney “is, in effect, deputy commander in chief in the greatest test of our generation . . . this long, tough fight to vanquish international terrorism.” [Washington Post, 7/17/04]

MR. GREGORY: Do you, do you have confidence in the president and his national security team to lead the war at this stage?

SEN. McCAIN: I do. I do. I have confidence in the president and I believe that he is well aware of the severity of the situation. [MTP, [8/20/06](#)]

“The president listened too much to the Vice President . . . Of course, the president bears the ultimate responsibility, but he was very badly served by both the Vice President and, most of all, the Secretary of Defense.” [Politico, [1/24/07](#)]

EVOLVING VIEW OF RUMSFELD: ‘He’s Done A Fine Job’ ... ‘One Of The Worst Secretaries Of Defense In History’

“I believe he’s [Rumsfeld] done a fine job ... He’s an honorable man.” [Fox News, 5/12/04]

AUDIENCE: My name is Sabah Elbardisi (sp) with Al Jazeera TV. Senator, Mr. Gephardt spoke on Sunday and said that Mr. Rumsfeld is not doing a good job, and he stopped short of calling for his resignation. He also said that the presidents cannot leave the responsibilities for their subordinates. Are you also calling for his resignation? Or what are you calling for?

McCAIN: No. I think there are certain things that happen with the elections; a president to select his team is certainly a part of that. I certainly would not advocate that. [The Council on Foreign Relations, [11/05/03](#)]

Asked about his confidence in the secretary’s leadership, McCain recalled fielding a similar question a couple weeks ago. “I said no. My answer is still no. No confidence,” McCain said [MSNBC, [12/15/04](#)]

McCain, speaking to The Associated Press in an hour-long interview Monday, said his comments were not a call for Rumsfeld's resignation, explaining that President Bush "can have the team that he wants around him." [MSNBC, [12/15/04](#)]

"But the president has the right and earned the right as the president of the United States to appoint his team—and he has confidence in Secretary Rumsfeld. I will continue to work with Secretary Rumsfeld as much as I can as long as he is secretary of Defense. We have to, because we need to win this war." [East Valley Tribune, [4/15/06](#)]

"I think that Donald Rumsfeld will go down in history as one of the worst secretaries of defense in history." [MSNBC, [2/19/07](#)]

"I'm the only one that said that Rumsfeld had to go." [Republican Presidential Debate, [1/30/08](#)]

"He did not call for his resignation," said the campaign's Brian Rogers. "He always said that's the president's prerogative." [The Trail, [2/13/08](#)]

LENGTH OF CONFLICT: 'The End Is Very Much In Sight'

"I think the victory will be rapid, within about three weeks because I think Saddam Hussein is very weak. And then I think you will find out more about these capabilities that we've been unable to uncover through the inspectors." [MSNBC, 1/28/03]

"I believe that this conflict is still going to be relatively short." [NBC, 3/30/03]

"It's clear that the end is very much in sight." [ABC, 4/9/03]

"Obviously we're going to be in Iraq a lot longer than many had anticipated to start with. I thought it would be appropriate for us to find out the costs of the war, find out what these are and find out what the additional homeland security expenses are." [CNBC, 5/23/03]

"We'll still be there for security purposes. Listen, my friend, we're going to be there for five or six years. A little straight talk. We're going. We're going to have to be there for quite a while." [Hardball, 2/25/04]

"Let's have some straight talk. Militarily, we'll be there for years." [Charlie Rose, 4/19/04]

"Because if you accept the reality that we're going to be there for a long time — which, by the way, is not terrible if you keep the casualties down. We've been in Kosovo. We've been in Bosnia. We've been in South Korea for more than 50 years." [Fox News, 9/19/04]

O'BRIEN: How much time will you give it?

MCCAIN: I'm not sure — I think one of the bad things about this, people are expecting immediate reaction. I'm sorry to tell you that I think casualties may go up in the short run, because they're going to go into some tough neighborhoods. It's going to be a number of months, perhaps before the end of this year, before we see some real signs of success. And then I'm not sure how quick we can withdraw. [CNN, 1/24/07]

ROSE: Do you think that this — Korea, South Korea is an analogy of where Iraq might be, not in terms of their economic success but in terms of an American presence over the next, say, 20, 25 years, that we will have a significant amount of troops there?

MCCAIN: I don't think so.

ROSE: Even if there are no casualties?

MCCAIN: No. But I can see an American presence for a while. But eventually I think because of the nature of the society in Iraq and the religious aspects of it that America eventually withdraws. [Charlie Rose, 11/27/07]

Q: President Bush has talked about our staying in Iraq for 50 years — (cut off by McCain)

MCCAIN: Make it a hundred.

Q: Is that ... (cut off)

MCCAIN: We've been in South Korea ... we've been in Japan for 60 years. We've been in South Korea 50 years or so. That would be fine with me. As long as Americans ...

Q: [tries to say something]

MCCAIN: As long as Americans are not being injured or harmed or wounded or killed. That's fine with me, I hope that would be fine with you, if we maintain a presence in a very volatile part of the world where Al Qaeda is training and equipping and recruiting and motivating people every single day.

[Mother Jones, [1/03/08](#)]

“So, what I want to do today is take a little time to describe what I would hope to have achieved at the end of my first term as President...By January 2013, America has welcomed home most of the servicemen and women who have sacrificed terribly so that America might be secure in her freedom. The Iraq War has been won.” [The Hotline, [5/15/08](#)]

“You set a date for withdrawal, you set a date for defeat,” McCain said. “You tell the bad guys, ‘Hang on, we are leaving’ on a certain date.” [The Tribune, [3/16/07](#)]

STAY THE COURSE: ‘We Cannot Leave Iraq’

“I was heartened to hear the President say that we cannot cut and run in Iraq.” [Press Release, [11/5/03](#)]

“To announce withdrawals when the number of attacks and deaths of American military are going up is not reasonable or logical,” Mr. McCain said in an interview. “If the American military can't do it, then certainly half-trained Iraqis cannot.” [NY Times, 11/14/03]

“I'm confident we're on the right course. I'm confident that this is a very difficult and imperfect process, bringing democracy to countries that have never known democracy, fraught with secular differences as well as ethnic differences. It's very, very difficult. But I am confident that an imperfect democracy is what we'll get out of Iraq will be vastly superior to what the people of Iraq had prior to this.” [ABC News, 3/7/04]

“Is it the time to panic, to cut and run? Absolutely not.” [CNBC, 4/7/04]

“We have no choice but to win. We could leave Vietnam. We could leave Somalia. We could leave Beirut. We cannot leave Iraq.” [CNBC, 4/7/04]

“Leaving is not an option.” [Charlie Rose, 4/19/04]

“We should be together united trying to work out a common policy on how we can address Iraq. Senator Kerry and the president say we have to stay the course. We have to stay the course. How do we do that best.” [CNN, 4/28/04]

“If we fail, if we cut and run, the results can be disastrous. We risk all-out civil war.” [CNNFN, 5/12/04]

“And we cannot cut-and-run. And I’m glad that 58 percent of the American people believe that we should stay the course, as well.” [Fox, 6/28/05]

“And what the president did tonight is the most important thing. He laid out an articulate vision for victory in Iraq and why we need to stay the course.” [Fox, 6/28/05]

“I think the situation on the ground is going to improve,” he says. “I do think that progress is being made in a lot of Iraq. Overall, I think a year from now, we will have made a fair amount of progress if we stay the course. If I thought we weren’t making progress, I’d be despondent.” [The Hill, 12/8/05]

The idea of removing U.S. troops from Iraq, only to station them nearby, seems pointless. “To do what?” McCain asks. “I know of no military strategist who would tell you that that kind of arrangement would work.” [The Hill, 12/8/05]

COOPER: There seems to be so much focus now on drawing down troop levels in Iraq, even by the president. He made a point tonight in the speech saying, you know, that’s going to be done based on military necessity not on domestic politics. But are domestic policies driving military strategy right now in Iraq?

MCCAIN: I don’t believe so. I think the president is staying the course. And I do believe that he stated very clearly when he said troop withdrawals would be dictated by conditions on the ground. [CNN, 1/31/06]

Senior Strategist John Weaver: “It is stay-the-course, no matter what. And if it dooms McCain, so be it.” [Kansas City Star, 4/23/06]

“Most of the Americans, when you’re asked, “Do you want to set a date for withdrawal,” say no. Of course they’re frustrated. All of us are frustrated. I’ve expressed my frustrations to you this morning. But they are not ready to face the consequences of failure by setting a date certain for withdrawal, and I believe that, that they are largely, although frustrated, recognize the consequences of failure.” [MTP, [8/20/06](#)]

“Americans are really kind of schizophrenic about this issue. ... They’re frustrated, and they want us to get out, but if we ask the American people if we should set a certain date or a calendar, they agree with the president, and with me, and with Dan, that is a recipe for disaster. We have to have conditions on the ground that indicate we can withdraw.” [New York Sun, [9/10/06](#)]

“I hate to use the phrase — ‘stay the course,’ but I would rather use ‘prevail’ in Iraq, bring about a democracy, and a free society. [CBS, [9/24/06](#)]

“Well, I think maybe I could call it McCain principle that when I vote to send young Americans into harm’s way and to carry out a mission that I’m committed to seeing that mission through. And to see that

it succeeds. I don't know what my other colleagues think when they also vote to send young Americans into harm's way but I feel it's a great responsibility." ["Face the Nation," CBS News, 1/14/07]

"When I sign up, when I raise my hand and vote to go to war, that I want to see the completion of the mission." [Washington Post, 1/13/07]

SUCCESS IS RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER: 'We're At A Critical Juncture'

"In the next few days, we're at a critical juncture, though. If the war gets extended out, I think you'll see criticism rise. If it goes well, you'll see it disappear." [LA Times, 4/2/03]

"What happens in the next few months? Time is not on our side. People in 125-degree heat with no electricity and no fuel are going to become angry in a big hurry. The sophistication of the attacks on U.S. and allied troops have increased. And what we do in the next several months will determine whether we're in a very difficult situation or not, and there's still time, but we've got to act quickly." [Meet the Press, 10/24/03]

"If we do not meaningfully improve services and security in Iraq over the next few months, it may be too late." [Press Release, [10/1/03](#)]

"I think the next three to six months will determine how long we remain in Iraq." [Boston Globe on CFR Speech, 11/6/03]

"We've got to get this issue resolved to the satisfaction of the American people so that we can focus all our attention on the enormous crisis that exists in Iraq today. We are in a very critical time." [NPR, 5/7/04]

O'BRIEN: With the recent spate of violence, including two U.S. soldiers who were killed yesterday in an ambush, three Iraqis as you well know also killed, the beheading that we've been talking about in Iraq as well, do you think the violence there is getting worse?

MCCAIN: I think it's probably going to escalate between now and the 30th and perhaps for a period afterwards. The terrorists know that this is a very critical time. If they can prevent a handover of the government from the United States military to this Iraqi government they will have achieved great success and there's a lot at stake here in the next few weeks. [CNN, [6/23/04](#)]

"I believe that Iraqi families want better lives for themselves. I think they yearn for freedom and democracy. And I'm very optimistic, guardedly optimistic that the Iraqi people sooner rather than later will start responding to these terrorists and that's what they are, and the window now over the next two to three months is a critical time." [CNN, 6/29/04]

"The next six months to a year are critical." [AP, 1/28/06]

"I think that we're in a pretty crucial phase." [NBC, 3/17/06]

MR. GREGORY: You agree this is a critical moment in Iraq? SEN. McCAIN: I agree it's a critical time, yes. [MTP, [8/20/06](#)]

“I think that, first of all, things are very serious there. And to say otherwise I don’t think would be an accurate depiction of events, and this is a very critical time.” [CBS, [10/19/06](#)]

“If you talk to most military experts, we’re in a critical and crucial time. We’re either going to lose this thing or win this thing within the next several months.” [MTP, [11/12/06](#)]

MCCAIN TURNS HIS SIGHTS ON IRAN: Iranian Operatives ‘Taking al-Qaeda Into Iran’

“As you know, there are al Qaeda operatives that are taken back into Iran, given training as leaders, and they’re moving back into Iraq.” [Hugh Hewitt, [3/17/08](#)]

Speaking to reporters in Amman, the Jordanian capital, McCain said he and two Senate colleagues traveling with him continue to be concerned about Iranian operatives “taking al-Qaeda into Iran, training them and sending them back.” [Washington Post, [3/18/08](#)]

MCCAIN: Do you still view al Qaeda in Iraq as a major threat?

PETRAEUS: It is still a major threat, though it is certainly not as major a threat as it was say 15 months ago.

MCCAIN: Certainly not an obscure sect of the Shi’ites overall?

PETRAEUS: No.

MCCAIN: Or Sunnis or anybody else. [Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, [4/8/08](#)]