**War in Iraq Part 5**

**2009-2011- Withdrawal and Renewed Violence**

**2009-Provincial Elections**

* In January, voters in 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces (including Sunni Muslims who had boycotted the previous election) choose 440 council members in the mostly peaceful elections
* Non-religious parties perform well, a result viewed as reflecting mistrust toward religious parties which have come to be considered corrupt and ineffective in power.
* Weeks before the election, the vast, $736 million U.S. embassy opens in Baghdad, and on New Year's Day the U.S. gives up formal control of Iraqi airspace

**2009- Starting to Withdraw**

* On Feb. 27, President Obama fulfills his central campaign promise by announcing his plan to pull out most combat troops from Iraq by August 2010 and all troops by the end of 2011.
* Some people express their frustration with the number of residual troops his plan leaves behind until 2011 (about 35,000 to 50,000 initially)
* The President acknowledges in his remarks that he's not going to please everyone saying his plan is pretty much exactly what he promised.
* He also notably avoids saying whether the U.S. has won the war in Iraq, stressing that he doesn't want to look backwards.
* While U.S. troops may be coming home from Iraq, they might not all actually remain home for long — the President has also vowed to significantly boost troop levels in Afghanistan.

**2009- Renewed Violence with Withdrawal**

* After months of calm in the Iraqi capital, insurgents strike with two back-to-back sophisticated suicide bombings in three days in early March, killing more than 60 people.
* Iraqi military leaders stress there shouldn't be any conclusions drawn that the Iraqi's cannot secure the capital or country
* The spike in attacks come as the Pentagon announces it will reduce its troop numbers in Baghdad from 140,000 to 128,000 by September 2009.
* Iraq's Prime Minister celebrates the beginning of U.S. troop withdrawal, praising the pullback as an achievement by the Iraqis and declaring the date National Sovereignty Day.
* President Barack Obama marks the withdrawal with little fanfare, calling the day "an important milestone" while cautioning of "difficult days ahead."
* Some American troops stay in the cities to assist Iraqi security forces, and the U.S. can continue operations outside of urban areas with the Iraqi government's consent
* Despite al-Maliki trying to convince the public Iraq has turned a page on the devastating violence, two synchronized suicide car bombs go off in Baghdad.
* The attack leaves at least 155 dead and about 500 wounded in the crowded downtown streets. It's the deadliest coordinated attack in Iraq since the summer of 2007.

**2010-National Elections**

* Just over one week before the national elections, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki approves reinstating a slew of army officers from Saddam Hussein's era.
* This is a surprising move given that the Prime Minister had focused his campaign in the coming elections around bashing the former Baath (Hussein) government.
* His opponents viewed the move skeptically and suggested that al-Maliki was trying to gain favor with the former Baathists.
* The move comes after an appeals court overturns a ban on hundreds of candidates from voting for having ties to Saddam Hussein's Baath Party.
* The initial ban, supported by al-Maliki, had prompted threats of election boycotts by Sunnis and warnings that the credibility of the election itself was at stake.

**2010-Attacks against al-Qaeda**

* The Iraqi Prime Minister announced the killings of **Abu al-Baghdadi** and **Abu al-Masri**, the new two leaders of al-Qaeda in Iraq.
* During the operation computers were seized with e-mails and messages to the two biggest terrorists, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri.
* Vice President Joe Biden states that the deaths of the top two figures in Iraq are devastating blows to the al-Qaeda and proof that Iraqi security forces are becoming more effective.

**2010- Beginning Withdrawal**

* From the end of August 2010, the United States attempted to cut its combat role in Iraq, with the withdrawal of all US ground forces designated for active combat operations.
* The last US combat brigades departed Iraq in the early morning of August 19, 2010.
* Convoys of US troops had been moving out of Iraq to Kuwait for several days, and NBC News broadcast live from Iraq as the last convoy crossed the border.
* While all combat brigades left the country, an additional 50,000 personnel remained in the country to provide support for the Iraqi military
* These troops were required to leave Iraq by December 31, 2011 under an agreement between the US and Iraqi governments.
* On 31 August, Obama announced the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom from the Oval Office.
* In his address, he covered the role of the United States' advising power, the effect the war had on the United States economy, and the legacy of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

**2010-2011- Talks Collapse, U.S. Withdraws**

* Discussions about extending the stay of any U.S. troops beyond 2011 collapse because Iraq would not grant any immunity from the Iraqi government.
* President Obama, angered by the collapse announced that all remaining U.S. troops and trainers would leave Iraq by the end of the year as previously scheduled.
* The last American soldier to die in Iraq before the withdrawal was killed by a roadside bomb in Baghdad in November.
* The last U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq on December 18th, 2011.
* The US embassy and consulates continues to maintain a staff of more than 20,000 including US Marine Embassy Guards and between 4,000 and 5,000 private military contractors.