

By David Swanson

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I just got an email from Huffington Post telling me that Obama was keeping his campaign promise to get U.S. troops out of Iraq. Not quite. Here's a [video](#) of Obama's promise.

In that 15-second video he says: "I will promise you this: that if we have not gotten our troops out by the time I am president, it is the first thing I will do. I will get our troops home. We will bring an end to this war. You can take that to the bank."

Here's the [Huffinton Post](#) :

"Fulfilling a long-held campaign promise, President Barack Obama announced Friday that he will pull all U.S. troops out of Iraq by the end of the year, as conditioned by the Status of Forces Agreement with the country."

What exactly is a long-held campaign promise? Is it one it takes you a long time to keep? Does that work even if the promise was specifically what your first action would be? Was this somehow Obama's belated first action? Of course, not. This is compliance with a treaty that Bush and Maliki made three years ago, which the Iraqi government has refused to modify to accommodate Obama's desire to keep troops in Iraq longer.

There will be U.S. troops remaining in Iraq. They simply will not be employed by the "Department of Defense" (as we call it, I'm not sure Iraqis call it that). Thousands of mercenaries will be employed by the State Department.

Iraqi police will be trained to U.S. specifications on the U.S. taxpayers' dime. We will maintain the world's largest embassy. And I have to assume the CIA is not departing.

Friday's announcement is indeed good news - and usually they save the ugly news for Fridays. Perhaps it sounded like bad news to the press corpse [sic]. Following President Obama's remarks, more than one member of the media shouted out "What about Iran?" But that is them, and this is us. We've wanted this war scaled back or ended since before it began. This reduction, even though not complete, will mean less killing and less violence. This would not have happened without the U.S. peace movement that scared U.S. politicians with its popularity three and four years ago. Of course it would also not have happened without Iraqi resistance, nonviolent and violent alike.

As U.S. troops have been withdrawn from Iraq a number of things have not happened:

- Iraq has not descended into the worst hell imaginable, many times worse than the hell we've helped to create there.
- The reputation of the U.S. military has not collapsed to the point where every little nation with a grudge to settle has attacked Washington.
- The people of Iraq have not risen up to demand a longer occupation.
- The U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq have not come back from their graves to insist that their memories require additional years of pointless killing and dying by others.
- The rule of law has not suffered a fatal blow (partly because it was already dead).

All of this suggests a few of things. One, it is possible that sometimes Fox News is wrong. Two, it is possible that the two-thirds of us who favor withdrawing from Afghanistan are right about that one as well. Three, maybe keeping the peace movement going would have been a

good idea, and maybe we should revive it.

Now, Iraq is not, and will not at any time soon become, a paradise. Millions of refugees are in exile. Every family has been decimated by the slaughter. There is a long road ahead. We owe the people of Iraq reparations. But first we owe them what we shouted about eight long years ago: liberation. When most people hear that "all U.S. troops" will leave Iraq, they think that means what it sounds like it means, and so it should.

The problem with U.S. training and funding of Iraqi police is not that U.S. money is going into the wrong economy. We owe the Iraqi people far more than that. The problem with U.S. training of anyone's police can be observed in the streets of New York, Boston, Oakland, Denver, San Diego and everywhere nonviolent protesters are being beaten by a militarized state. During the course of this war, we have been turning the United States into what we were told we would help Iraq to escape from. Our first duty now is to allow Iraq to escape from us. We should support the Iraqi economy from afar, bring our troops home from every other foreign nation as well, and use the saved trillions to begin converting our own economy to nonviolent industries.