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Romney gripes about Iraq withdrawal

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Mitt Romney seems rather upset about President Obama honoring the Bush administration's agreed withdrawal timeline in Iraq:

"President Obama's astonishing failure to secure an orderly transition in Iraq has unnecessarily put at risk the victories that were won through the blood and sacrifice of thousands of American men and women. The unavoidable question is whether this decision is the result of a naked political calculation or simply sheer ineptitude in negotiations with the Iraqi government. The American people deserve to hear the recommendations that were made by our military commanders in Iraq."

Neither Bush nor Obama really wanted U.S. troops gone by the agreed-upon deadline -- in fact, Obama had been negotiating through the end of last month to stay longer. But the Iraqis wanted us gone, and they wouldn't budge.

I understand why Romney takes this as a sign of weakness and ineptitude, but he's probably blaming the wrong guy. George W. Bush was the first to show weakness at that particular negotiating table, at the end of 2008. Bush signed [the agreement](#) because he couldn't get the Iraqis to agree to something longer-term, and because if he hadn't, the UN mandate to occupy Iraq would have ended on January 1, 2009.

And really, it's hard to blame Bush, either. America cannot just occupy other nations forever, especially once they have achieved some level of political autonomy. If Bush had imposed his will more strongly, he would have been violating the commitment to democracy that supposedly propelled his foreign policy.



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"I have wondered at times about what the Ten Commandments would have looked like if Moses had run them through the U.S. Congress."

— Ronald Reagan

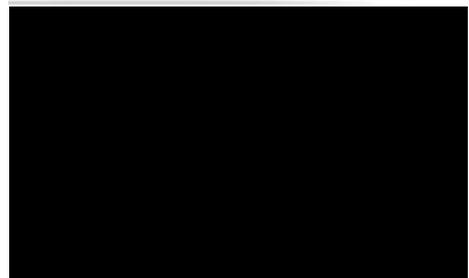
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