

# WebMemo



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## Getting Zarqawi: One Win in Long War

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An airstrike in Iraq, undertaken on intelligence provided by Iraqi security forces, ended the murder spree of the terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, leader of the al-Qaeda in Iraq organization. That is good news. But there is still a war to be won, and Zarqawi's death will not bring an end to the violence in Iraq. Getting Zarqawi, however, does demonstrate the resolve of the United States and its allies in the global war on terrorism. This war can be won with determination, persistence, and a strategy that frustrates the terrorists' mission to intimidate free peoples and slaughter innocents with impunity.

### **Al-Qaeda in Iraq**

Within in few months of the overthrow of the Saddam Hussein regime, foreign terrorists, including Zarqawi (at the time, a known terrorist wanted for murder in Jordan) journeyed to Iraq to set up operations. They worked in concert with former members of the Saddam regime to strike at coalition troops and Iraqi security forces. Zarqawi also engineered attacks against ethnic groups in Iraq, with the aim of spurring sectarian violence and civil war. His specialties were attacking mosques while the faithful were at prayer and car bombs that slaughtered women on their way to market or children returning home from school. Zarqawi and his associates also fanned a growing criminal network in Iraq, outsourcing work to gangs and kidnapping foreigners to extort payoffs from Western countries that could be used to fund more attacks. Finally, he

undertook a propaganda campaign, pledging allegiance to Osama bin Laden and advertising terrorism on the Internet and with videos meant to inspire would-be terrorists.

The presence of Zarqawi and al-Qaeda in Iraq demonstrates why the global war on terrorism is so important. Bin Laden, Zarqawi, and their ilk are willing to go anywhere in the world where they believe they can profitably spread their message of hate and frustrate the spread of freedom and justice. Diminishing the capacity of these groups to spread global terrorism is this war's most urgent mission.

### **After Zarqawi**

Zarqawi's end does not mean an end to violence in Iraq. His network may be disrupted or diminished by the decapitation of its leadership, but it may attempt revenge attacks on his behalf or strikes to demonstrate that al-Qaeda in Iraq is still in the game. Even without Zarqawi, there are other terrorist and criminal groups hard at work.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
[www.heritage.org/research/middleeast/wm1116.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/middleeast/wm1116.cfm)

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To build on this victory, the United States and its allies must stick to their strategy in Iraq: continue to build up Iraq's domestic security forces, support the government, and allow Iraqis to reclaim responsibility for their own future.

More broadly, the United States must stay the course in fighting the long war against transnational terrorism. This means promoting international cooperation to fight terrorism, waging a war of ideas against extremist ideologies, and promoting the expansion of freedom, justice, and economic opportunity.

The U.S. strategy is working because the terrorists are failing. In Iraq, despite efforts to disrupt the political process, two free and fair national elec-

tions have been held and a sovereign government was established. And despite great efforts to inflame sectarian violence, even the most outrageous atrocities have not sparked a civil war. Attacks or attempted attacks in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Spain, and Britain have strengthened the resolve of Middle East and European states to combat transnational terrorism. Zarqawi's death is just another example of how little hope the terrorists have to prevail against the just.

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