



Center for a
New American
Security

LONG HOT SUMMER AHEAD FOR U.S. TROOPS IN IRAQ

**NPR MORNING EDITION INTERVIEW WITH THOMAS
RICKS INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY DAVID GREENE**

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Iraqis celebrated this week's withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraqi cities as a national holiday. Still, roughly 130,000 U.S. troops remain in the country.

Tom Ricks, who has written two books on the war, told NPR's David Greene that he doesn't think that life in Iraq will be that different for the American military.

"American troops are going to continue to fight in Iraq," he said. "They're going to continue to die in Iraq."

In fact, he thinks there will be "some real fighting" this summer in the belts outside the cities where the troops will be based.

"This is not the first time the Americans have tried to transfer security responsibility to Iraqi forces. They've tried it several times. It has not worked several times," Ricks reminded Greene.

"The question now is, are Iraqi forces up to the job? And the answer is: Nobody knows."

And, Ricks says, President Obama "has broken more campaign promises on Iraq than in any other area." He's keeping troop levels the same and is looking at getting the troops out rather slowly.

Ricks also calls Obama's promise to get the combat troops out "a meaningless phrase. ... There are no noncombat troops in the U.S. military. There is no pacifist wing of the military."

He says troop levels will need to remain the same through Iraqi elections next January, then the administration plans to draw them down by about 10,000 troops a month starting in March.

"That means next summer is going to be a point of maximum vulnerability," he says. "Because you take the troops out in the beginning from the easy places, but the deeper you get, the more you have to take them out of the riskier places — or the places where the Iraqi troops are less reliable.

"So actually I think this summer will be a long, hot summer in Iraq, but 2010 will be even more difficult."