

PROVIDE FOR A STRONG NATIONAL DEFENSE WITH PRUDENT FOREIGN POLICY

# Rethink the United States' Middle East Footprint

After two decades of war in the Middle East, the United States needs to reduce its military commitments in the region. America can pursue its regional interests through alternative means at lower cost, reducing the risks of strategic overstretch.

**THE ISSUE** Today, over [40,000 U.S. troops](#) are deployed in the Middle East across [over 19 installations](#), even though growing domestic energy production and mature U.S. over-the-horizon counter-terrorism capabilities are making the region less strategically important overtime. The United States has greater challenges elsewhere, such as the Indo-Pacific, and should be decreasing, not increasing its Middle East force posture.

## **POLICY SOLUTIONS** REDEPOLY FROM IRAQ AND SYRIA

The roughly [4,500 U.S. troops](#) in Iraq and Syria lack coherent objectives tied to core American security interests and faced regular attack over the past year. Redeployment would reduce the risks of our troops suffering a [mass casualty event](#) that could embroil America in a regional war we cannot afford to fight.

## RETURN TO COLD WAR-ERA REGIONAL FORCE POSTURE

During the Cold War, when the Middle East's energy was more strategically important for the United States, America maintained a much more limited regional basing footprint focused on air assets in Turkey and naval forces in Bahrain. Policymakers should reembrace a largely offshore posture for the Middle East. America is well-positioned to protect trade flows and counter credible terror threats without large-scale permanent ground deployments.

## POWER OF THE PURSE

In the FY 2026 appropriations cycle, Congress should embrace the same constitutional prerogative it used to help end the Vietnam war by zeroing out funding for future U.S. deployments in Iraq and Syria.

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