

## Extra Feature Story

### Obama World Tour Highlights Foreign Policy Differences With McCain

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**As the 2008 presidential campaign chugs along, Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama is traveling to the Middle East and Europe -- attracting plenty of media attention along the way while trying to win some political points on foreign policy.**

Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, is using the week-long trip to improve the perception of his foreign policy skills, meet important world leaders and to visit Iraq and Afghanistan, where Obama says he would make significant changes in U.S. troop levels if elected.

Meanwhile, the campaign of his rival, Republican Senator John McCain, says the trip is a political stunt and the overblown media coverage proves the media favors Obama.

On his travels, Obama met with Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al Maliki, who endorsed Obama's plan to withdrawal American soldiers from the country by the end of 2010.

#### **Iraq debate**

Big differences exist between Obama and McCain over the situation in Iraq. Neither candidate believes the Iraq war was handled well, but Obama opposed the invasion in 2003, while McCain continues to be one of its staunchest defenders.

Obama said he wants to remove most American troops from Iraq in the 16 months after he takes office. McCain argues that Obama's plan to withdrawal troops is dangerous and risks destabilizing a fragile country.

McCain argues that American soldiers would not be in a position to leave if the country was not stabilized by an increase in U.S. forces to the country in 2007, known as the surge. McCain supported the surge while Obama voiced opposition to it.

"We have to maintain the progress that we have. The major point here is, Senator Obama could not have gone to Iraq as he did because he opposed the surge. It was the surge that succeeded. It was the surge that -- that has brought -- that is winning this war. He opposed it. He said it wouldn't succeed. He has still yet to say that it has succeeded," McCain said in July.

Just before Obama's visit, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki told the German paper, Der Spiegel, "U.S. presidential candidate Barack Obama talks about 16 months. That, we think, would be the right time frame for a withdrawal, with the possibility of slight changes."

#### **Shift to Afghanistan**

Meanwhile, violence in Afghanistan is rising and more coalition soldiers died in Afghanistan than in Iraq in May and June 2008. Both Obama and McCain want to send more troops to Afghanistan, but they see the situation differently.

Obama has argued that the U.S. should have less troops in Iraq and more in Afghanistan, where the Taliban, who supported the al-Qaida terrorists who organized the 9/11 attacks, are growing stronger.

"I think one of the biggest mistakes we made strategically after 9/11 was to fail to finish the job here, focus our attention here. We got distracted by Iraq," Obama told CBS news from Afghanistan.

Last week, McCain said, "Senator Obama will tell you we can't win in Afghanistan without losing in Iraq. In fact, he has it exactly backwards. It is precisely the success of the surge in Iraq that shows us the way to succeed in Afghanistan. With the right strategy and the right forces, we can succeed in both Iraq and Afghanistan. And they are not disconnected. Success breeds success. Failure breeds failure."

### **Finish in Europe**

Obama will finish his mini-world tour by visiting leaders in Jordan, Israel, the Palestinian Territories, Germany, France and Britain.

Senator Obama is well liked in Europe: 84 percent of French, 82 percent of Germans and 74 percent of the British have confidence in Obama, while the corresponding numbers for McCain are in the low 30s and 40s, according to Politico.com.

Obama plans to make a major European policy speech in Berlin, Germany, where officials expect a large turnout. German public opinion of the United States has been particularly strained under the Bush administration and German media organization Deutsche Welle has dubbed Obama popularity there "Obamania."

**-- Compiled by Quinn Bowman for NewsHour Extra**

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