



Written by [Ralph R. Reiland](#) on January 9, 2015

Lethal Surges

In a nationally televised address on January 10, 2007, President George W. Bush announced major changes in the direction and tactics of America's failing policy in Iraq.

"America will change our strategy to help the Iraqis carry out their campaign to put down sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad," he stated. "This will require increasing American force levels, so I've committed more than 20,000 additional troops to Iraq."



Bush said it was "clear that we need to change our strategy in Iraq," with security being the "most urgent priority," especially in Baghdad. "Eighty percent of Iraq's sectarian violence," he explained, "occurs within 30 miles of the capital."

The 2005 elections in Iraq, two years earlier, were a "stunning achievement," stated Bush. "We thought these elections would bring the Iraqis together and, as we trained Iraqi security forces, we could accomplish our mission with fewer American troops."

But in 2006, the opposite happened and now the United States was digging deeper, committing 20,000 additional troops.

"The violence in Iraq, particularly in Baghdad," Bush explained, "overwhelmed the political gains the Iraqis had made."

So instead of subtracting American troops, we were adding, with a working title of the surge in American forces optimistically labelled "The New Way Forward," as if something new from Washington could halt the perpetual warring between Iraqi factions.

President Bush provided an example of why the administration's old way forward didn't work: "Our past efforts to secure Baghdad failed for two principal reasons. There were not enough American and Iraqi troops to secure neighborhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents, and there were too many restrictions on the troops we did have."

"The New Way Forward" strategy, explained Bush, would include more Iraqi troops "conducting patrols, setting up checkpoints, going door-to-door," the destruction of "networks" in Iran and Syria "providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq," the "deployment of an additional carrier strike group to the region," an expansion of "intelligence sharing," the deployment of "Patriot air defense systems," preventing Iran from "gaining nuclear weapons," and having Secretary Rice appoint "a reconstruction coordinator in Baghdad to ensure a better result for economic assistance being spent in Iraq." Stated more candidly, Secretary Rice had the task of finding someone who might be able to lessen the stealing of the economic assistance funds.

In short, we were starting all over again in Iraq with a new surge, more than five years after the attack on 9/11, nearly four years after U.S. forces invaded Iraq, and after thousands of American military



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fatalities.

Bottom line, the surge didn't work. Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, brutally oppressed Shiites and Kurds. Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, switching targets, brutally oppressed the Sunnis and Kurds. "Meet the new boss, same as the old boss."

President George W. Bush ended his January 10 address praising "the extraordinary and selfless men and women willing to step forward and defend us."

These young Americans, he said, "have watched their comrades give their lives to ensure our liberty."

And some had watched too much.

Bradley Stone, 35, of Pennsburg, Pa., is "a former marine who went on a murder spree in December and killed six family members and himself had been denied claims for new benefits by the Department of Veterans Affairs, including a claim for traumatic brain injury," reported Dave Boyer, a White House correspondent for the *Washington Times*, on December 18, 2014.

In a VA document, a reviewer of Stone's requests for new benefits and treatment stated that all of Stone's new complaints, including claims related to the effects of traumatic brain injury, were "not service-related."

Stone killed his ex-wife, her mother, her grandmother, her sister, her brother-in-law, and her 14-year-old niece. A nephew, 17, survived but suffered injuries.

Stone's "claims for 17 different medical conditions were rejected under the VA's 'surge' program aimed at clearing a backlog of claims in the beleaguered agency, according to documents obtained by The *Washington Times*," reported Boyer.

More specifically, a reviewer in March in the VA's Philadelphia regional office said Stone's new claims were being rejected "under surge guidance."

The VA "surge" was launched in 2013 by then-VA Secretary Eric Shinseki to expedite claims and cut the backlog of claims that was "to cause a media firestorm and contribute to Mr. Shinseki's resignation," reported Boyer.

Shinseki explained that the "surge" would "help eliminate the backlog with continued emphasis on high-priority claims for homeless veterans and those claiming financial hardship, the terminally ill, former prisoners of war, Medal of Honor recipients, and veterans filing fully developed claims."

It seems that Bradley Stone, who served in Iraq in 2008, didn't fit into any of the prioritized boxes.

Stone, with a 100 percent disability rating by the VA for post-traumatic stress disorder, saw a psychiatrist at the VA facility in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, just one week prior to the murders.

A VA spokesman, regarding the psychological visit and assessment in Coatesville, said "the provider noted that at the time of the evaluation, the veteran was without any suicidal or homicidal ideation."

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