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## EDITORIAL: U.S. should not return to Iraqi cities

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Aug. 24--Two large bomb blasts last week in Baghdad, one aimed at the Foreign and Finance Ministries, killed at least 100 people and injured about 600. They put something of an exclamation point on a month of escalating insurgent violence and calling into question the capacity of the Iraqi government to provide effective security. There will be those who urge the United States, which pulled out of Iraqi cities June 30, to deploy some troops back into the cities, if only temporarily, to get the insurgent violence under control. This is unlikely, and it would be unwise.

More than 4,300 Americans, including seven with direct ties to this part of Ohio, have died in the Iraq war. This country has sacrificed enough for whatever is to be gained in Iraq.

There is little question that the record of the Iraqi government since the U.S. withdrawal from cities has been spotty. Despite persistent pressure, Prime Minister Maliki's Shia-dominated government has dragged its feet about giving Sunni Iraqis (including fighters in the Anbar Awakening who turned on al-Qaida and turned around a deteriorating situation) positions of genuine authority in the government and security forces.

In the northern city of Kirkuk, oil-rich and on an uneasy boundary between traditionally Arab and traditionally Kurdish areas, tension between Kurds and Arabs is mounting, 140 people have been killed since July 1, and some American forces will be deployed.

The violence has not risen to the level of being a civil war, but it is more than a little troubling. If Sunni Arabs come to believe there is no hope, they will get a fair shake, an increasing number could decide armed resistance is their best hope.

These are difficult problems, but whatever responsibility the U.S. might bear for having unleashed hostilities that Saddam Hussein had cruelly kept in check through state violence, they are now the Iraqis' problems. They will undoubtedly make mistakes along the way, but based on the record, there is little evidence the U.S. could fix things by sending troops back into the cities. Our time there is over.

Christopher Preble, director of foreignpolicy studies at the libertarian **Cato Institute**, told Freedom Communications, parent company of The Lima News, that he

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hears calls every day in Washington for the U.S. to re-engage in Iraqi cities. He doesn't think it will happen for several reasons.

Opinion polls show that both Iraqis and Americans favor U.S. troop withdrawal -- indeed, there is sentiment in Iraq for a referendum that would likely call for full withdrawal a year earlier than the timetable negotiated by the Bush administration and being carried out under Obama. And the Obama administration is committed to maintaining and probably increasing the U.S. military commitment in Afghanistan.

As tragic as the rising violence in Iraq is, we will probably have to grimace and live with it. Even if it escalates to a civil war, it is doubtful the U.S. any longer can play a constructive role. Whether the original invasion was unwise or noble, it has finally led to an Iraqi government acting more and more independently. It's time to take off the training wheels.

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