ROBERT M. GATES NEWS TIMELINE
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1965  Robert M. Gates graduates from the College of William and Mary with a B.A. in history.

1966  Gates graduates from Indiana University with an M.A. in history.


1981 – 1982  Gates serves as director, DCI/DDCI Executive Staff at the CIA.


1989 – 1991  Gates serves as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor.


1999  Gates serves as interim dean for the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. (The Associated Press, 07/23/1999)

2001  Gates argues that America’s complacency over the last decade has lead to negligence in homeland security, which helps explain why the U.S. did not predict or prevent 9/11 from occurring. He further argues that the U.S. must start from scratch. (The Associated Press State & Local Wire, 12/04/2001)

2002  Gates is elected by the Texas A&M regents to serve as the university’s next president. (The Austin American-Statesman, 05/12/2002)

2004  

February  Gates signs a letter penned by former secretaries of defense and state which asks the White House to delay overhauling U.S. intelligence infrastructures until after the 2004 elections. (The New York Times, 09/22/2004)
2005

March While speaking at a counterterrorism conference hosted by Texas A&M University, Gates states that serving as DCI never overwhelmed him. His comments come shortly after current DCI Porter Goss stated that “he was amazed at the workload” of the DCI. (The Associated Press, 03/05/2005)

2006

January In an interview with the Houston Chronicle editorial board, Gates declines to back the George W. Bush administration’s use of warrantless surveillance. (The Houston Chronicle, 01/22/2006)

March Gates is asked to serve on the Iraq Study Group, a bipartisan panel commissioned by Congress to assess how the US is doing in Iraq. According to the panel’s mandate, their work also includes looking at how the future of US involvement in Iraq may unfold. Other panelists include: Rudolph Giuliani, Leon Panetta, William Perry, Alan Simpson, James Baker, and Lee Hamilton. (Voice of America News, 03/15/2006; The Hotline, 03/16/2006; Defense Daily, 03/20/2006; The San Francisco Chronicle, 09/20/2006)

September Gates is asked to serve and accepts a position as co-chair of an advisory group formed by the Commerce Department. The Deemed Export Advisory Committee’s mandate is to “strike a balance between protecting national security and ensuring that the United States continues to build upon its position as a leading innovator of technology.” (Commerce Department Documents and Publications, 09/12/2006)


On the 16th, Gates begins making the rounds on Capitol Hill in anticipation of his confirmation hearings in December. He meets with Bill Frist (R-TN), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), and John Warner (R-VA), among others. On the 30th, Gates meets with Robert Byrd (D-WV), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), and Byron Dorgan (D-ND). (The Associated Press, 11/16/2006, 12/01/2006)

In response to a Senate Armed Services Committee questionnaire given to Gates prior to his confirmation proceedings, Gates argues that the U.S. should include Iran and Syria in Iraq’s stabilization processes. Additionally, he opposes a quick pullout of troops in Iraq. Gates’ position concerning Iran and Syria is counter to the president’s long standing policies in the region. (The Associated Press, 11/29/2006; United Press International, 11/29/2006)
During his Senate confirmation hearing, Gates posits that the U.S. is not winning the war in Iraq. On the 6th, the Senate confirms Gates with a vote of 95-2. *(The Associated Press, 12/05/2006, 12/06/2006)*

On the 6th, the Iraq Study Group presents its findings to Bush. The group posits that the situation in Iraq is “grave and deteriorating.” The group also argues for the U.S. to engage with Iran and Syria over stability in Iraq. However, no suggestions for troop withdrawal are given. *(Radio Free Europe, 12/06/2006; USA Today, 12/06/2006)*

After meeting with Vice President Richard Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Gates, Bush states that he will not rush into strategy decisions for Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 12/13/2006)*

Gates suggests he is willing to cede many of the surveillance responsibilities created by Rumsfeld to other agencies, including the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. *(Contra Costa Times, 12/17/2006)*

On the 18th, Gates officially takes over for Rumsfeld. On the 19th, Bush publicly admits the U.S. is not winning the war in Iraq and asks Gates to report back to him on a possible increase in troop strength there. The proposal to increase troop strength reportedly receives mixed responses from members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and commanders in Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 12/18/2006, 12/20/2006, 12/21/2006; The Associated Press Online, 12/19/2006)*

On the 20th, Gates visits Iraq to discuss a possible troop surge and meet with commanders prior to a reported large shuffle of military leaders in war. On the 20th, the U.S. announces that security for Najaf province has been handed over to Iraqi security forces. On the 21st, Gates meets with Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki to discuss the U.S.’s overall approach in Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 12/20/2006; The White House Bulletin, 12/21/2006)*

In late December, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says that she is planning a series of in-depth meetings with Gates “to enhance diplomatic and military collaboration in Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa and elsewhere.” *(State Department Documents and Publications, 12/22/2006)*

On the 23rd, Gates gives a briefing at Camp David to Bush, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJSC) General Peter Pace, Rice, National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, and others. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss ways to turn the tide of battle back in favor of the U.S. in Iraq, including implementing a troop surge in the region. *(The Associated Press, 12/24/2006)*

On the 26th, Gates signs an order to send the 82nd Airborne Division’s 2nd Brigade to Kuwait. The move is seen as a possible precursor to a troop surge in Iraq. *(The Associated Press Online, 12/27/2006)*
On the 28th, Gates, along with Rice, Cheney, Pace, Hadley, and Deputy National Security Advisor J.D. Crouch, meet with Bush at his Crawford, Texas ranch to discuss U.S. strategy in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 12/30/2006)

2007

January

On the 8th, Gates recommends General David Petreaus to command coalition forces in Iraq and General George Casey to serve as Army chief of staff. The moves are part of Bush’s new Iraq strategy. On the 10th, in a televised speech to the American public, Bush declares that the U.S. will send more than 20,000 new troops to Iraq in order to stabilize the country. The decision is part of a new White House strategy “switching from a focus on training Iraqi security forces to securing the battered population and targeting economic aid toward the worst violence.” On the 11th, Gates says it is “unclear” how long troop buildup will last in Iraq. He also says that the Pentagon is debating increasing the size of the U.S. armed forces by 92,000 troops. (*The Associated Press*, 01/10/2007, 01/11/2007)

On the 14th, Gates meets with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and British Defense Secretary Des Browne in London to discuss Bush’s new strategy for Iraq. From London, Gates travels to meet with NATO commanders in Brussels where he says the U.S. will deploy a second aircraft carrier to the region in order to demonstrate the U.S.’s strength to potential enemies in the region, like Iran. After Brussels, Gates travels to Kabul to assess the situation in Afghanistan. During his trip, he reports that commanders in Afghanistan favor a troop surge in the country. On the 17th, Gates receives a letter written by Senators Evan Bayh (D-IN) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY) requesting that the U.S. increase troop levels in Afghanistan. Gates says that he will consider increasing troop levels. On the 19th, Gates travels to Iraq, where Casey suggests the “surge” may end by late summer. (*The Associated Press*, 01/14/2007, 01/15/2007, 01/16/2007, 01/17/2007, 01/19/2007; *The White House Bulletin*, 01/17/2007, 01/19/2007)

In late January, Gates sends a memo to the CJCS and undersecretaries of defense asking them to end the use of stop-loss policies that keep troops in tours of duty longer than expected. (*The Hill*, 01/25/2007)

On the 26th, Gates says that a congressional resolution opposing troop buildup in the Middle East “emboldens the enemy.” The resolution comes after fears that the U.S. may attack Iran in response to its meddling in Iraq’s stability. (*The Associated Press*, 01/26/2007, 02/09/2007)

February

On the 8th, Gates meets with NATO defense ministers and asks for more troops for Afghanistan. The response from European members is tepid, with Spain, Italy, Turkey, France, and Germany all reportedly weary of sending more troops to the region. (*The Associated Press*, 02/08/2007)

On the 12th, Gates states that the U.S. will cooperate with Pakistan in an effort to secure Afghanistan. He also says that the U.S. does not plan on abandoning its
efforts in Afghanistan and is planning an increased coordinated assault in the country this spring. (*The Associated Press, 02/12/2007*)

Also on the 12th, Moscow asks Gates to clarify his recent comment that “Russia’s future is uncertain.” Gates’ comment comes after Putin had stated that the U.S. “has overstepped its national borders in every way.” (*The Associated Press, 02/13/2007*)

A bipartisan group of Senators sends a letter to Gates amid concerns that U.S. troops are not being properly outfitted in Iraq. The letter comes after a January 25th report by the inspector general, which indicates that there may be a shortage of armor in Iraq. (*States News Service, 02/17/2007*)

On the 20th, Gates receives a letter from both Democratic and Republican Senators requesting that he look into facility conditions at Walter Reed Army Medical Center after a *Washington Post* report suggests that conditions there are deplorable. On the 23rd, Gates states that those who are responsible for the conditions at Walter Reed will be held accountable. On the 1st of March, the head of Walter Reed is forced to resign. On the 2nd, Bush appoints a bipartisan commission to look into military care. (*The Associated Press, 03/02/2007*)

On the 23rd, Gates meets with South Korean Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo in Washington. After the meeting, the two announce that South Korea will maintain wartime command of South Korean forces. Previously, South Korean forces were under the command of U.S.–United Nations (UN) forces. (*The Associated Press, 02/23/2007*)

**March**

On the 7th, Gates approves a request to send more military police to Iraq prior to a security crackdown in the country. (*The Associated Press Online, 03/07/2007*)

On the 22nd, the Senate Appropriations Committee approves a bill that would fund the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq but also requires the president to withdraw from those countries by spring 2008. On the 29th, the Senate approves the measure by a vote of 51-47. (*The Associated Press, 03/22/2007, 03/29/2007*)

On the 22nd, after the government of Afghanistan decides to free five Taliban prisoners in exchange for an Italian journalist, Gates says that he is troubled by the exchange because it will lead to more Taliban fighters in the field. (*The Associated Press Online, 03/22/2007*)

**April**

Gates suggests that the U.S. should stop holding terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and transfer them to the mainland in order to quell global criticism of the U.S.’s terrorism detention policies. (*The Washington Times, 04/02/2007*)

On the 4th, Gates states that ethnic cleansing and increased violence could occur in Iraq if Congress passes a proposed law that would only allow “targeted” funding for Iraq. The proposed bill is a measure by Democrats to increase pressure on Bush to withdraw troops from the war-torn country. (*The Associated Press, 04/04/2007*)
On the 5th, Gates says that the U.S. and Iran are working on an agreement that would allow Iran access to five Iranians detained in Iraq on suspicion of helping the insurgency in Iraq. However, Gates also states that the U.S. is “not inclined” to release the prisoners. (*Radio Free Europe, 04/05/2007*)

Also on the 5th, Gates suggests that the “surge” in Iraq and new operations in Afghanistan are working. (*State Department Documents and Publications, 04/05/2007*)

On the 11th, Gates informs the U.S. that all active-duty Army troops will be required to serve 15 months in Iraq instead of the usual one-year duties. Gates says that “this policy is a difficult but necessary interim step” in order to secure the country. The decision is not popular with Democrats. On the same day, Gates presses NATO allies for more assistance with both wars. (*The Associated Press, 04/11/2007; USA Today, 04/12/2007*)

On the 17th, while traveling in Jordan, Gates states that the resignation of six Iraqi ministers with ties to Iraqi opposition may help stabilize the country, depending on who replaces them. (*The Associated Press, 04/17/2007*)

On the 18th, Gates says that diplomacy between the U.S. and Iran over the latter’s nuclear programs is working but needs more time to succeed. (*The Associated Press, 04/18/2007*)

On the 19th, Gates travels to Israel in an effort to relieve Israeli anxiety over a deal that would send a large number of U.S. arms to Saudi Arabia. While in the Middle East, Gates also visits Iraq to assess how the “surge” is working. While in Iraq, Gates posits that U.S. commitment to troop buildup is not “open ended” and is contingent on Iraq’s political progress. (*The Associated Press, 04/21/2007*)

Also on the 19th, the Pentagon admits that Bush is misleading the U.S. when he says that the U.S. does not have enough financial resources to continue the war in Iraq. According to the Pentagon, the U.S. has enough resources to fund the war through June, a point that Democrats have been making recently. (*States News Service, 04/19/2007*)

Gates travels to Russia on the 23rd to discuss the U.S.’s plans to deploy an anti-missile defense shield around Europe to protect the continent from long-range nuclear missiles. Russian ministers argue that the move will destabilize the region and could potentially spark a new arms race. Gates suggests the U.S. is willing to negotiate on some limitations and invites Russian officials to visit anti-missile sites in Alaska and California. (*The Associated Press, 04/23/2007, 04/24/2007*)

On the 25th, by a vote of 218-208, the U.S. House of Representatives passes funding legislation for the war in Iraq provided the U.S. start bringing troops back by October 1, 2007. (*The Associated Press, 04/26/2007*)

*May*

On the 2nd, Gates suggests that Walter Reed Army Medical Center should be closed. His recommendation comes after a review by a report issued by an
independent advisory group. According to the report, “money woes and Pentagon neglect were mainly to blame for shoddy outpatient conditions and bureaucratic delays at Walter Reed.” (The Associated Press, 05/02/2007)

On the 4th, Gates receives a letter from Senators asking that he reevaluate recent regulations that may limit the rights of servicemen and servicewomen to keep active blogs while on duty. (States News Service, 05/04/2007)

On the 8th, the Pentagon announces that the U.S. may continue troop buildup in Iraq through December 2007. (The Associated Press, 05/08/2007)

On the 9th, the Pentagon rejects a proposal by governors that would allow them the ability to command active duty National Guard members during homeland emergencies, such as tornados and hurricanes. (The Associated Press, 05/09/2007)

Also on the 9th, while testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gates states he is unsure if the 2002 War Resolution Act is still active. (States News Service, 05/09/2007)

On the 20th, Gates, Rice, and Bush meet with NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to discuss increased violence in Afghanistan. (The Associated Press Online, 05/20/2007)

On the 24th, after a report is released suggesting that China is increasing its military sophistication, Gates suggests that China should become more transparent. (The Associated Press, 05/24/2007)

June

Gates travels to Singapore for his first trip to Asia as secretary of defense. During the trip, Gates says that the U.S. remains committed to Asia despite fighting two wars in the Middle East. (The Associated Press, 06/01/2007)

On the 3rd, Gates warns Turkey not to attack Kurds in northern Iraq. Turkey alleges that the Kurds are using northern Iraq as a base from which to launch terrorist attacks against Turkey. Gates’ comments come after a military buildup by Turkey along the north of Iraq. Days later, Turkish forces raid northern Iraq. (The Associated Press, 06/03/2007, 06/07/2007)

On the 4th, General Bismullah Khah of Afghanistan suggests that the U.S. should accelerate training in the region so that Afghans can fight insurgents on their own. Gates remains mute on the subject but posits that Taliban fighters are currently using weapons snuggled into the country by Iran. (The Associated Press, 06/04/2007)

On the 5th, Gates says from Iraq, “We would certainly be happier if there were faster progress on the political front.” (The Associated Press, 06/05/2007)

On the 8th, Gates recommends Admiral Mike Mullen of the Navy to replace CJCS Peter Pace. (The Associated Press, 06/08/2007)
On the 13th, Gates states that a “large number of shipments of weapons” are entering Afghanistan via Iran. According to Gates, “given the quantities (of weapons) that we're seeing, it is difficult to believe that it is associated with smuggling or the drug business or that it's taking place without the knowledge of the Iranian government.” *(The Associated Press, 06/13/2007)*

On the 14th, Gates states that the U.S. will continue with its plan to implement an anti-missile defense shield system in Eastern Europe and will not participate in a proposed counter offer by Russia, whereby a radar site would be set up in Azerbaijan for dual-country use. *(The Associated Press, 06/15/2007)*

On the 15th, Gates makes a surprise visit to Baghdad. Upon his return to the U.S., he asks for more patience and says, “The reality here is the Shia were repressed for a long time, as were the Kurds. Saddam Hussein and most of those in his government were Sunnis. ...To try to bring these three groups together along with other minorities in Iraq is a difficult endeavor.” *(The Associated Press, 06/15/2007; The Associated Press Online, 06/17/2007)*

On the 21st, Gates states that the improvements to the mental health system for veterans will be improved. One such proposal suggested is to eliminate questions that ask servicemen and women if they have previously suffered from a mental health issue. According to Gates, generally, many soldiers “avoid seeking mental health treatment because of the fear that they may lose security clearances.” *(The Associated Press, 06/21/2007)*

Also on the 21st, Gates says that the Pentagon is not planning on extending troop duties in Iraq past the current 15-month deployments. *(The Associated Press, 06/21/2007)*

*July*

Gates decides to cancel a scheduled trip to Latin America because a progress report on Iraq is scheduled to be released in July. The report states that thus far, the Iraqi government has failed to meet many benchmarks previously set by the Bush administration. In response to the report and growing anxiety surrounding the war, Senators Warner and Richard Lugar (R-IND) draft legislation requiring Bush to narrow the scope of the mission in Iraq by October. *(The Associated Press, 07/08/2007, 07/10/2007, 07/13/2007)*

On the 17th, Gates asks Congress for permission to reallocate up to $1.3 billion in order to speed up the construction and deployment of new bomb-resistant vehicles for Iraq. *(The Associated Press Online, 07/17/2007; USA Today, 07/20/2007)*


On the 26th, Robert Dole and Donna Shalala, who head a presidential commission on healthcare for Iraq War veterans, suggest that the president and Congress act rapidly within the next two months to improve disability health benefits. In
response, Bush says that he has already asked Gates to “take them seriously” and “implement” the reforms. *(The Associated Press, 07/26/2007)*

At the end of July, Gates and Rice travel to Egypt and Saudi Arabia to lobby leaders in the Middle East on the importance of succeeding in Iraq and Bush’s recently proposed Middle East peace conference. *(The Associated Press Online, 07/31/2007, 08/01/2008; The Frontrunner, 08/02/2007)*

**August**

On the 30th, a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report finds that Iraq has made little political progress since the “surge.” *(The Associated Press, 08/31/2007)*

On the 31st, Bush meets with Gates and the joint chiefs of staff to discuss how long to sustain the “surge” in Iraq. During the meeting, military leaders inform Bush that the “surge” is leading to a heavy level of stress on troops in Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 09/01/2007)*

**September**

On the 3rd, Bush, Gates, and Rice visit Iraq. During the visit, Bush suggests that a troop withdrawal may be possible in the future, but he gives no particulars. On the 14th, Gates says that if conditions improve in Iraq, he hopes to decrease the number of troops there to 100,000 by 2008. On the 15th, Bush states that the U.S. is shifting more troops to support roles in Iraq, in lieu of combat roles. *(The Associated Press, 09/03/2007, 09/14/2007, 09/15/2007; USA Today, 09/04/2007)*

On the 20th, Gates meets with roughly 20 House Republicans to discuss the situation in Iraq, as well as Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV). The meetings come after the defeat of a bill in the House that would have limited funding for the war in Iraq. On the 26th, Gates asks Congress for $190 billion to fund both wars for FY 2008. *(The Associated Press, 09/26/2007)*

On the 26th, Gates announces he is sending a fact-finding group to Iraq to examine the role of private contractors in the country. Gates’ announcement comes after an incident with Blackwater, a private contractor based in North Carolina, where 11 Iraqi civilians were killed by the company. In addition to Gates’ announcement, Congress is considering a bill to make all private contractors subject to U.S. domestic prosecution for illegal activities. On the 3rd, Gates’ military fact-finding group suggests more military oversight for private contractors. On the 6th of December, the State Department and Department of Defense reach agreement on new rules and guidelines for private contractors in Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 09/26/2007, 10/01/2007, 10/03/2007, 12/06/2007)*

**October**

On the 9th, Gates approves a plan to increase the size of active-duty military servicemen and women to 547,000 by 2010. The increase will help lessen the strain on current members by allowing more time between deployments. *(The Frontrunner, 10/10/2007)*

On the 12th, Gates and Rice travel to Russia to meet with Putin to discuss the U.S.’s missile defense plans. The meeting is “chilly” because Russia is weary of
the U.S. extending its reach into Russia’s sphere of influence. Rice states that the U.S. is willing to listen to any proposals offered by Russia for cooperation, but the U.S. is still planning to expand the system into the Czech Republic and Poland. *(The Associated Press, 10/12/2007; States News Service, 10/12/2007)*

On the 18th, Gates posits that a recent Congressional resolution declaring Armenian massacres by Turkish forces in and around World War I as genocide could cause irreparable harm to U.S.–Turkish relations. *(The Associated Press, 10/18/2007)*

On the 22nd, in a speech to the Southeast European Defense Ministers, Gates asks Europe to do more to help stabilize Afghanistan. On the 25th, from Heidelberg, Germany, Gates questions the commitment of some NATO members to the coalition in Afghanistan. *(The Associated Press, 10/22/2007, 10/25/2007)*

**November**

On the 1st, Gates states that Iran has agreed to stop the flow of weapons and bomb-making materials into Iraq. The announcement comes after a period of tension, where the U.S. accused Iran of helping Iraqi insurgents and even considered military options against Iran. *(The Associated Press, 11/01/2007)*

On the 6th, Gates visits China to discuss U.S.–Chinese military cooperation concerning Iran’s nuclear ambitions. One of the key achievements of the meeting is an agreement to create a “hotline” between the U.S. and China to increase communication efficiency. *(The Frontrunner, 11/06/2007)*

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf declares a state of emergency and cancels upcoming elections. In response, Gates and Rice both argue that the U.S. wants to continue to cooperate with Pakistan in the war on terrorism but also argue that Pakistan should follow democratic principles and the rule of the law. *(The Associated Press, 11/05/2007)*

On the 9th, from Japan, Gates argues that Japan and other Asian states must do more to secure the region from a potential nuclear North Korea. *(The Associated Press, 11/09/2007)*

On the 9th, the U.S. releases nine Iranian prisoners. The move comes as the military tries to empty detention centers of prisoners who are no longer deemed a threat. *(The Associated Press, 11/09/2007)*

On the 15th, Gates argues that if Congress does not pass a war funding bill needed to continue the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, he will be forced to lay off workers and cut government contracts. On the 16th, the Senate votes to block the war funding bill by a vote of 53-45. *(The Associated Press, 11/15/2007, 11/16/2007; USA Today, 11/21/2007)*

**December**

On the 3rd, Gates visits Afghanistan to discuss the U.S. role in the country after a recent poll in Afghanistan found that nearly half of Afghans are growing increasingly unhappy with foreign troops in the country. After the meeting, Gates suggests that attacks by Al Qaeda might be increasing in the country. In response,
Karzai asks for more equipment and trainers to help improve security. After his visit to Afghanistan, Gates makes a surprise trip to Iraq to assess how the surge is working. During his trip, Gates says, “I believe that a secure, stable Iraq is within reach. We need to be patient.” *(The White House Bulletin, 12/05/2007; The Associated Press, 12/05/2007; The Washington Post, 12/06/2007)*

Speaking from Bahrain on the 8th, Gates calls on all Middle Eastern countries to work together to counter a potential Iranian nuclear threat. “Everywhere you turn, it is the policy of Iran to foment instability and chaos, no matter the strategic value or cost in the blood of innocent Christians, Jews and Muslims alike.” *(The Associated Press, 12/08/2007; The Washington Post, 12/09/2007)*

On the 15th, Gates says that the U.S. will tone down pleas for more support from NATO countries because the “political realities” of some countries hinder them from supporting the NATO mission fully. *(The Associated Press, 12/15/2007)*

**2008**

*January*

The Pentagon announces that it plans to send an additional 3,000 troops to Afghanistan to help the country fight insurgents. The move comes after a year of increased violence in Afghanistan. According to Gates, the move is to bolster security but does not reflect “dissatisfaction” with the work of NATO troops. *(The Associated Press, 01/10/2008)*

*February*

On the 1st, after receiving a letter from Gates asking for help in the south of Afghanistan, German military leaders say that they will remain in the north. Germany, along with France, Italy, and Turkey, have all refused to send troops to the war-torn south. On the 8th, Gates posits that European countries may not want to help out in Afghanistan due to the war in Iraq. *(The Associated Press, 02/01/2008, 02/08/2008; USA Today, 02/08/2008)*

On the 4th, Gates appeals to Congress to pass funding for both wars. The appeal comes months after Gates warned Congress that failure to pass funding for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq would have severe implications. Democrats in Congress have been reportedly stalling on passing the bill in an attempt to bring troops home. *(The Associated Press, 02/04/2008)*

On the 10th, Gates visits Iraq to assess how political and military progress is proceeding. During the visit, Gates says that Iraqi political elites appear to be “more energized over the last few weeks.” On the 11th, Gates suggests that the U.S. may need to slow down a scheduled drawdown of troops in Iraq over the summer in order to evaluate security and stability in Iraq after an initial drawdown in July. Democrats dislike the proposal because, according to Pelosi, not enough political progress is being made in the country. *(The Associated Press, 02/11/2008; CongressNow, 02/11/2008; USA Today, 02/18/2008)*

On the 25th, from Indonesia, Gates promises to help Indonesia modernize and reform its military capabilities. *(The Associated Press, 02/25/2008)*
Near the end of February, Turkey steps up military incursions into Northern Iraq. In response, Gates argues that military pressure will not solve Turkey’s Kurdish problems. *(The Associated Press, 02/27/2008)*

On the 28th, the Army releases a revised operations manual. According to the manual, future efforts to secure U.S. interests will rely on successful nation building as much as traditional combat operations. *(The Associated Press, 02/28/2008)*

**March**

On the 14th, Gates and Rice travel to Moscow to discuss the U.S. missile defense plans. Gates states that we should not get “too over optimistic.” Russian representatives respond by suggesting that the best way to avoid conflict over the plan is to eliminate the missile defense in Russia’s spheres of influence. *(The Associated Press, 03/14/2008, 03/17/2008; The Associated Press Online, 03/18/2008)*

On the 25th, Gates meets with Bush as part of a weekly series of the president’s meetings with top military leaders to discuss troop levels in Iraq. On April 9th, Gates states that he no longer believes troop levels will reduce to pre-surge levels by the end of the year. *(The Associated Press, 03/26/2008, 04/10/2008)*

**April**

On the 4th, Gates suggests that the U.S. will increase troop strength in Afghanistan in 2009 regardless of troop levels in Iraq. Gates’ comments come after a deterioration of Afghani stability. *(The Associated Press, 04/04/2008)*

On the 10th, Gates and Chinese General Liang Guanglie test the U.S.–Chinese crisis hotline, which was negotiated last year. *(The Associated Press, 04/10/2008)*

Also on the 10th, Gates says that Iran is increasing support again for Iraqi militias. *(The Associated Press, 04/11/2008)*

On the 21st, from Maxwell Air Force Base, Gates suggests that the Air Force needs to do more to help in Afghanistan and Iraq because the “old ways of doing business” are no longer satisfactory. *(The Associated Press, 04/21/2008; The Christian Science Monitor, 04/28/2008)*

**May**

On the 1st, Gates announces that the troops will no longer have to disclose all mental health issues during security clearance processes, particularly post-combat counseling sessions. The Pentagon hopes the move will decrease the stigma related to mental health illness. *(The Associated Press, 05/01/2008)*

**June**


On the 12th, from Brussels, Gates announces that NATO members agree to broaden their peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. The announcement comes after
Kosovo’s declaration of independence from Serbia in February. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 06/12/2008)} \)

On the 26th, Gates reports that there is a “real concern” regarding Afghanistan’s security after a recent rise in attacks. According to Gates, part of the problem is Pakistan’s failure to stop insurgents from entering the country. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 06/26/2008)} \)

July

On the 1st, Gates states that Lithuania is a good backup site for the U.S.’s missile defense plans if talks in Poland continue to degenerate. However, on the 2nd, Poland and the U.S. agree to a tentative deal for placing missile defense shield infrastructure in the country. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 07/01/2008, 07/02/2008)} \)

On the 9th, Iran performs a missile test capable of reaching Israel. According to Gates, Iran’s test shows that Tehran is a threat, and it also illustrates the need for a missile defense shield to protect the U.S. and her allies. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 07/09/2008)} \)

On the 31st, Bush announces that recent victories in Iraq may lead to further troop reductions by the end of the year. According to Bush, “The progress is still reversible, [but] there now appears to be a degree of durability in gains.” \( \textit{(The Associated Press Online, 07/31/2008)} \)

August

On the 5th, Gates extends the deployment of 1,250 Marine trainers in Afghanistan and announces an additional 200 troops to support the trainers. According to reports, the move is an effort to bolster support for the trainers after positive gains. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 08/05/2008)} \)

On the 8th, Gates endorses an Afghan proposal to increase the size of its army by 50,000 troops. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 08/08/2008)} \)

On the 14th, after Russia and Georgia engage in military operations against each other, Gates states that Russia must withdraw from Georgia or face the serious possibility that relations between the U.S. and Russia may deteriorate. However, Gates is quick to point out that the U.S. does not plan on using military force in the Georgia-Russia conflict. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 08/14/2008; The Associated Press Online, 08/14/2008)} \)

On the 16th, from Crawford, Texas, Bush holds a high-level meeting concerning the war in Georgia. Gates and Rice are present via video conference. On the 17th, Gates says that Russia is stalling its pullout from Georgia and that the U.S. is worried that Russia is reverting to its former Cold War actions. However, on the 17th, Russia says that it will begin moving troops out of Georgia, starting on the 18th. After Russia’s actions in Georgia, Polish support for a U.S. missile defense base soars. \( \textit{(The Associated Press, 08/16/2008; The Associated Press Online, 08/17/2008)} \)

September

Top military leaders recommend delaying troop withdrawal from Iraq despite improved security in the country. On the 10th, Gates defends the recommendation.
in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee. (*The Associated Press*, 09/05/2008, 09/10/2008; *USA Today*, 09/05/2008)

On the 16th, Gates travels to Afghanistan to assess the security of the country. During his visit, Gates meets with Karzai, as well as top military leaders. During his trip, U.S. General David McKiernan, the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, asks for more troops. On the 19th, Gates says that NATO states should help with financial burden in Afghanistan. (*The Associated Press Online*, 09/16/2008, 09/19/2008; *The Frontrunner*, 09/17/2008)

**October**

On the 2nd, Richard Danzig, a senior advisor to Senator Barack Obama (D-IL), says that Obama may ask Gates to stay on as secretary of defense if he wins the 2008 election. (*The Associated Press Online*, 10/02/2008)

On the 6th, Gates suggests that reaching out to Afghan militants who may be “reconcilable” may be the key to winning the war in Afghanistan. According to Gates, similar policies helped change the course in Iraq. (*The Associated Press*, 10/06/2008)

On the 8th, while speaking at the Southeast European Defense Ministerial, Gates asks Southeast European states to shift their troops from Iraq to Afghanistan to help with security and drug-trafficking problems. According to early reports, NATO allies “balk” at the idea. However, on the 10th, NATO defense ministers authorized their troops to attack drug cartels in the country. (*The Associated Press Online*, 10/08/2008, 10/09/2008, 10/10/2008)

On the 15th, during a speech to the United States Institute of Peace, Gates states that the U.S. and its allies must look for new ways to combat violent extremism. According to Gates, military muscle is not the only answer. (*The Associated Press Online*, 10/16/2008)

**November**

On the 4th, Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) wins the presidential general election.

On the 5th, the Pentagon announces that the U.S. military will pull out two combat brigades in November. The withdrawal comes two months earlier than originally anticipated. (*The Associated Press*, 11/05/2008)

On the 11th, Gates travels to Tallinn, Estonia, to attend a NATO meeting. Gates’ visit is seen as a symbol of support for Eastern European states wanting to westernize in the face of an increasingly assertive Russia. (*The Associated Press*, 11/11/2008, 11/13/2008)

On the 21st, Gates says that he wants to increase troop levels “significantly” in Afghanistan before the 2009 Afghan elections. (*The Associated Press*, 11/21/2008)

On the 26th, Obama announces that he has asked Gates to remain the secretary of defense for his administration. (*The Washington Post*, 11/26/2008)
TIMELINES

- Robert M. Gates News Timeline, prepared by M. Joel Voss, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 07/01/2011.

- Timeline of the Bush Presidency, prepared by Justin Peck and Bryan Craig, Miller Center, University of Virginia, 04/30/2010.
SELECTED WRITINGS AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS BY ROBERT M. GATES


SECRETARY OF DEFENSE


KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS AS SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Afghanistan


Iraq


- Ken Dilanian, “Progress in Iraq Reshapes Debate over War; Democrats in Congress Lose Ground in Efforts to Force Withdrawal of U.S. Troops,” USA Today, 02/18/2008.


Congress


**Europe, Russia, and NATO**


**Iran**


Early Relationship with President Bush

- When did you come to first meet George W. Bush? What were you early impressions of him? Did you have any interactions with George W. Bush while you served in his father’s administration?
- Did you have any interaction with the Bush administration before becoming secretary of defense?
- Describe your early relationship with President Bush. How did your relationship with President Bush change during your time in office?

Secretary of Defense

- Describe your appointment as secretary of defense? Did you have any conversations with President Bush about his expectations of you in this role?
- Tell us about your confirmation process. Did you face any strong opposition to your nomination? How was your nomination received in the media? Who were your staunchest supporters?
- Describe your early days at Defense. What changes did you make at DoD after replacing Donald Rumsfeld? Did the circumstances of your appointment, in the aftermath of Republican losses of the Senate and House, primarily over opposition to the Iraq War, shape your earliest decisions at DoD? Discuss how you constructed your team at the Defense Department. Tell us about your relationship with the uniformed services.
- Comment on DoD’s relationship with the White House, the Vice President’s Office, the State Department, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and other key agencies. Tell us about your relationship with Condoleezza Rice, Stephen Hadley, and Dick Cheney. What role did Cheney play in defense policy?
- Tell us about the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. What were the administration’s biggest concerns in Afghanistan and Iraq as you took office? Describe how the U.S. set policy in the region and the role you played in the process. Did President Bush play an active role? Tell us about your work with Congress to help build support for the administration’s policies. Tell us about your work with other countries such as Pakistan and our NATO allies. Comment on the destabilizing role Iran played in the region.
- Discuss the decision to implement a “surge” in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Did you face much opposition to the “surge” from Congress, the public, or from within the Bush administration itself? Were the “surges” successful? What other major changes were implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan during your time in office? What were the administration’s biggest concerns in the region when President Bush left office in 2009?
- Discuss NATO’s role in world affairs, particularly with regard to Afghanistan, Iraq, and missile defense. Comment on President Bush’s view of NATO during your tenure as secretary of defense.
- Comment on the U.S. relationship with Russia, particularly with regards to missile defense and Russia’s conflict with Georgia in 2008.
• What was the purpose of the DoD’s National Defense Strategy report that was released in June 2008? In what ways did it build on the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review?
• What other important issues occupied most of your time as secretary of defense?
• Tell us about your decision to stay on as secretary of defense under President Barack Obama.

The Bush Presidency in Retrospect
• What do you consider to be your most important accomplishments as secretary of defense? What were the most challenging parts of your job? What were the most rewarding?
• What were President Bush’s greatest assets as commander in chief? What were some of the key differences between President Bush and the other presidents you have served under as commanders in chief?
• What were the strengths and weaknesses of the Bush presidency with regards to national security and defense? What would you have liked to see the Bush administration accomplish or do differently?
• What features of the Bush presidency were overlooked or misunderstood by the press?
• How should the Bush presidency be viewed in history?