

Berlusconi Reveals Italian Retreat from Iraq

Written by

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Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi admits Italy's Iraq withdrawal "timeline." His announcement comes a day after he defiantly denied Italian troop deployments would be effected by the heavily criticized "no fault" findings of American investigators looking into the March shooting of journalist, Giuliana Sgrena and Italian secret agent, Nicola Calipari in Iraq. [lex](#)

Lost in the Translation: Mixed Messages on Italian Iraq Pullout

C. L. Cook

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Will he Stay, or Will he Go?

While Britain's [Guardian newspaper is reporting](#), Silvio Berlusconi's commitment yesterday to "stay the course" in Iraq, today, [AGI, an Italian news service](#) with close ties to the PM's office says Berlusconi has revealed a withdrawal timeline for Italian troops now in Iraq. The embattled Mr. Berlusconi wouldn't give further details, but said he had discussed the timeline with the Iraqi leadership, Tony Blair and George Bush.

Berlusconi has been under tremendous pressure to quit Iraq. Italians have consistently rejected the invasion and subsequent occupation and ignoring public opinion has cost the Prime Minister dearly. His tremulous coalition government was crucified in [last month's mid-term elections](#), losing 11 of 13 ridings, forcing Berlusconi to dissolve the government and forge a new, far weaker ruling coalition. Now, loud calls from prominent Italian politicians from both within the coalition and without appear behind today's withdrawal announcement. It's now just a matter of time, or timeline, before the Anglo-American alliance loses another partner.

Italians, [already bitter about Berlusconi's arrogance](#) and his close allegiance to George Bush, were outraged last month by American pronouncements on the [infamous U.S. military attack against prominent journalist, Giuliana Sgrena](#) and the man sent to Iraq to negotiate her release from insurgent kidnappers, Nicola Calipari. The pair and their secret service driver came under heavy fire from an American squad stationed on the road to the Baghdad airport. The official results of a joint [Italian-American military inquiry](#) into the incident have worsened the situation, with the overwhelming reaction by Italians being calls of "Whitewash."

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Though Italy's military contingent in Iraq is relatively small, approximately three thousand strong, the symbolism of fractures appearing in the so-called, "coalition of the willing" can only embolden the resistance, who are now mounting [almost 200 attacks](#) daily against the occupiers and their Iraqi collaborators. And with [recruitment in the U.S. falling short](#) of it's goals in each of the last three months, finding feet to fill those Italian boots on the ground lost could prove more significant than the numbers suggest.

Tony Blair's re-election rebuke in Britain, too should have the Bush camp worried. Though securing another majority mandate, [for now](#), Blair is fully aware of the unpopularity of his Iraq adventure, as are his fellow New Labour members. There's already talk of a [leadership challenge](#)

All in all, not a good week for the trilateral partners in conquest.

Chris Cook hosts Gorilla Radio, a weekly public affairs program, [broad/webcast](#) from the University of Victoria, Canada. He also serves as a contributing editor to the progressive news site, PEJ.org.

You can check out his blog at: <http://gorillaradioblog.blogspot.com>