

Iraq: Progress In the Face of Challenge

By **Gen. David H. Petraeus**
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More than 160,000 troopers of Multi-National Force-Iraq are currently helping our Iraqi partners build a new state in an ancient land. The goal of all involved remains constant—a representative government in Iraq that upholds the rule of law, respects the rights of its people, provides for their security and is an ally in the war on terrorism. Achieving that goal has been very challenging; nonetheless, despite the increasingly complex environment, we and our Iraqi counterparts continue to make progress in the “Land of the Two Rivers.”

As I write this situation report in early June, nearly

all the combat forces associated with the change in strategy announced by President Bush in January are in place. Each additional unit has added to the momentum of our renewed efforts to achieve security and stability in Iraq. Indeed, as forces have hit the ground, they have been immediately employed.



Gen. David H. Petraeus continues his efforts to check upgrades to security throughout Iraq. Here, in April, he is reviewing the conditions at Zafaraniyah market in northeast Baghdad after increases in security were implemented.

In mid-February this market was devastated by two car bombs that killed more than 50 civilians. By March, the market was thriving, due to Iraqi and Coalition efforts.



The joint Multi-National Force/U.S. Embassy campaign plan guides our way forward. The campaign is pursued along four related lines of operation—security, economic, diplomatic and political. We work with our Iraqi counterparts to help secure the population and foster economic development. Security and economic progress, in turn, give Iraqi leaders a chance to resolve the tough issues that have divided them and to develop their governmental institutions. Support gained through diplomacy with Iraq’s neighbors and the international community helps reinforce and complement progress in the security, economic and political arenas. In addition, our actions along the four lines of operation are bolstered by supporting initiatives in the areas of reconciliation, capacity building, rule of law, good governance and strategic communications.

The results so far have been heartening in some areas, but indicate continuing challenges in others. The most encouraging development has been seeing Iraqis increasingly reject extremist groups and the violence they visit on the Iraqi people. For example, in Anbar Province and some other areas of the country, local tribes are turning away from al Qaeda and other extremist groups and toward the govern-



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tions)/director of Plans, Training and Mobilization, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault); chief operations officer, U.N. Mission in Haiti, Operation Uphold Democracy, Haiti; and commander, 1st Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C. He was executive assistant to the director of the Joint Staff, The Joint Staff, Washington, D.C., and executive assistant to the chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C., before becoming assistant division commander (Operations), 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, and commanding general, Combined Joint Task Force-Kuwait, Operation Desert Spring, Kuwait. He next served as acting commanding general, 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, and then as chief of staff, XVIII Airborne Corps, Fort Bragg. He was assistant chief of staff for Operations, Stabilization Force and deputy commander, U.S. Joint Interagency Counter-Terrorism Task Force, Operation Joint Forge, Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina. After serving as commanding general, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell, Fort Campbell, Ky., and Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq, he became commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq/commander, NATO Training Mission-Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Iraq. A U.S. Military Academy graduate, Gen. Petraeus has a master’s degree and a doctorate in International Relations from Princeton University and a Senior Service College Fellowship from Georgetown University.



SSgt. Jorge Paez enjoys a moment with Iraqi children at a Joint security station construction site.

hoods they are securing. They provide a persistent presence and undertake the difficult work of helping rebuild communities damaged by sectarian violence. Our forces work hand in hand with the Iraqi Security Forces and local authorities during all phases of these operations. Gradually, our Iraqi partners are demonstrating increased capability and taking on more of the responsibility for securing their nation.

One of the principal reasons for the steady, albeit slow, improvement in the capability of the 350,000-strong Iraqi Security Forces has been our strong partnership effort. Multi-National Security Transition Command advisers increase ministerial capacity by mentoring senior Iraqi leaders in the Ministries of Interior and Defense, helping them develop, resource and employ their forces. Multi-National Corps-Iraq and its division headquarters ensure unity of effort by working closely with their counterparts, the Iraqi corps and division headquarters. Transition teams, as well as our units, partner with the Iraqi Army and National Police brigades and battalions that share their battle space while civilian police advisers and military police elements mentor the local Iraqi police. Across Iraq, our troopers are fighting and shedding blood alongside their Iraqi comrades-in-arms. Training more—and more specialized—Iraqi elements also continues, as we help the Iraqis build additional units and much needed force projection, logistics and support capabilities.

A significant portion of our military's combat power is currently deployed in Iraq. There are 20 U.S. Army and Marine brigade and regimental combat teams as well as as-

ment of Iraq. Not surprisingly, these areas are becoming decidedly more peaceful. Another hopeful sign of progress has been a decrease in sectarian violence and car bomb attacks in the months since the surge was first announced.

Much work remains, however, before we will be able to sufficiently quell the violence and establish stability, especially in Baghdad and its surrounding belts, as well as in Diyala Province, northeast of Baghdad. Far too many members of extremist groups still seek to destroy what Iraqi leaders are trying to build. Elements of al Qaeda-Iraq and fringe Shia militias continually attempt to reignite ethno-sectarian violence. Moreover, Iraq's government—its fourth in as many years—is hampered by limited governmental capacity and by the actions of some political parties with narrow agendas. Corruption and extremely unhelpful—indeed, lethal—activities by Iran and Syria compound these problems.

To address these challenges, we are executing a “clear, hold, build” strategy. After clearing areas of terrorists and illegal armed groups, we are holding them by employing population control tactics and establishing Joint security stations and combat outposts. Instead of commuting to the fight, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces are living and operating out of small bases located within the neighbor-



Sgt. Hamdullah Mullawez of the 3rd Battalion, 4th Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, pulls security in downtown Mahdadiyah, Iraq, during the Iraqi army's Warrior Leader Course for new noncommissioned officers.



SSgt. Luke Murphy and Pvt. Shane Irwin of Troop C, 1st Squadron, 33rd Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division, scan the area for movement during a security halt in Sadr City, Iraq.

sociated headquarters, combat support, combat service support and special operations forces now operating in theater. After four years of sustained combat, many members of these units are on their second and third tours, and their experience is very evident. Our leaders and troopers demonstrate an impressive understanding of their environment, working across the full spectrum of operations and navigating with confidence between the enemy they seek to destroy and the civilian populace they aim to help. Indeed, our troopers across the armed forces now possess skills and tools that were the near exclusive purview of the special operations community just a few years ago, such as the ability to conduct counterinsurgency operations, the

knowledge and cultural savvy necessary to train and work with foreign militaries, the capability to gather, fuse and act on all forms of intelligence, and the ability to help build local governments and reestablish basic services.

Our forces are enabled by the latest equipment, much of it designed for this environment and fielded since the beginning of our operations in Iraq. Important new systems, for example, increase our ability to detect and defeat improvised explosive devices (IEDs). In the air, unmanned aerial vehicles link sensor to shooter in an unparalleled effort to find, locate and destroy IEDs and those who emplace them. On the ground, the Buffalo, the RG-31 counter-IED vehicle and sophisticated robots help our route clearance and explosive ordnance disposal teams. Our troops are protected by enhanced armor, including the newest generation of Humvees and an increasing number of mine resistant ambush protected vehicles.

Rapidly fielded new technology is also a combat multiplier on our patrols, at our checkpoints and in our headquarters. Sensors on aerostats and mast-mounted sights provide our soldiers with improved situational



PFC Jason Dore looks for any possible enemy contact in western Baghdad, Iraq. He is a forward observer with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division.



U.S. and Iraqi soldiers discover a large weapons cache containing hundreds of rockets, improvised explosive device-making materials, small-arms munitions and dozens of antitank weapons in northern Iraq. Multi-National Force-Iraq troops found more caches in Anbar and Baghdad provinces in the first four months of 2007 than they did in all of 2006.

awareness. Audiovisual warning devices alert oncoming personnel to our checkpoints, while bomb-sniffing devices, three-dimensional imaging machines, military working dogs and biometric collection tools increase our ability to make on-the-spot determinations regarding a potential detainee's culpability. New command, control and communications systems, such as Blue Force Tracker, tactical satellite radios and the Command Post of the Future application, have transformed the ability of our leaders to track, communicate with and control our forces. This is just a short list of the many items of new technology and equipment our troopers are employing.

Overall, our visible, sustained presence, better technology and increased operational tempo, especially in areas where until recently we had no sustained presence, have begun to create a baseline of security for the Iraqi people. Dozens of Joint security stations and combat outposts throughout Iraq have led to a corresponding increase in the number of actionable tips received from Iraqis who are tired of the violence and want to get extremists out of their neighbor-

hoods. Because of this actionable intelligence, our troopers have more than doubled the number of weapons caches found, and they have detained the leaders of networks using deadly IEDs, explosively formed projectiles and car bombs, as well as the leaders of secret militia cells and death squads. Partly as a result, the numbers of car bombs and sectarian-related murders have dropped significantly, though we are well aware that inter-sect animosity could be reignited with sufficient provocation. We remain mindful of the fact that the slow progress our soldiers have achieved has not come without the sacrifice of some of our country's very finest young men and women who have given the last full measure of devotion for the cause in Iraq.



SSgt. Justin Little leads his squad from Troop B, 1st Battalion, 14th Cavalry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team (Stryker), 2nd Infantry Division, during clearing operations in Baghdad.

Dennis Steele/ARMY Magazine



Moshtak Talib Abid, an engineer who maintains the Al Bakr water treatment plant, shows Col. Bryan Owens, commander, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, around the plant.

To capitalize on the baseline of security our troopers are building, we are also fostering economic development. Embedded provincial reconstruction teams deployed earlier this year reinforce the efforts of our brigade combat teams. Together with our soldiers, these teams mentor Iraqi governmental officials, helping them efficiently execute their budgets and build the capacity to put Iraq's oil revenues to work for its people. They also help rebuild the infrastructure necessary to provide basic services through projects focused on fixing sewer systems, supplying clean water, restoring electricity, collecting trash, delivering fuel, providing accessible health care and opening schools. All told, we have more than 1,800 projects under way right now, some \$5.6 billion worth of work.

Economic development is strengthened by the restoration of commerce. Everyday institutions like banks and markets create stakeholders in the new Iraq, while employment opportunities provide Iraqi citizens with a means to support their families. We are fortifying markets with barriers and checkpoints, so that the enemy has more difficulty conducting sensational attacks in highly populated areas, and we are helping our Iraqi partners reopen banks. Other initiatives are focused on creating jobs. One such program, a joint U.S. Agency for International Development/Multi-National Force effort, employs nearly 35,000 young men each day in key cities like Baghdad, Ramadi and Fallujah, harnessing their energy for public works improvement, small business development and vocational education. Another program is dedicated to reopening some of Iraq's state-owned enterprises. As with security, we are striving to create a baseline of economic development, recognizing that we must continue to make progress in this area if we are to set the conditions for sufficient economic opportunity across Iraq.

Contributions from the international community, including debt relief, equipment donations and technical assistance, also support and strengthen Iraq. The International

Compact for Iraq and the Rebuilding Iraq Expo in Amman, Jordan, are two recent examples of neighboring nations recognizing Iraq's importance in the region and the region's role in helping Iraq succeed. A more direct contribution has come by way of boots on the ground. Troops from 25 countries make up Multi-National Force, and seven additional countries participate by providing forces assigned to the NATO Training Mission.

Our security, economic and diplomatic initiatives all support our main effort, the political line of operation. Lasting stability and security will only come through reconciliation among Iraq's ethnic and sectarian groups, political parties and leaders that will then enable the resolution of Iraq's complex political issues. Numerous initiatives have been launched to facilitate Iraqi political accommodation and to strengthen Iraq's government. The Multi-National Force/U.S. Embassy reconciliation support cell is, in coordination with Iraqi officials, helping to bring reconcilable opposition groups into the political process and into the fight against extremists. Provincial reconstruction teams and ministerial mentors are helping build governmental capacity, thereby increasing effectiveness and, in turn, legitimacy. The Rule of Law Task Force is helping Iraqis administer justice by establishing legitimate trials and improving Iraqi detainee operations. Last, our commanders continue supporting our diplomats and Iraqi leaders as they strive to resolve crucial issues such as the distribution of petroleum revenues, the future of Kirkuk, deBaathification reform, provincial elections and constitutional reform.

The situation in Iraq remains exceedingly complex and very tough. As all who have served here know, nothing is easy in Iraq. Thus, while we continue to see and feel progress on the ground, we know that much work remains ahead of us. Indeed, success will take continued commitment, perseverance and sacrifice, and it will not be achieved quickly. Multi-National Force will remain Iraq's partner in this effort, and we will continue to help create an environment conducive to Iraqis forging the political accommodation that is the key to their success. While we will strive to open the window of opportunity as widely as possible, in the end, it is the Iraqis who must make the most of this opportunity. We continue to do all that we can to enable them to do so. ★