



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342

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MEMORANDUM FOR COMMANDER, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE – IRAQ, VICTORY
BASE, IRAQ, APO AE 09342

SUBJECT: August 2007 Assessment and Recommended Way Ahead

1. Sir, I wanted to give you my assessment and recommendations which are included as Enclosures 1-4. Enclosures 5-10 are my commanders' assessments. They were used in formulating my assessment and recommendation. The intent of the surge is to provide Security and Stability to the population of Iraq through the application of population protection measures inside the urban areas and to eliminate safe havens and sanctuaries in and outside of the urban areas. This should buy space and time for the Government of Iraq (GoI) to build its governmental capacity; equip, train, and man its security forces; deliver public services to all regardless of sect; provide sustainable economic opportunities; and reconcile with different communities.

I would characterize the Iraq threat environment as four interacting conflicts: counter-occupation, terrorism, insurgency, and a communal struggle for power and survival all occurring in the context of a failing state. This is complicated by the external influences of Western, Turkish, Persian, and Arab civilizations. Solving one in isolation makes the others worse so our solution set must address all of these factors together.

2. AQI is off plan

It is my view that Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has been significantly degraded over the past six months. Numerous safe havens / sanctuaries have been eliminated along the Euphrates River Valley, in Baghdad as well as in the Baghdad belts. Their freedom of movement has been severely challenged and AQI leadership has been forced away from Baghdad and major population centers.

While showing adaptability at the tactical level, AQI is having difficulty altering their overall methodology in response to the changing dynamic of the Iraqi population. The failure of the second Golden Mosque bombing to incite the desired retaliation, growing tribal resistance, and the turning of Sunni militant groups are all direct reflections of the failure of their heavy-handed tactics. This does not render their tactical efforts defeated – AQI is still able to conduct limited high profile attacks. But their overall goal of establishing themselves as the leaders of the Sunni resistance in Iraq is moving farther away with each murder.

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AQI is losing population acquiescence. This combined with the increased ability of Coalition Forces (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to protect the population through the surge has degraded AQ capabilities and put them off plan. We have helped turn the Sunni population away from providing passive sanctuary through reaching local security accommodations and recognizing the importance of tribal influence. We have been able to stop the cycle of sectarian violence that plagued the country through population security means, but we have not yet reduced sectarian tension enough. AQI is still able to conduct spectacular attacks, but they are no longer followed by revenge killing sprees.

3. Shi'a Extremists are an increasing threat

Shi'a extremists are becoming increasingly more aggressive and may be seeking to influence the MNF-I Commander's September report to Congress as well as increase their power and influence in the South. The Special Groups of the Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) are the predominate Shi'a extremist group [redacted] 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d Muqtada al-Sadr is unable to control these elements. As the security situation improves in the mixed sectarian areas the prospects for political progress are enabled. Prospects for political progress and the decline of both AQI and the Sunni insurgency are a direct threat to the goals of the Shi'a extremists who cannot intimidate, coerce, and extort in a stable environment. [redacted] 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d is similarly threatened by the current progress, and will increase support to Shi'a extremists with arms, training, and funding, focusing on southern Iraq, exacerbating intra-Shi'a tensions and heightening the impression of instability to increase pressure for a Coalition withdrawal.

Coalition forces have been successful in degrading high and mid-level leadership of the Shi'a extremists. However, only the GOI can totally solve this problem through aggressive security and political action against these militias and their political leaders. The cloud of [redacted] 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d influence will remain. However, the Sadrist Trend is under constant pressure as a consequence of political isolation, intra-Shi'a tensions, and Coalition military activity. Given the Trends inability to control its criminal elements, the continued JAM involvement in sectarian violence, and raised tensions with Badr/ISCI, senior officials and Sadr may be seeking to reverse the Sadrists' isolation. This gives the GOI and MNF-I a window of opportunity in which to capitalize on the Sadrists' temporary vulnerability and isolate irreconcilable elements. [redacted] 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d JAM activities serves as an opportunity to introduce stress into the ISCI/Badr relationship with [redacted] 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d. In my view, it is important that we develop and shape a Shia strategy which is inclusive of all sides.

4. Reconciliation is delivering stability – but for how long?

The past months have seen extraordinary developments across the Sunni heartland, with insurgent groups turning on AQ and working with the Coalition to provide local security. Whenever I speak to these Sunni "Volunteers" about their motivations, they tell

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me they are looking for security for their communities, legitimacy, and job opportunities. This has clearly provided short term security gains and despite strong reservations initially, I have witnessed a positive change in PM Maliki, and a willingness to move this work forward through a small group of close advisors who form the IFCNR.

I do believe we need to develop a more coherent strategy for National Reconciliation. It is important to develop an overall framework for National Reconciliation to ensure that our efforts at both tactical and strategic levels focus on pushing the different parties towards reconciliation, and that we use our leverage to this end. This strategy should include the nurturing of political movements which provide better representation of both Sunnis and Shi'a at Provincial level and also at National level; the provision by GoI of public services; reconstruction; the recruitment and training of local police; and detainee release. Without this, I'm concerned that separate strategies focused on Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds, may exacerbate the rifts and differences, rather than encourage cross-sectarian working and reconciliation.

I recommend an overall strategy so that we can better manage the risks. And the risks are many. I do not believe that our local security accommodations are sustainable if there is not movement on the political front. Also, if the GoI does not increase the pace at which it reaches local accommodations, nor improve its strategic communications with the Sunni community, it will fail to capitalize on the potential for reconciliation. Without a political process, we could be enabling insurgent/militia competition between the different groups in the name of security, as they position for the civil war. Our current approach could undermine the security institutions that we are trying to build up. At worst it might further populate the gap between the people and the Government with empowered and equipped "militias".

We must continue to push the Iraqi leaders to generate a political environment to move forward with reconciliation – and not just local security. I believe that only as part of some overall political agreement could we expect genuine Amnesty agreements. So Conditional Immunity might be what we go for in the current environment; and amnesty is what we go for when the political environment is set.

5. Iraqi Security Forces Development

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continue to increase combat effectiveness and gain credibility. There have been significant, tangible improvements in the ISF over the past eight months, both quantitative and qualitative. Development of the Iraqi Army is ahead of the Iraqi Police, but both are making progress. Although the ISF is not yet self-reliant and several challenges remain, they are moving in the right direction and are assuming more security responsibilities.

Our monthly Operational Readiness Assessments (ORA) do not portray an accurate picture of the ISF's capabilities. More telling is the fact that Iraqi Security

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Forces are standing, fighting, and taking casualties. The ISF have noticeably increased their aggressiveness and discipline, and are achieving positive operational results. Coalition commanders, in monthly subjective assessments, increasingly express a high degree of confidence in the ISF units with which they are partnered. In fact, coalition commanders are quick to argue against taking any ISF units from their operational environments. Many ISF units effectively operate with minimal coalition supervision such as in Mosul, Tal Afar, Kirkuk, Najaf, Nasiriyah, the Kurdish region, and several southern provinces.

Additionally, the ISF has demonstrated an adept ability to command and control forces, as well as plan and conduct targeted operations. This included the repositioning of brigade-sized elements from across Iraq to Baghdad in support of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, as well as recent operations in Samarra in the wake of the June 2007 Golden Mosque attack. Moreover, several effective Iraqi joint operations centers have been stood-up in Baghdad, Samarra, Karbala, and Basra. This progress was best manifested in the highly successful August 2007 7th Imam Observance, a corps-level operation executed by the Baghdad Operational Command under the leadership of Lieutenant General Abud Qanbar.

However, challenges remain and they must be addressed as we seek to deliberately and cogently transfer security to the Iraqi Security Forces. The biggest challenges are the lack of self-sustaining logistics and a shortage of qualified officers and NCOs. These challenges will be further compounded as the Iraqi Army grows by 2 Division Headquarters, 6 Brigade Headquarters and 23 Battalions by April 2008. In the aggregate, Iraqi Army units only have 69% of their authorized officers and 38% of their authorized NCOs. Additionally, we must increase the rate of equipping. They remain under equipped to take sole responsibility for security. Finally, sectarianism is still evident within the ranks and among the leadership. It is significantly less in the IA but is still there in some units. Unfortunately, loyalty to militias instead of the GoI is still prevalent in IP and NP.

I am convinced that the ISF will continue to grow and gain credibility over the upcoming months. This is in part due to the combat experience they are gaining on a daily basis through joint operations with coalition forces and the stellar work of our transition teams. However, I recommend that we equip the Iraqi forces as fast as possible and provide them with the type of equipment that gives them overmatch capabilities. We must also assist the MOD and MOI in aggressively training and emplacing leaders at all levels. A viable logistics system is a longer-term task, but we must begin its development now if we expect the ISF to be successful in the out years. Finally, we may never fully extinguish sectarianism, but our continued counsel and encouragement is imperative to ensuring the ISF's professionalism.

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6. Non-Representative Political Parties and Illegitimate Political Leaders

The longer I am in Iraq, the more that I have come to realize that the majority of Iraqis are not represented by any political parties. Those parties in power – with the exception of the PUK/KDP – were for the most part formed outside Iraq and are mostly led by exiles. They do not resonate with the Iraqi people. Yet they are able to dominate the political space. OMS/JAM has much greater grass-roots appeal than other parties, but as yet is not able to meet the needs of its constituents. More legitimate Sunni parties may emerge out of the Tribal Awakening movement started in al-Anbar. It will take time for indigenous groups to develop into credible political parties, able to represent their constituents and to meet their needs.

In many parts of the country, I hear of complaints about non-legitimate representatives. The Sunnis recognize that it was their non-participation in the provincial elections that led to this situation. While I understand that provincial elections in some places will bring greater stability; I accept that in others it is likely to spark further violence. However, I am not in favor of simply maintaining the status quo. Staggered elections are an option we might consider.

7. Public Services Delivery – Weak Capability and Malign Intent

In places where security has improved, GoI has been slow in delivering public services. Often this is due to lack of capability but sometimes it is malign intent.

Across Baghdad, there is a notable difference in services delivered to Sunni communities from those delivered to Shia communities. The GoI was quick to respond to calls from Shia in Husseniya about lack of food; but virtually deaf when Sunni communities made similar appeals. I truly believe that the delivery of basic services could have an exceptional effect in conjunction with the current security improvements.

Too often, I listen to commanders describe the efforts they go to in order to just get GoI officials to visit the Provinces. The allocation of ministries to political parties is a large part of the problem. Ministers are appointed on the basis of party affiliation rather than capability to do the role. And too often they give out jobs in the ministry as rewards to their supporters. This impacts both on the ability of the ministry to function as well as sectarian bias. At the Provincial level, however, there are more positive developments particularly in budget execution. The delivery of basic services would make an immediate impact not only on the overall security situation, but would also improve government legitimacy.

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8. Conclusion

I do not believe we can simply say that we have been successful on the security front, but not on the political one. Iraq's instability stems from inherently political issues, and the security LOO is supportive of the political LOO.

Iraq faces a myriad of problems, a number of which we have been largely responsible for creating. We need to recognize this.

- De-Baathification became perceived as De-Sunnification; as well as the removal of professional, educated and experienced officials from their jobs.
- Dissolving the army and security institutions overnight deprived a large number of Iraqis of both their status and their livelihoods. Many of the "volunteers" I speak to today when I am on battlefield circulation tell me that they were formerly officers in the old Iraqi Army. They should never have become our enemy. And it is clear that former Iraqi Army are now in the ranks of JAM.
- The system of government that we have introduced has made it incredibly difficult to govern Iraq. The mixed Presidency/Prime Minister model is hard for a mature Western democracy, let alone a country such as Iraq. The "Lebanon" model of allocation of positions according to sect/ethnic group compounds the divisions in society, and undermines the concept of professionalism. The attempt to ensure against the return of a dictator by decentralizing power, even before it had been centralized, has crippled decision-making. As a number of Iraqis have said to me: "Not even Mohamed or Jesus could run Iraq today." I do not think it is simply a matter of replacing Maliki.

Our reliance on Iraqi exiles not only gave us a skewed understanding of Iraq, but also resulted in the empowerment of people considered by the Iraqi street as alien and foreign.

To completely solve Iraq's problems will take years. There are no good options. The plan I propose allows us to adequately support the Iraqi Security Structure. But, we need to develop a ten year strategy, which draws on all elements of national power. Iraqis think in weeks, months, and years, while we think in seconds, minutes, and hours.

I genuinely believe that the impact of a rapid withdrawal of our troops will be devastating. I predict that the ISF would fail and not be able to provide security; militias and AQ would get stronger as GoI is not able to provide protection to the Iraqi people; sectarian violence would increase, spiraling into civil war and further massive displacement; Iraq would break down/partition; AQ would claim victory and create terrorist sanctuaries; neighboring countries would intervene; and US interests and reputation would be severely damaged. The threat of 1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4c influence and Regional instability would grow and add to international instability throughout the world.

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We have a moral responsibility as well as a national security responsibility to continue to assist Iraq.

I truly believe that we can still attain our strategic goals in Iraq. My recommendation is based on the realization that we face increasing resource and political constraints from both the US and Iraqi governments and that Iraq currently exercises only partial control over its political and security affairs and must progressively assume greater responsibility consistent with its sovereignty. This recommendation outlines a concept for the gradual rebalancing of security responsibilities inside Iraq in favor of the GoI. Reinforcing population security means deliberate transfer of security authority to the GoI from the periphery to the center in the most volatile areas. It requires a gradual rebalancing of security responsibility accompanied by simultaneous reductions in CF mission, presence, and profile and a final CF set intended to secure our adjusted strategic goals. My recommended strategy for phased rebalancing of responsibilities in Iraq, "Gradual Empowerment", follows as Enclosure 1.

10 Encls

1. Gradual Empowerment Strategy
2. Nationwide Rebalancing Concept
3. Force Re-Posturing Concept
4. Joint Regional Support Base Concept
5. MND-B Assessment
6. MND-N Assessment
7. MND-W Assessment
8. MND-C Assessment
9. MND-SE Assessment
10. CJSOTF Assessment

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