

From: "Kavanaugh, Brett M."
To: "McGurn, William J.", "Michel, Christopher G."
Cc: "Drouin, Lindsey E."
Subject: FW: Pentagon statement
Sent: Thu, 22 Sep 2005 05:58:56 -0500
[PentagonStatement22September2005#11ann.doc](#)

By the way, see footnote 10 of the annotated. I also still have concerns about that phrasing since it was mostly Coast Guard efforts and local efforts that rescued people as I understand it.

From: Currin, John
Sent: Thursday, September 22, 2005 3:38 AM
To: Staff Secretary
Cc: McGurn, William J.; Michel, Christopher G.; Carson, Melissa M.; Ward, Frank P.; Jordan, Elise; Green, Anneke E.; Fahy, Brian D.; Drouin, Lindsey E.
Subject: Pentagon statement

Issues (Statement at the Pentagon)

Issue 1

Page 2, 1st paragraph, sentence: "That is why Special Forces from our Coalition, along with Afghan forces, are conducting precision raids against high-value targets in southeastern Afghanistan."

Special Forces from the Coalition, with Afghan forces, are conducting raids against high-value targets in Jalalabad, Farah, and Kandahar. While Kandahar is located in southeastern Afghanistan, Jalalabad is east of Kabul and near the border with Pakistan, and Farah is in the west of Afghanistan. Do we need to adjust the language? See annotated, note #18

Issue 2

Page 2, 3rd paragraph, sentence: "The terrorists are now concentrated in 4 of Iraq's 18 provinces."

Reynolds Kiefer expressed concern with this wording. The terrorist and insurgents have been concentrated in 4 of the 18 Iraqi for a long time. The phrasing here make it seem as if it is just now that they are concentrated in these four provinces. Kiefer thought it more accurate to say that the terrorists remain concentrated in 4 of Iraq's 18 provinces.

Issue 3

Page 3, 2nd full paragraph, sentence: "We saw the value of larger and more capable Iraqi Security Forces in Najaf and Fallujah last year, when American and Iraqi forces conducted joint operations to clean out terrorist strongholds."

The word "joint" needs to be change to "combined." According to the Joint Staff J-3, a "joint operation" is an activity in which the elements of two or more U.S. Military departments participate. A "combined operation" is an activity combining U.S. forces with those of another country. Thus the strong recommended to use "combined operation" instead of "joint operation." See annotated, note #40.

Issue 4

Page 3, 3rd full paragraph, sentence: "Our joint efforts killed, captured, or flushed out hundreds of terrorists."

Same issue as no. 3. Recommend changing “joint efforts” to “combined efforts”.

Issue 5

Page 3, 3rd full paragraph, sentence: “And as part of General Casey’s strategy, the Iraqi forces left behind a unit in Tal Afar to ensure that the terrorists are not allowed to return, regroup, and hold hostage the innocent residents of that city.”

The Joint Staff J3 reports that at least two Iraqi battalions remain in Tal Afar, but did not provide a specific number on how many Iraqi battalions remain in Tal Afar. There is more than one unit, but uncertainty about how many units remain. Recommend re-wording to “And as part of General Casey’s strategy, Iraqi forces remain in Tal Afar to ensure that the terrorists are not allowed to return, regroup, and hold hostage the innocent residents of that city.”

Issue 6

Page 4, 1st full paragraph, sentence: “To ensure that we can maintain this aggressive pace of military operations through the election period, we are temporarily increasing our troop levels – just as we have before other major political events.”

Information from the Joint Staff is that US troops in Iraq number 149,500, as of 21 Sep 05. The United States has recently increased the number of forces in Iraq, and these forces are currently in place. This level of around 149,000 will be maintained through the end of year. Because it appears that the increase in troop level has taken place, should we re-word the sentence to read: “To ensure that we can maintain this aggressive pace of military operations through the election period, we have temporarily increased our troop levels – just as we have before other major political events.” See annotated, note #54.

Statement at the Pentagon
Thursday, September 22, 2005
Draft #11

Good morning. It is a pleasure to be back at the Pentagon. I just finished a briefing with Secretary Rumsfeld, General Myers, and Admiral Giambastiani¹ – along with Generals Abizaid and Casey via videoconference from the Middle East² [other participants TK]. They gave me an update on the wide range of missions being carried out by our Armed Forces.

I thank Secretary Rumsfeld and our military leaders for their efforts to help our fellow citizens in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. More than 50,000³ soldiers,⁴ sailors,⁵ airmen,⁶ and Marines⁷ – including thousands of National Guardsmen⁸ and Reservists

¹ Information from [b(3) 10 USC 130b] Military Aide to the Secretary of Defense, provided via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

² General Casey will be participating in the VTC from Qatar, not from Iraq. Information from [b(3) 10 USC 130b] Military Aide to the Secretary of Defense, via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

³ **“Meanwhile, the federal government continues its contributions to relief efforts for the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. There are 54,426 military personnel on the ground or aboard ships supporting relief operations -- 13,305 active duty and 39,037 National Guard.** Ten ships, 144 helicopters and 45 airplanes are in the area. Mortuary affairs teams from the 54th Quartermaster Company are in New Orleans operating from the Convention Center, and the Army Corps of Engineers reports that 80 percent of the city is dry.” Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, “Government Prepares for Hurricane Rita’s Landfall,” September 21, 2005 (http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2005/20050921_2809.html)

⁴ Army personnel are there supporting relief efforts. Information verified by CAT Team Chief, J3 Staff. Via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁵ Navy personnel are there supporting relief efforts. Information verified by CAT Team Chief, J3 Staff. Via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁶ Air Force personnel are there supporting relief efforts. Information verified by CAT Team Chief, J3 Staff. Via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁷ Reservists are there supporting relief efforts. Information verified by CAT Team Chief, J3 Staff. Via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁸ **“Meanwhile, the federal government continues its contributions to relief efforts for the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. There are 54,426 military personnel on the ground or aboard ships supporting relief operations -- 13,305 active duty and 39,037 National Guard.** Ten ships, 144 helicopters and 45 airplanes are in the area. Mortuary affairs teams from the 54th Quartermaster Company are in New Orleans operating from the Convention Center, and the Army Corps of Engineers reports that 80 percent of the city is dry.” Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, “Government Prepares for Hurricane Rita’s Landfall,” September 21, 2005 (http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2005/20050921_2809.html)

⁹ – are showing skill and bravery in supporting relief efforts. They have demonstrated the capability and compassion of our Armed Forces ... they have saved thousands of lives ... and they have the gratitude of our entire Nation.¹⁰

When I traveled to New Orleans on Tuesday, I received a briefing on the preparations for Hurricane Rita,¹¹ which is now expected to hit the Texas Coast this weekend.¹² I urge citizens in the area to follow the instructions of their local authorities. Officials at every level of government are preparing for what is expected to be a devastating storm. And our Armed Forces have pre-positioned troops and resources to help federal, state, and local officials respond swiftly and effectively to the storm.¹³

⁹ Marine Corps personnel are there supporting relief efforts. Information verified by CAT Team Chief, J3 Staff, via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

¹⁰ No data provided on how many lives members of the Armed Forces that are part of DoD personnel saved. Perhaps safer to say “helped save thousands of lives”

¹¹ “The other thing, **I've just come from a briefing about Hurricane Rita** -- or Storm Rita, now a category two hurricane -- and we were watching very closely, of course, its track. All up and down this coastline people are now preparing for what is anticipated to be yet another significant storm. Admiral Allen is going to stay in charge of the Louisiana/Mississippi area. We've got another admiral who is now being stationed in Texas, to coordinate the relief -- the relief -- response. We've got military assets that are being taken out of the New Orleans area, out of harm's way, and will come back in behind the storm, to follow up where it's needed.” President's Remarks to the Travel Pool in Louisiana, Folgers Coffee Plant Orleans Parish, Louisiana, September 21, 2005
(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050920-3.html>)

¹² “Current through 24 hours: Hurricane Rita is moving toward the west near 13 mph and this motion is expected to continue during the next 24 hours. Maximum sustained winds are near 165 mph with higher gusts. Hurricane Rita is an extremely dangerous category five hurricane on the Saffir-Simpson scale. Some fluctuations in intensity are likely during the next 24 hours. A hurricane watch has been issued for the Gulf of Mexico coast from Port Mansfield, Texas to Cameron, Louisiana. A tropical storm watch has been issued for east of Cameron to Grand Isle, LA and from south of Port Mansfield to Brownsville.

Next 72 hrs: **The latest forecast projects landfall north-central Matagorda county TX between 1 AM EDT and 2 AM EDT Saturday morning with wind speeds of 110 mph.** The area will start to feel the effects of tropical force winds around 3 PM EDT Friday afternoon and hurricane force winds 8 PM EDT Friday evening.” HURRICANE RITA DHS SITREP #5, Wednesday, September 21, 2005, 1800 hrs, p.1

¹³ “In anticipation of the landfall of Hurricane Rita, nearly 2,000 National Guardsmen in Texas are on state active duty and the governor has authorized the activation of up to 5,000 of the more than 10,000 National Guardsmen currently available in the state, defense officials reported today. Additionally, Texas guardsmen serving in Louisiana are returning to Texas in anticipation of the storm as other units assume their Katrina missions, and the Air National Guard has relocated several of its aircraft from Houston to Austin as a precautionary measure.” About 1,500 guardsmen already are on duty in response to Rita throughout southern Florida, where the storm made a brush-by pass Sept. 20, and another 2,000 remain on stand-by. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and other federal agencies are preparing for

As we meet our responsibilities to the victims of disaster, our focus on defending the Nation remains undiminished. Today, General Abizaid delivered a detailed briefing on the global war on terror – with particular attention on the major battlefronts in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁴

In Afghanistan, nearly 18,000 American troops continue to serve as part of a Coalition that has made extraordinary progress in delivering freedom and security to the people of that proud nation.¹⁵ This Sunday, the Afghan people took another vital step toward democracy by electing representatives to their provincial councils and National Assembly.¹⁶ President Karzai described the moment this way: “After 30 years of wars, interventions, occupation, and misery, today Afghanistan is moving forward.”¹⁷

Our mission in Afghanistan is not yet complete. The international community has a responsibility to help Afghanistan grow into a lasting

Rita by pre-positioning supplies and commodities in the surrounding affected areas and potential landfall areas of the storm. Fifty truckloads of water and ice and 20 truckloads of military field rations have been delivered to federal facilities in Florida. Forty-five truckloads of water, 45 truckloads of ice and eight truckloads of meals are being staged in Texas. Urban search-and-rescue task forces and disaster medical-assistance teams are pre-staging in Texas, and the U.S. Coast Guard is ready with helicopters from Air Station Houston and Air Station Corpus Christi.” Department of Defense, American Forces Press Service, “Government Prepares for Hurricane Rita's Landfall,” September 21, 2005 (http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Sep2005/20050921_2809.html)

¹⁴ Unable to confirm.

¹⁵ US Forces in Afghanistan as of 21 Sep: 17,700 for OEF and 286 for ISAF. Total: 17,986. Data provided by b(3) 10 USC 130b via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

¹⁶“I congratulate the Afghan people and Afghan Government for today's successful parliamentary elections, which are a major step forward in Afghanistan's development as a democratic state governed by the rule of law. Braving deadly attacks and threats of violence, Afghans voted in large numbers for representatives to their new National Assembly and Provincial Councils. We commend the tremendous progress that the Afghan people have made in recent years, and we pledge the full support of the United States as Afghanistan acts to meet the new challenges ahead.” President Congratulates Afghan People and Government on Successful Parliamentary Elections,” September 18, 2005 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/09/20050918.html>)

¹⁷“It's a day of self-determination for the Afghan people,” said President Hamid Karzai, looking tired as he voted at 7 a.m. at government offices in central Kabul. **“After 30 years of wars, interventions, occupation and misery, today Afghanistan is moving forward, making an economy,** making political institutions.” Carlotta Gall and Somini Sengupta, “Afghan Voters Take the Next Step to Democracy,” *The New York Times*, September 18, 2005 (Nexis)

democracy. There are still terrorists who seek to overthrow this young government. They want to return Afghanistan to what it was under the Taliban – a place where citizens have no rights, and terrorists have a safe haven to train and plot attacks. That is why Special Forces from our Coalition, along with Afghan forces, are conducting precision raids against high-value targets in **southeastern Afghanistan**.¹⁸ America will stand with the Afghan people as they secure their freedom and become an ally in the war on terror.

As we work to help defeat the enemies of a democratic Afghanistan, we are also working to defeat the enemies of a democratic Iraq. And we are following a comprehensive strategy to achieve victory.¹⁹ We will deny terrorists a safe haven to plot attacks.²⁰ We will continue to train more Iraqi forces to assume increasing responsibility for basic security operations.²¹ Our forces will focus on hunting down high-value targets like the terrorist Zarqawi.²² We will continue working with Iraqis to bring all communities into the political process.²³ And together we will help Iraq become a strong democracy that protects the rights of its people and is a key ally in the war on terror.

General Abizaid and General Casey briefed me on our military operations in Iraq. **The terrorists are now concentrated in 4²⁴ of Iraq's 18²⁵ provinces.**²⁶ Over the last several months, terrorists have continued to

¹⁸ Special Forces from the Coalition, with Afghan forces, are conducting raids against high-value targets in Jalalabad, Farah, and Kandahar. Information verified by LTC Colver, DDSO, J3, via Hedy Henderson, OSD. *NOTE: Kandahar is located in southeaster Afghanistan, but Jalalabad is east of Kabul and near the border with Pakistan, and Farah is in the west of Afghanistan.*

¹⁹ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

²⁰ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

²¹ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

²² Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

²³ Language from Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

²⁴ These four provinces are: Al Anbar, Baghdad, Ninawa, and Salah ad Din. Information provided by Reynolds Kiefer, Director for Iraq, NSC (X69381).

²⁵The 18 provinces of Iraq are 1. Baghdad; 2. Salah ad Din; 3. Diyala; 4. Wasit; 5. Maysan; 6. Al Basrah; 7. Dhi Qar; 8. Al Muthanna; 9. Al Qadisyah; 10. Babil; 11. Al Karbala; 12. An Najaf; 13. Al Anbar; 14. Ninawa; 15. Dahuk; 16. Arbil; 17. At Ta'mim; 18. As Sulaymaniyah.

²⁶ Reynolds Kiefer expressed concern with this wording. The terrorist and insurgents have been

launch suicide attacks and assassinate Iraqis who are working to improve their country.²⁷ The number of attacks has increased – particularly in the past week, as terrorists have begun their campaign to stop a referendum on the constitution.²⁸ The terrorists have a history of escalating their attacks before the nation’s major political milestones – the handover of sovereignty in 2004 ... the free elections this past January ... and the drafting of the constitution over the summer.²⁹ And recently, Zarqawi has called for a “total war” on all Shia Iraqis.³⁰ His hope is to set off a civil war that will divide the country and derail its democracy.³¹ Today our commanders made it clear: As Iraqis prepare to vote on their constitution in October and elect a permanent government in December, we must be prepared for more violence.³²

To defeat the terrorists, we are conducting aggressive counterinsurgency operations³³ in the areas where they are concentrated.

concentrated in 4 of the 18 Iraqi for a long time. The phrasing here make it seem as if it is just now that they are concentrated in these four provinces. Kiefer thought it more accurate to say that that terrorists remain concentrated in 4 of Iraq’s 18 provinces. Information provided by Reynolds Kiefer, Director for Iraq, NSC (X69381).

²⁷ Language from Meghan O’Sullivan, NSC.

²⁸ Language from Meghan O’Sullivan, NSC.

²⁹ This trend is confirmed by graph, “Iraq; Overall Attack Levels”, in Department of State, Iraq Operations and Policy Group, *Iraq Weekly Status Report*, September 14, 2005, slide 43 (Classified).

³⁰ The following are excerpts from a speech by the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Mus’ab Al-Zarqawi. The speech was published in audio form on the Internet and downloaded by MEMRI from the website of Al-Qaeda’s Jihad Media Battalion (www.k-j-i.tk) on September 14, 2005.: “This is a call to all the Sunnis in Iraq: Awaken from your slumber, and arise from your apathy. You have slept for a long time. The wheels of the war to annihilate the Sunnis have not and will not halt. It will reach the homes of each and every one of you, unless Allah decides otherwise. If you do not join the mujahideen to defend your religion and honor, by Allah, sorrow and regret will be your lot, but only after all is lost. **Based on all that I have mentioned, and after the world has come to know the truth about this battle and the identity of its true target, the Al-Qaeda organization in the Land of the Two Rivers has decided: First, since the government of the descendant of Ibn Al-Alqami and the servant of the Cross, Ibrahim Al-Ja’fari, has declared a total war against the Sunnis in Tel’afar, Ramadi, Al-Qaim, Samarra, and Al-Rawa, under the pretext of restoring rights and eliminating the terrorists, the organization has decided to declare a total war against the Rafidite Shi’ites throughout Iraq, wherever they may be.** This is a fitting reward, because you started the aggression.” “Leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq Al-Zarqawi Declares “Total War” on Shi’ites, States that the Sunni Women of Tel’afar Had “Their Wombs Filled with the Sperm of the Crusaders” (FBIS)

³¹ Language cleared by Meghan O’Sullivan, NSC.

³² Based on language provided by Meghan O’Sullivan, NSC.

³³ Language from Meghan O’Sullivan, NSC.

As more and more Iraqi Security Forces complete their training, they are taking on greater responsibility in these efforts.³⁴ Iraqi troops are increasingly taking the lead in joint operations, conducting independent ones, and expanding the reach and effectiveness of American forces.³⁵

The growing size and increasing capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces are helping our Coalition deal with a challenge we have faced since the beginning of the war.³⁶ It used to be that after we cleared out a city, the terrorists waited for us to leave – and then often tried to move back in.³⁷ Now, the increasing number of more capable Iraqi troops allows us to hold onto the cities we have taken from the terrorists.³⁸ The Iraqi troops know their people ... they know their language ... and they know who the terrorists are.³⁹ By leaving Iraqi units in the cities we have cleaned out, we can keep these cities safe while we move on to hunt down the terrorists in other parts of the country.

We saw the value of larger and more capable Iraqi Security Forces in Najaf and Fallujah last year, when American and Iraqi forces conducted joint operations⁴⁰ to clean out terrorist strongholds.

³⁴ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

³⁵ Language from Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

³⁶ "The recommended wording from Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC: "The presence growing numbers and increasing capabilities of Iraqi Security Forces are helping us deal with a problem we and the Iraqis have faced since the beginning of the war." CAT Team Chief, Joint Staff J-3 Staff, reviewing this language, commented that the language of draft #7 is more accurate. This language is as follows: "Since the beginning of the war, American troops have been clearing enemy fighters from key cities – yet in many cases, the insurgents returned to the cities once American forces left. As more Iraqi troops are trained, we are solving that problem. By working with Iraqi troops, we can better identify and root out the insurgents – and leave behind Iraqi units to keep the cities secure while we move on."

³⁷ The preferred wording from Meghan O'Sullivan and Reynolds Kiefer: "After we have cleared out a city, the terrorists and insurgents have often waited for us to leave or to scale back our presence– and then, the terrorists and insurgents have moved back in, overpowering weak, local Iraqi forces." Reynolds Kiefer thinks the point about the terrorist and insurgent overpowering weak local Iraqi forces important to include for accuracy.

³⁸ Language not confirmed by NSC. The language modified and cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan is as follows: "The growing number of more capable, more confident Iraqi troops is increasingly allowing us to leave Iraqi units behind to keep their cities secure while we move on to hunt down the terrorists in other parts of the country."

³⁹ Points made by Reynolds Kiefer, Director for Iraq, NSC (X69381).

⁴⁰ *NOTE: The phrase "joint operation" as used here is incorrect. A "joint operation" is an activity in which the elements of two or more U.S. Military Departments participate. A "combined operation" is an activity*

⁴¹ We followed up these successful efforts by working with the Iraqi government to ensure that Iraqi forces were able to maintain law and order.
⁴² We worked with local leaders to improve infrastructure, create jobs, and provide hope. ⁴³ As a result, the people of Najaf and Fallujah are safer – and their cities are moving ahead with vital reconstruction. ⁴⁴

We are seeking to repeat this success elsewhere in Iraq, most recently in the country's northwest region.⁴⁵ This area was the main route for foreign terrorists into Iraq, and a major concern for Coalition forces.⁴⁶ During operations in the key border town of Tal Afar, Iraqi Security Forces outnumbered U.S. forces for the first time in a major offensive operation.⁴⁷

combining U.S. forces with those of another country. Recommended using "combined operation" instead of "joint operation." Information provided by CAT Team Chief, Joint Staff J-3 Staff, via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁴¹ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁴² Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁴³ Language provided by Reynolds Kiefer, Director for Iraq, NSC (X69381).

⁴⁴ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC. Reynolds Kiefer and Meghan O'Sullivan thought it important to note that in Najaf, Iraqi Security Forces are in control, not Coalition forces.

⁴⁵ Tal Afar is located in the northwest region of Iraq.

⁴⁶ "COL. MCMASTER...First of all, **Tal Afar is positioned along routes that lead from Mosul into Syria. So it was important to the enemy to have freedom of action, not only in Tall Afar, but in western Ninevah province, so they could access sources of external support in Syria.** Also, this area is important to the enemy because this enemy -- al Qaeda in Iraq -- wants to foment ethnic and sectarian violence and wants a chaotic environment so that they can operate freely in this area, and ultimately what they hope is that Iraq will fail and descend into civil war. And this area is conducive to those sort of efforts because you have an ethnic minority here: the Turkmen. You have - that - ethnic minority is further divided between a majority of Turkmen Sunna and a minority of Turkmen Shi'ia. And this city of Turkmen exists in an area that also includes other ethnic and sectarian groups, including Sunni Arabs and Izedis, and then also Kurds in the region. So the enemy moved into here to establish this support base and safe haven. They also moved into this area because there's very dense urban terrain in the city of Tall Afar. It's difficult for our forces, organized as we are as a mechanized force, primarily, to access these areas. And so the enemy went into this safe haven and used it not only to access sources of external support, but they also used this area to train, organize, and equip their forces for employment not only locally here in Tall Afar, but without (sic) the region and potentially throughout the country. So it was very important for us to deny the enemy the ability to use this safe haven and to terrorize this population." Department of Defense, "Press Briefing on Overview of Operation Restoring Rights in Tall Afar, Iraq. Presenter: Army Col. H. R. McMaster, commander of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment," Tuesday, September 13, 2005 (<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2005/tr20050913-3901.html>)

⁴⁷In Operation Restoring Rights, ISF (approximately 5,000) did outnumber US forces, (approximately 3,500). This was the first large-scale offensive combat operation that Iraqi forces outnumbered US forces. Other operations that involved primarily static security missions, such as checkpoints, routine patrols, some raids, and cordon and search, have involved Iraqi forces. Information provided by Joint Staff, J3.

Our joint efforts⁴⁸ killed, captured, or flushed out hundreds of terrorists.⁴⁹ And as part of General Casey's strategy, the Iraqi forces left behind a unit in Tal Afar⁵⁰ to ensure that the terrorists are not allowed to return, regroup, and hold hostage the innocent residents of that city. Thanks to these operations, we are making it much more difficult for foreign terrorists to enter through the northwest part of Iraq.

Coalition and Iraqi troops are now focusing their efforts in western Iraq, where we are trying to stop foreign terrorists from entering through Syria and prevent al-Qaeda from establishing a safe haven in Anbar province.⁵¹ General Casey is working with his Iraqi counterparts to restore Iraqi control of this region by the end of November, so that terrorists will not be able to disrupt the December elections.⁵² And when we have completed this task, elements of the Iraqi military will remain – to protect Iraq's border and ensure that the enemy does not return to dominate this region and intimidate its citizens.⁵³

To ensure that we can maintain this aggressive pace of military operations through the election period, we are temporarily increasing our troop levels⁵⁴ – just as we have before other major political events. Iraqi forces will also increase during this period. As the Iraqi Security Forces establish control over more and more of their country, American troops will focus more narrowly on what we do best: hunting down terrorists in the remaining problem areas.

⁴⁸ Accurate wording is "combined effort". Information provided by CAT Team Chief, Joint Staff J-3 Staff, via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

⁴⁹ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁰ The Joint Staff J3 reports that at least two Iraqi battalions remain in Tal Afar, but did not provide a specific number.

⁵¹ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵² Confirmed by Joint Staff J3, based on GEN Casey's brief of 21 Sep.

⁵³ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁴ US troops in Iraq number 149,500 (21 Sep 05, OCONUS Forces slide, SecDef Operations Book, data from JPERSTAT). This level will be maintained through the end of year. Information provided by CAT Team Chief, Joint Staff J-3 Staff, via Hedy Henderson, OSD. The United States has recently increased the number of forces in Iraq, and these forces are currently in place. A large force rotation will begin to take place in the fall timeframe. This is a scheduled rotation of forces, and the overlap will result in a temporary increase. Information provided by the Joint Staff DDRO, J3, via Hedy Henderson, OSD.

Iraqi forces are showing the vital difference they can make. They are now in control of more parts of Iraq than at any time in the past two years.⁵⁵ Significant areas of Baghdad and Mosul – once violent and volatile – are now calm and stable because Iraqi forces are in place.⁵⁶ Iraqis are providing security in Najaf and parts of Diyala province.⁵⁷ In all these areas, the Iraqis are gathering useful intelligence.⁵⁸ They are forging alliances with civic and religious leaders.⁵⁹ As the Iraqi Security Forces show that they are capable of keeping the terrorists out, they are earning the confidence of the Iraqi people – and ensuring the success of a free and democratic Iraq.⁶⁰

I know there are differences of opinion about the way forward. Some Americans want us to withdraw our troops, so that we can escape the violence. I recognize their good intentions. Yet to leave Iraq now would be to repeat the costly mistakes of the past that led to the attacks of September 11, 2001. The terrorists saw our response to the hostage crisis in Iran ... the bombings of the Marine barracks in Lebanon ... the first World Trade Center attack ... the killing of American soldiers in Somalia ... the destruction of two U.S. embassies in Africa ... and the attack on the USS Cole. The lesson the terrorists drew was that we lacked the courage and character to defend ourselves.

Now the terrorists are testing our will and resolve in Iraq. And if we fail that test, the consequences for the safety and security of the American people would be enormous. Our withdrawal from Iraq would allow the terrorists to claim an historic victory over the United States. It would leave our enemies emboldened – and give men like Zarqawi and bin Laden a safe haven from which to launch more attacks on our citizens.

⁵⁵ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁶ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁷ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁸ Language provided by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁵⁹ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

⁶⁰ Language cleared by Meghan O'Sullivan, NSC.

The battle lines are drawn – and there is no middle ground. Either we defeat the terrorists and help the Iraqis build a working democracy – or the terrorists will impose their dark ideology on the Iraqi people and make that country a source of terror and instability for decades to come. The only way the terrorists can win is if we lose our nerve and abandon the mission. For the security of the American people, that will not happen on my watch. We will do our duty ... we will defeat those who threaten our freedom ... and we will lay the foundation of peace for our children and grandchildren.

Since our country was attacked on the morning of September 11, 2001, we have known that the war on terror would require tremendous sacrifice and commitment. Across the world, the brave men and women of our Armed Forces are taking on dangerous and difficult work. Some have given their lives in battle – and they did so in a cause that is just and necessary for the security of our country. We are grateful for their service ... we pray for the families they left behind ... and we will honor their sacrifice by completing their mission and winning the war on terror.

Thank you.

*Drafted by: Chris Michel and Bill McGurn, Office of Speechwriting
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