



OUUSD(P) OFFICES

LEADERSHIP

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

RELATED LINKS

DOD NEWS / ARTICLES

## The Strategy for Victory in Iraq

*The Honorable Peter W. Rodman*

*Assistant Secretary of Defense, International Security Affairs*

*Speech at the American Enterprise Institute*

*Wednesday, January 18, 2006*

- I have 2 experts with me, Amb. Jeffrey and LTG Odierno, who have spent a lot of time on the ground in Iraq. They know the country well, and can discuss these issues in detail.
- I'd like to say a few words to put all this in context—first, our national strategy to win this war, and then, what is at stake.

### Strategy for Victory in Iraq

- In the last few months, the President has been laying out the **national strategy** that we have been pursuing.
  - The strategy is political and economic, as much as it's military.
  - And these elements—political, economic, and military—are all inter-connected.

- The **political dimension** may be the most important of all: The core of the strategy is helping the Iraqis build and consolidate their own new institutions, filling the vacuum left by the demise of the old regime. This is a strategy to *empower the moderates* in Iraq, the mainstream people in all the communities, who represent the overwhelming majority of the Iraqi population. It's a way to isolate the extremists politically, even as the Coalition and the Iraqi Forces hunt them down militarily.
  - We saw 3 successful elections last year (Jan 30, Oct 15, Dec 15), and in that success we can see the gravitational pull working on the mainstream Sunni Arabs, pulling them *into* the political process. We hope this will separate them from the terrorists. The terrorists are revealed to be a minority of a minority.
  - What those elections conferred is legitimacy, and legitimacy is the most powerful weapon we and the Iraqis have. Remember the quote from Zarqawi in his letter we intercepted 2 years ago: "Democracy is coming, and we will have no pretext."
- The **economic dimension** is about demonstrating to the Iraqi people that these new democratic institutions can improve their lives. Iraq's economic potential is enormous. The terrorists' strategy is to perpetuate hardship—to demoralize the population and weaken the new government. So security is part of the problem. But the economy also suffers from over 30 years of "socialist" mismanagement and Saddam's twisted priorities.
  - Saddam's Iraq was the 2nd biggest oil producer in the region, but he diverted millions of dollars to weapons, palaces, and corruption.
- In the **military dimension**, LTG Odierno will describe the success of Coalition operations and of the training program. Ultimately, Iraqis need to take over responsibility for their own affairs, including security.
  - We are satisfied with the success of operations and the progress of training. But the President has made clear we will set no artificial

forces will depend on our achieving the conditions of success, not on arbitrary timelines.

### What is at Stake

- Now, what is at stake?
  
- I said that legitimacy is the most powerful weapon we and the Iraqis have. If I may quote from Tom Donnelly in *Armed Forces Journal*: “The government that emerges from the December Iraqi elections will be, despite the difficulty of the process, unique in the Arab world: the democratic product of a democratically drafted and ratified constitution.”<sup>(1)</sup>
  
- So it’s not a coincidence that both we *and* the enemy see Iraq as a crucial battleground in the war that these ideological extremists have declared against us. It is a crucial test of strength.
  - Osama bin Ladin has said: The “third world war is raging” in Iraq, and it will end there in “either victory and glory or misery and humiliation.”
  - Zarqawi has declared that “we fight today in Iraq, and tomorrow in Land of the 2 Holy Places [Saudi Arabia], and after there the West.”
  
- So our enemies have grand ambitions, driven by an extreme ideology, which the President described in his speech at the National Endowment for Democracy last October.
  
- But our enemies ought to be asking *themselves* hard questions about the effectiveness of *their* strategy in Iraq. *They* ought to do press briefings like this and answer tough questions in Congressional hearings as we do. If they think they’re winning, they’re wrong:

- The overwhelming majority of the Iraqi people have shown that they support the democratic process that the extremists are trying to derail.
- The strategic prize in Iraq is that political process, and the extremists have failed to stop it.
- The Sunni Arabs are coming into the game, as I said.
- They're not gaining ground militarily; they're losing it.
- For us, as I said, Iraq is an example of how legitimate political institutions can empower moderates. It's for this reason, more broadly, that the President has identified the United States with a trend of political reform, liberalization, and democracy in the region.
  - We've seen the after-effects of Iraq around the Middle East—in Libya, in Lebanon, in Syria, in other Gulf States.
  - Walid Jumblatt told David Ignatius last February: "It's strange for me to say it, but this process of change has started because of the American invasion of Iraq. ...I was cynical about Iraq. But when I saw the Iraqi people voting three weeks ago, 8 million of them, it was the start of a new Arab world. ...The Syrian people, the Egyptian people, all say that something is changing. The Berlin Wall has fallen. We can see it."<sup>(2)</sup>
- So both sides, we and our enemies, see Iraq—correctly—as the crucial battleground. The outcome in Iraq could determine the face of the Middle East for a generation. It could determine:
  - whether extremists throughout the region feel emboldened, or discouraged;
  - whether their ideology gains momentum, or begins to lose credibility;

- o whether the promising trend of democracy and reform in the Middle East receives a great boost, or a serious setback.

- History is being shaped in Iraq. This is one of the most significant undertakings of US foreign policy in many decades. The stakes are indeed enormous. The United States has a strategy that we believe is succeeding.

(1) Thomas Donnelly, "The Political Battles Ahead," *Armed Forces Journal*, Jan., 2006

(2) David Ignatius, "Beirut's Berlin Wall," *Washington Post*, Feb. 23, 2005, p. A 19.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE



This site is maintained by the Policy Automation Web Services Team.