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Fact Sheet: Strategy for Victory: Clear, Hold, and Build

Today's Presidential Action

Today, President Bush Discussed The Strategy For Victory In Iraq And Profiled The Northern Iraqi Town Of Tal Afar. Once a key base of operations for Al-Qaida, Tal Afar is a concrete example of progress in Iraq.

Tal Afar Shows How The Three Elements Of The Strategy For Victory In Iraq - Political, Security, And Economic - Depend On And Reinforce One Another. By working with local leaders to address community grievances, Iraqi and Coalition forces helped build the political support needed to make the military operation to drive terrorists out of that city successful. The military success against the terrorists gave the citizens of Tal Afar security, and this allowed them to vote and rebuild their city. The economic rebuilding taking place is giving Tal Afar's residents a real stake in the success of a free Iraq - and further marginalizing the terrorists.

Tal Afar Was An Al-Qaida Base

After Saddam Hussein's Removal In April 2003, The Terrorists Began Moving Into Tal Afar. With roughly the population of Akron, Ohio, Tal Afar is a city of more than 200,000 residents. It has dozens of tribes of different ethnicity and religions. Due to its strategic location, Tal Afar was a key base of operations for al-Qaida. Al-Qaida's stated goal is to drive American forces out of Iraq so they can take over the country, overthrow moderate Muslim governments throughout the region, and use Iraq as a base to plan and launch attacks against America. They seek to do this by recruiting terrorists from across the Middle East to come to Iraq, infiltrate the cities, and sow violence. After Saddam Hussein's removal, the terrorists moved into Tal Afar seeking to divide its many ethnic and religious groups. The terrorists forged an alliance of convenience with those who benefited from Saddam's regime and others with their own grievances, skillfully used propaganda to foment hostility, and exploited the weak economy to recruit young men to their cause.

- **We Drove The Terrorists And Insurgents Out Of The City, But They Returned.** By September 2004, the terrorists and insurgents had seized control in Tal Afar. We launched a military operation that drove the enemy out after three days of heavy fighting. To keep the terrorists on the run, Coalition forces kept pursuing the enemy and rooting out the terrorists in other parts of Iraq. Unfortunately, the local Security Forces were not able to maintain order, and by November 2004, the terrorists had returned.

The Terrorists And Insurgents Imposed In Tal Afar The Brutal Reality They Seek For All Of Iraq.

Ruling through fear and intimidation, the terrorists and insurgents controlled the only hospital, beheaded civilians who had worked as interpreters for Coalition forces, gunned down a popular city councilman, booby-trapped bodies, and deliberately fired mortars into playgrounds and soccer fields filled with children.

Building Support For Military Operations

In Response To Experiences In Tal Afar And Elsewhere, The Coalition Adopted A New Approach - Clear, Hold, And Build. The ability of al-Qaida and its associates to retake Tal Afar was a problem seen elsewhere in Iraq, and the Iraqi government and Coalition adopted a new approach. Instead of coming in, removing the terrorists, and then moving on, Iraqi and Coalition forces pursued a strategy of clearing a city of terrorists, leaving well-trained Iraqi units behind to hold the city, and working with local leaders to build economic and political infrastructure.

In May 2005, Iraqi And Coalition Forces Began Implementing This New Approach To Restore Order In Tal Afar And Give Residents Confidence The Terrorists Would Not Return.

Clearing And Holding Tal Afar

In The Summer Of 2005, Iraqi And Coalition Forces Launched Operation Restore Rights To Clear Tal Afar Of Terrorists. Iraqi forces took the lead. The primary force was 10 Iraqi battalions backed by three Coalition battalions. Many Iraqi units conducted their own anti-terrorist operations and controlled their own battle space. By focusing on securing the safety of Tal Afar's population, Iraqi and Coalition forces won the trust of the city's residents - which was critical to defeating the terrorists.

After The Main Combat Operations, Iraqi Forces Moved In To Hold The City. More than 1,000 Iraqi Army soldiers and emergency police were deployed to keep order, supported by a restored police force that would eventually number about 1,700 officers. We embedded Coalition forces with the Iraqi police and Army units to work with their Iraqi counterparts and help them become more capable and professional. Today, the Iraqi police have built stations throughout the city, and residents are stepping forward to provide vital intelligence about the terrorists. By turning control of these cities over to capable Iraqi troops and police, Coalition forces give Iraqis confidence that they can determine their own destiny - and our troops are better able to go after high-value terrorist targets.

Recent Elections Demonstrate The Benefits Of A Secure Environment. Tal Afar is the largest city in Western Nineva province. In the elections held in January 2005, only 32,000 of about 190,000 registered voters cast a ballot. By the October constitutional referendum and December elections, Iraqi and Coalition forces had secured Tal Afar and surrounding areas. Voter registration increased to about 204,000, and more than 175,000 voted in each election - more than 85 percent of the eligible voters in Western Nineva province.

Rebuilding Tal Afar

The Residents Of Tal Afar Are Seeing Their City Come Back To Life. Terrorists who once exercised brutal control over every aspect of the city have been killed, captured, driven out, or put on the run. Children are going to school, electricity and water service are restored throughout the city, and the police force better reflects the ethnic and religious diversity of the communities they patrol. Markets are opening, buildings are going up, and homes are being repaired. Immediately following military operations, the Coalition helped Iraqis set up humanitarian relief for the civilian population, and we set up a fund to reimburse innocent Iraqi families for damage to their homes and businesses in the fight against the terrorists. The Iraqi government pledged \$50 million to help reconstruct Tal Afar by rebuilding hospitals and schools and by improving infrastructure from the electric grid to the sewer and water systems.

Work Remains, But Tal Afar Exemplifies The Progress In Iraq

The Story Of Tal Afar Shows That With A Basic Level Of Safety And Security, Iraqis Can Live Together Peacefully. After the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, the reaction in Tal Afar was subdued, with few reports of sectarian violence. On the Friday after the attack, more than 1,000 demonstrators gathered in peaceful protest.

- **Despite Progress, Challenges Remain In Iraq.** Though most of the country has remained relatively peaceful, in some parts of Iraq the enemy is carrying out savage acts of violence - particularly in Baghdad and surrounding areas. Even in Tal Afar, the people still face many challenges, including age-old resentments, an economy that needs to create jobs and opportunity for its young people, and determined enemies. But the progress made in bringing more Iraqi Security Forces online is helping bring peace and stability to Iraqi cities.

In Tal Afar, A Free And Secure People Are Getting Back On Their Feet, Are Participating In Government And Civic Life, And Have Become Allies In The Fight Against The Terrorists. As Iraqis see the benefits of liberty, they will gain confidence in their future - and work to ensure that common purpose trumps narrow sectarianism.

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