

For Immediate Release
May 3, 2007

Setting the Record Straight: Iraq Is The Central Front Of Al Qaeda's Global Campaign

[Setting the Record Straight](#)

[White House News](#)

"All Americans are entitled to their own opinions about Iraq, but they are not entitled to their own facts. We all wish al Qaeda were no longer a threat, but the reality is Gen. Petraeus calls them 'probably public enemy number one' in Iraq. It is impossible to completely segregate al Qaeda's attacks in Iraq from sectarian violence because al Qaeda's explicit goal is to create sectarian violence to destabilize the government so they can establish a safe haven within the country. Considering Gen. Petraeus' comments, the National Intelligence Estimate, and news media reports, al Qaeda's role in fomenting violence in Iraq is ignored at our own peril."

– White House Press Secretary Tony Snow, 5/3/07

Some news reports claim President Bush is overemphasizing al Qaeda's role in Iraq violence.

- **But General David Petraeus says al Qaeda is "probably public enemy number one" in Iraq:** "Secretary Gates noted the other day that al Qaeda has declared war on all Iraqis ... I think it is probably public enemy number one. It is the enemy whose actions sparked the enormous increase in sectarian violence that did so much damage to Iraq in 2006, the bombing of the Al Askari mosque in Samarra, the gold-domed mosque there, the third holiest Shi'a shrine." (Gen. David Petraeus, Press Briefing, The Pentagon, 4/26/07)
 - **Gen. Petraeus: "Iraq is, in fact, the central front of al Qaeda's global campaign."**
- **National Intelligence Estimate: "If such a rapid withdrawal [e.g., over 12-18 months] were to take place ... AQI would attempt to use parts of the country – particularly al-Anbar province – to plan increased attacks in and outside of Iraq ..."** (National Intelligence Council, National Intelligence Estimate: "Prospects for Iraq's Stability: A Challenging Road Ahead," January 2007)
- **Director of National Intelligence Mike McConnell: al Qaeda's "major effort is to prompt sectarian violence."** SEN. LIEBERMAN: "So my question is, is it not correct that we have concluded that one of the major goals of al Qaeda in Iraq is to stimulate the sectarian violence that some describe as a civil war? Is that correct?" ADM. MCCONNELL: "Yes, sir. I would agree with that. There has been some evidence that those in Pakistan and those in Iraq had some disagreements. But I would agree with exactly the way you described it – that the major effort is to prompt sectarian violence to keep the violence at an increasing level going forward." (Committee On Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Hearing, 2/27/07)
- **CIA Director Gen. Michael Hayden: "... I strongly believe [U.S. failure in Iraq] would lead to al Qaeda with what it is they said is their goal there, which is the foundations of the**

- caliphate, and in operational terms for us, a safe haven from which then to plan and conduct attacks against the West." (Committee On Intelligence, U.S. House Of Representatives, Hearing, 1/18/07)**
- **Defense Intelligence Agency Director Gen. Michael Maples: "Al Qaeda in Iraq is the largest and most active of the Iraq-based terrorist groups." "[Al Qaeda in Iraq] attacks against Iraqi government targets and coalition forces continue with a particular intent to accelerate sectarian violence and to destabilize Baghdad. ... Al Qaeda in Iraq continues to pose a regional threat and aspires to become a global threat." (Committee On Armed Services, U.S. Senate, Hearing, 2/27/07)**
 - **House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD): "Al Qaeda obviously is a very significant presence [in Iraq] at this point in time." (Rep. Steny Hoyer, News Conference, Washington, DC, 4/25/07)**
 - **Recent news reporting on al Qaeda's role in Iraq violence:**
 - **CNN's Hugh Riminton:** "... al Qaeda also claimed responsibility for two suicide truck bombs used to kill nine U.S. soldiers and wound 20 more at a patrol base in Diyala Province." (CNN's "CNN Newsroom," 5/2/07)
 - **Chicago Tribune:** "... a suicide car bomber killed 10 Iraqi soldiers at a checkpoint in the city, 50 miles north of Baghdad. Al Qaeda in Iraq claimed responsibility for that attack..." ("U.S. Military Death Toll Rises Above 100 For Month," *Chicago Tribune*, 5/1/07)
 - **The Washington Post:** "On Tuesday, the Islamic State of Iraq, an umbrella Sunni insurgent organization said to have been created by al-Qaeda in Iraq, asserted responsibility for the attack in Sadah." (Sudarsan Raghavan and Thomas E. Ricks, "Outpost Attack Highlights Troop Vulnerabilities," *The Washington Post*, 4/25/07)
 - **Agence France-Presse:** "Ansar al Sunna, which is linked to Al-Qaeda, has claimed responsibility for attacks in Iraq including bombings in northern Iraq in May 2005 in which 84 people were killed." ("US Concerns In Germany Boost Security After Threat," *Agence France-Presse*, 4/20/07)
 - **The Associated Press:** "The Islamic State in Iraq, an al-Qaida-linked group, claimed responsibility for the attack on al-Zubaie, which killed nine people." (Hamza Hendawi, "Senior Leader Of Key Iraqi Insurgent Group Killed, Al-Qaida Is Blamed," *The Associated Press*, 3/27/07)
 - **Osama Bin Laden: Baghdad is "the capital of the caliphate." (Text Of Bin Laden's Audio Message To Muslims In Iraq, Posted On Jihadist Websites, 12/28/04)**
 - **Bin Laden: "The most important and serious issue today for the whole world is this third world war ... raging in [Iraq]." BIN LADEN:** "I now address my speech to the whole of the Islamic nation: Listen and understand. The issue is big and the misfortune is momentous. The most important and serious issue today for the whole world is this Third World War, which the Crusader-Zionist coalition began against the Islamic nation. It is raging in the land of the two rivers. The world's millstone and pillar is in Baghdad, the capital of the caliphate." (Text Of Bin Laden's Audio Message To Muslims In Iraq, Posted On Jihadist Websites, 12/28/04)

Our Strategy In Iraq Is Aimed At Both Sectarian Violence And Al Qaeda

Some news reports claim the White House has a plan to deemphasize sectarian fighting in Iraq.

• **In his remarks yesterday, President Bush mentioned the sectarian violence in Iraq 10 times:**

1. **President Bush:** "The terrorists and extremists and radicals set off a wave of sectarian violence that engulfed that young democracy's capital. It threatened to destabilize the entire country." (President George W. Bush, Remarks To the Associated General Contractors Of America, Washington, DC, 5/3/07)
2. **President Bush:** "And their job was to go after the extremists and radicals who were inciting sectarian violence."
3. **President Bush:** "And, finally, it's important to measure the level of sectarian violence."
4. **President Bush:** "If the objective is to bring security to the capital, one measurement is whether or not sectarian violence is declining."
5. **President Bush:** "...[I]n spite of the fact that we haven't fully implemented the plan, the number of sectarian murders in Baghdad has dropped substantially."
6. **President Bush:** "Even as the sectarian attacks have declined, the overall level of violence in Baghdad remains high."
7. **President Bush:** "[Spectacular attacks] are part of al Qaeda's calculated campaign to reignite sectarian violence in Baghdad, to discourage the Iraqi citizen, and to break support for the war here at home."
8. **President Bush:** "Despite [al Qaeda's] tremendous brutality, they failed to provoke the large-scale sectarian reprisals that al Qaeda wants."
9. **President Bush:** "And the definition of success as I described is sectarian violence down."
10. **President Bush:** "[Our military commanders] go into a neighborhood in Baghdad that had been ravaged by sectarian violence, they bring order with the Iraqis, they stay in place, they gain the confidence of the people, and there is some reconstruction money to help provide jobs of cleaning up neighborhoods and rebuilding storefronts."

#

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/05/20070503-6.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT