



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
August 18, 2007

President's Radio Address

[In Focus: Iraq](#)

In recent months, American and Iraqi forces have struck powerful blows against al Qaeda terrorists and violent extremists in Anbar and other provinces. In recent days, our troops and Iraqi allies launched a new offensive called Phantom Strike. In this offensive, we are carrying out targeted operations against terrorists and extremists fleeing Baghdad and other key cities -- to prevent them from returning or setting up new bases of operation. The terrorists remain dangerous and brutal, as we saw this week when they massacred more than 200 innocent Yezidis, a small religious minority in northwestern Iraq. Our hearts go out to the families of those killed, and our troops are going to go after the murderers behind this horrific attack.

As we surge combat operations to capture and kill the enemy, we are also surging Provincial Reconstruction Teams to promote political and economic progress. Since January, we have doubled the number of these teams, known as PRTs. They bring together military, civilian, and diplomatic personnel to help Iraqi communities rebuild infrastructure, create jobs, and encourage reconciliation from the ground up. These teams are now deployed throughout the country, and they are helping Iraqis make political gains, especially at the local level.

In Anbar province, at this time last year, the terrorists were in control of many areas and brutalizing the local population. Then local sheikhs joined with American forces to drive the terrorists out of Ramadi and other cities. Residents began to provide critical intelligence, and tribesmen joined the Iraqi police and security forces. Today, the provincial council in Ramadi is back, and last month provincial officials re-opened parts of the war-damaged government center with the help of one of our PRTs. Thirty-five local council members were present as the chairman called the body to order for its inaugural session.

Similar scenes are taking place in other parts of Anbar. Virtually every city and town in the province now has a mayor and a functioning municipal

[President's Radio Address](#)

[Audio](#)

[En Español](#)

Archives

Radio Address:

[2008](#)

[2007](#)

[2006](#)

[2005](#)

[2004](#)

[2003](#)

[2002](#)

[2001](#)

Radio Interviews:

[2006](#)

[2005](#)

[2004](#)

council. The rule of law is being restored. And last month, some 40 judges held a conference in Anbar to restart major criminal trials. In the far west town of al Qaim, tribal leaders turned against the terrorists. Today, those tribal leaders head the regional mayor's office and the local police force. Our PRT leader on the ground reports that al Qaim is seeing new construction, growing commercial activity, and an increasing number of young men volunteering for the Iraqi army and police.

I can't find a radio station that carries the radio address. Do any stations in Pomona carry it?

[Click here for answer....](#)



In other provinces, there are also signs of progress from the bottom up. In Muthanna, an overwhelmingly Shia province, the local council held a public meeting to hear from citizens on how to spend their budget and rebuild their neighborhoods. In Diyala province, the city of Baqubah re-opened six of its banks, providing residents with much-needed capital for the local economy. And in Ninewa province, local officials have established a commission to investigate corruption, with a local judge empowered to pursue charges of fraud and racketeering.

Unfortunately, political progress at the national level has not matched the pace of progress at the local level. The Iraqi government in Baghdad has many important measures left to address, such as reforming the de-Baathification laws, organizing provincial elections, and passing a law to formalize the sharing of oil revenues. Yet, the Iraqi parliament has passed about 60 pieces of legislation.

And despite the lack of oil revenue law on the books, oil revenue sharing is taking place. The Iraqi parliament has allocated more than \$2 billion in oil revenue for the provinces. And the Shia-led government in Baghdad is sharing a significant portion of these oil revenues with Sunni provincial leaders in places like Anbar.

America will continue to urge Iraq's leaders to meet the benchmarks they have set. Yet Americans can be encouraged by the progress and reconciliation that are taking place at the local level. An American politician once observed that "all politics is local." In a democracy, over time national politics reflects local realities. And as reconciliation occurs in local communities across Iraq, it will help create the conditions for reconciliation in Baghdad as well.

Thank you for listening.

Return to this article at:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/08/20070818.html>



CLICK HERE TO PRINT