

Gen. David Petraeus' Change of Command Remarks

Saturday, 10 February 2007

Multi-National Force – Iraq Change of Command

Baghdad, Iraq

Remarks by General David H. Petraeus

February 10, 2007

As-salaam aleikum. Ambassador Khalilzad, Ambassador Weber, Ambassador Roth, National Security Advisor Rubbaie, a long-time partner, Minister Abdul Qadr, Minister Jawad al-Boolani, General Babekir, General Mohan, General Abizaid, General Casey, other governmental officials, General Officers, and above all, members of Multi-National Force-Iraq, thank you for being here today to help make this such a special ceremony. Thank you, as well, for your commitment to Iraq and for your courage in the conduct of a difficult mission. Thanks as well to the 1st Team Band and Color Guard for adding that special touch this morning. And don't think that the "Screaming Eagles" song went unnoticed when you played it before the ceremony. Thanks for that.

This morning's ceremony truly is a humbling experience for me. The challenges ahead are substantial. The rucksack of responsibility is very heavy. In truth, it is too heavy for any one person to bear, and we will all have to share the burdens and move forward together. If we can do that and if we can help the people of Iraq do likewise, then the prospects for success are good. Failing that, Iraq will be doomed to continued violence and civil strife and surely that prospect is one that all must strive to avoid.

General Abizaid, thank you for presiding over this ceremony. Thank you for your leadership of Central Command over the past three-and-a-half years and your nearly 34 years of service that will come to an end here in another month, and thanks for your vote of confidence this morning.

General Casey, thank you for your steadfast and selfless leadership at the helm of MNF-I over the past two-and-a-half years. You and your family have sacrificed greatly, and I know that all here join me in congratulating you on your upcoming assignment as Chief of Staff of the United States Army.

To the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and civilians of MNF-I, I pledge to do all that I can to provide the best leadership, direction, and example that I can muster. You are each serving your country and the country of Iraq admirably, and I thank you for what you have done and the way in which you have done it.

The situation in Iraq is exceedingly challenging. The stakes are high. The way ahead will be hard, and there undoubtedly will be many tough days. As I recently told the members of the United States Senate, however, "hard is not hopeless." Indeed, together with our Iraqi partners, we can and we must prevail.

Our job in the months ahead, supporting and working with Iraqi forces, will be to improve security so that the Iraqi government can resolve the tough issues it faces and so that the economy and basic services can be improved. These tasks are achievable. This mission is doable.

Finally, to the Sha'ab Al Iraqi, the people of Iraq: When I left this country in September 2005, I pledged that Iraq That has been the case. I feel deeply honored to return to the Land of the Two Rivers to lead the coalition's military forces. Together with Iraqi forces, the members of the coalition will do all that we can to help you make the most of the opportunity to build a new country, free of the fear of the Saddam era -- a country in which all citizens can live in peace with one other, provide for themselves and their families, and better their lives. and the Iraqi people would be on my mind and in my heart.

Tragically, barbaric enemies have prevented Iraq from making the most of the abundant blessings bestowed by the Almighty on Mesopotamia. These are enemies who brag of inhuman acts against fellow human beings, who invoke religious justifications for actions that no God could countenance, who try to drive wedges between religious and ethnic groups that have lived together in harmony in the past, and

who, in recent weeks have even targeted a girls' school, innocent laborers, market places and pet shops in their efforts to spark sectarian violence.

Surely the Iraqi people realize that these enemies do not want the best for Iraq's citizens. And surely, now is the time for all Iraqis to reject violence, crime, and corruption and to rise up against those who employ such methods to further their agendas. It is against these enemies that all Iraqis must now fight and I pledge the full support of Multi- National Forces Iraq in this endeavor. Together, we can defeat the enemies of Iraq.

It is an honor again to be back in Iraq. Baarak Allah fee A-Sha'ab Al-Iraqi. Shukran Jazeelan.