

WASHINGTON REPORT, SPECIAL EDITION

MAY, 2007

I am privileged to share my experiences with the people who have entrusted me with representing them in our nation's capitol.

Devin

On April 27, 2007, Rep. Devin Nunes traveled to Iraq for his second visit to the country. Congressional Delegation Nelson, named for United States Senator Bill Nelson who served as delegation Chairman, traveled to Baghdad, Camp Victory, Fallujah, al Taqqadum, and Balad. This Special Edition of the Washington Report provides useful information about coalition efforts to stabilize the new Iraqi democracy.

DEVIN NUNES, UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

21ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

BAGHDAD: THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

SOURCE: GEN. RAY ODIERNO, COMMANDER MULTI-NATIONAL CORPS



The City of Baghdad, Iraq

The most significant element of coalition military strategy in Iraq is being carried out in Baghdad.

What is being done today:

- ◆ Increased presence of security forces within Baghdad. In every part of Baghdad, Iraqi security forces and coalition forces – rather than militias – are now seen patrolling streets.

Terrorists and extremists in Iraq are making their stand against coalition forces in several key areas, including the city of Baghdad and the Anbar Province. Baghdad is the location of the majority of sectarian violence in Iraq, and the activities of terrorists in the city are essential to the propaganda campaign of al-Qaeda. The capital city is home to the new democratic government of Iraq and has a large presence of foreign journalists, ensuring that terrorism is broadcast around the world.

- ◆ There are 25 Joint Security Stations in Baghdad enabling Iraqi army and police to be out in the community, supported by coalition forces.

- ◆ The Baghdad Operations Command has been established under the leadership of Iraqi Army Lt. Gen. Abud Qanbar and manages all operations within Baghdad, supported by coalition forces.

- ◆ The increased presence of security forces and the corresponding sense of greater security is increasing the amount

-NOTABLE SUCCESSES -

DETAINED KEY AL QAEDA LEADERS

KILLED THE AL QAEDA SECURITY EMIR OF EASTERN ANBAR PROVINCE

DISMANTLED A CAR BOMB NETWORK

DESTROYED SEVERAL SIGNIFICANT CAR BOMB FACTORIES.

VISIT: WWW.DEFENSELINK.MIL

of information provided by the local population on perpetrators of violence and locations of caches and bombs.

- ◆ Only people with authorized

weapons cards by the Ministry of Interior are allowed to legally carry weapons.

- ◆ There are checkpoints around Baghdad controlling entrance to the city.

- ◆ Every night there is a curfew from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m.

IMPRESSIONS FROM IRAQ

BY REPRESENTATIVE DEVIN NUNES

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VISIT CONGRESSMAN NUNES ONLINE:

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Before I begin, it is important to understand the context of our current military presence in Iraq. As you may recall, in early 2003 coalition forces rolled into Baghdad amid celebrations by the Iraqi people. From this enormous victory, the coalition responsible for liberating Iraq has navigated a perilous path towards Iraqi democratic self-rule and defense. Coalition forces face many challenges. The most immediate and serious problem is related to sectarian violence. This violence is being instigated by Iranian insurgents, al Qaeda, and other foreign fighters. For example, Jihadists (radical Muslim soldiers) are operating throughout Iraq today. Their purpose is to expand the influence of fascist Islamic leaders and to install religious governments. The chaos they spread is intended to drive coalition partners out of the country before Iraqi security forces can defend the new democracy.

On this, my second trip to Iraq, I expected to witness the harsh reality that

many in Washington have begun to consider: Iraq may fail as a democracy. In recent months, I had become increasingly skeptical of the progress American forces were making and, more importantly, I had feared that the Iraqi government itself may not be willing to make the hard decisions necessary to regain control. These questions, "whether or not progress is being made," and "whether or not the Iraqi government is committed," are central if we are to continue to receive the support of the American people. Indeed, a war weary public has already lost patience with our mission in Iraq. The prospect of a legislated defeat in Iraq is very real, underlying the importance of the answers to these questions. It is my belief, one expressed by our intelligence community, that defeat in Iraq could result in regional conflict and mass casualties as well as a host of other threats that would directly threaten the United States.

Before briefly addressing these ques-

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HEROES IN THE WAR ON TERROR: CALIFORNIANS

Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Matthew G. Axelson

Navy SEALs Petty Officers Axelson and Dietz were part of a reconnaissance team sent on a mission on June 28, 2005, to find a key Taliban leader in the rough and dangerous terrain east of Asadabad, Afghanistan. Taliban sympathizers spotted the SEALs, and alerted terrorist fighters of the team's presence. A deadly firefight ensued between the four SEALs and an enemy force of at least 30 fighters. The SEALs radioed for reinforcements; however, the MH-47 Chinook helicopter that was sent in as support was shot down, killing all 16 men aboard. Both Axelson and Dietz were mortally wounded, yet they con-



tinued to fight and were able to hold their ground. Both men were posthumously awarded the Navy Cross on Sept. 13, 2006.

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Nathaniel R. Leoncio

Petty Officer Leoncio was on patrol with a group of Marines in southern Ramadi, Iraq, searching for weapons and insurgent activity on Oct. 4, 2005. His convoy was hit by several improvised explosive devices, one of which disabled Leoncio's vehicle, killing the driver and injuring three others, including Leoncio. After being pulled to safety, Leoncio told one of the Marines how to apply a tourniquet to his badly damaged right leg. Although he sus-



tained a shattered femur and internal bleeding, Leoncio refused medical evacuation, staying to treat the wounded, including his badly injured platoon commander. After the Marines convinced Leoncio that there were no others that needed attention, he agreed to be evacuated. Due to the severity of his injuries, Leoncio's right leg had to be amputated. For his actions, Leoncio was awarded the Bronze Star with Combat Distinguishing Device in April 2006.



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IMPRESSIONS FROM IRAQ (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

tions, I think it is important for me to share with you that I support the war in Iraq and view victory as essential to our national security. Setting aside the reasons underlying the war, including significant national intelligence failures, we are now engaged in a pitched battle against Islamic extremists who view Iraq as the principle battleground in the war on terror.

As I mentioned, when I arrived in Iraq I had two principle questions. The first: "Is progress being made?" The answer may surprise you. According to our military leaders in Iraq and soldiers on the ground, there has been significant progress that has been largely unreported. This is particularly true outside of Baghdad. The situation in the Capital City remains difficult. There were mortar attacks during our meetings in the Green Zone and both American and Iraqi civilian casualties occurred during our stay. According to our generals, we are in the early stages of a new security plan that has a real chance to work. Coalition forces, including a significant Iraqi military component, have made progress in certain areas of Baghdad and have detained high profile terrorists, including Iranian foreign fighters.

On April 29, 2007, I traveled to the al Anbar Province of Iraq and visited Fallujah, an area that has been home to some of the most difficult terrorist and insurgent campaigns against coalition forces. Like portions of Baghdad, this city had until recently been virtually paralyzed by

violence. A major offensive to retake control of Fallujah, which included Iraqi military units, resulted in the restoration of relative calm throughout the city. In-



Representative Devin Nunes in Fallujah, Iraq
April 29, 2007.

deed, the once terror-prone al Anbar province is now stable and, while not entirely free of violence, local residents are cooperating with Iraqi security. The increasing trust and cooperation among Iraq's population signals a potential sea-change in the perceptions held by al Anbar province residents. However, significant violence persists in Iraq, particularly in the Capital City of Baghdad.

As part of our new security strategy in Baghdad, we are adopting successful ideas from Fallujah. This includes building stability by clearing terrorists from neighborhoods and maintaining a presence afterwards. Previous efforts witnessed effective clearing action but short-lived success. When coalition and Iraqi forces moved to another location, the terrorists would simply return. "Clear

and hold" is essential to the new security plan in Iraq, and it has proved largely successful where implemented. However, this strategy requires more manpower, which is why the generals advising President Bush asked for more soldiers.

On this day I also had an opportunity to visit soldiers from the Fresno area who are based in Balad. These men and women were in good spirits and were proud of coalition efforts in Iraq. Their story and those of countless other Americans serving in the war on terror are not being told in the mainstream media. Instead, our nation is being bombarded by images of chaos and death. While the challenges are real, so too are the many successes we have quietly achieved throughout Iraq.

On the second question, that of the commitment of the Iraqi government, I remain cautious but hopeful. My colleagues and I met with each of Iraq's three vice presidents as well as Prime Minister al-Maliki. They assured us that they would do what it takes to achieve stability and self-defense. Congress will have to monitor this commitment, but given the dire consequences of failure, I believe we must continue to do what is necessary to achieve victory. The Iraqi prime minister and all of the government officials in Iraq have put their lives on the line to build a democracy. If the coalition abandons Iraq, these men and women will certainly be slaughtered by terrorists if they are unable to escape the country. Without further training and equipping,

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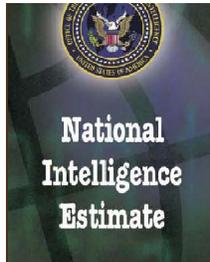
DEVIN NUNES, UNITED STATES CONGRESSMAN

21ST CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAILURE: NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL ESTIMATE

READ THE UNCLASSIFIED N.I.E. SUMMARY
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The Intelligence Community judges that the term “civil war” does not adequately capture the complexity of the conflict in Iraq, which includes extensive Shia-on-Shia violence, al-Qaeda and Sunni insurgent attacks on Coalition forces, and widespread criminally motivated violence. Nonetheless, the term “civil war” accurately describes key elements of the Iraqi conflict, including the hardening of ethno-sectarian identities, a sea change in the character of the violence, ethno-sectarian mobilization, and population displacements.

Coalition capabilities, including force levels, resources, and operations, remain an essential stabilizing element in Iraq. If Coalition forces were withdrawn rapidly during the term of this Estimate, we judge that this almost certainly would lead to a significant increase in the scale and scope of sec-

tarian conflict in Iraq, intensify Sunni resistance to the Iraqi Government, and have adverse consequences for national reconciliation.

If such a rapid withdrawal were to take place, we judge that the Iraqi Security Forces would be unlikely to survive as a non-sectarian national institution; neighboring countries—invited by Iraqi factions or unilaterally—might intervene openly in the conflict; massive civilian casualties and forced population displacement would be probable; al-Qaeda would attempt to use parts of the country—particularly al-Anbar province—to plan increased attacks in and outside of Iraq; and spiraling violence and political disarray in Iraq, along with Kurdish moves to control Kirkuk and strengthen autonomy,



U.S. soldiers search for bomb making materials in an abandoned house during a search for insurgents in Buhriz, Iraq, April 10, 2007.

could prompt Turkey to launch a military incursion.

A number of identifiable developments *could* help to reverse the negative trends driving Iraq’s current trajectory. They include:

Emergence of a Shia Strongman. Instead of a disintegrating central government producing partition, a security implosion could lead Iraq’s potentially most powerful group, the Shia, to assert its latent strength.

Anarchic Fragmentation of Power. The emergence of a checkered pattern of local control would present the greatest potential for instability, mixing extreme ethno-sectarian violence with debilitating intra-group clashes.

Chaos Leading to Partition. Collapse of this magnitude would generate fierce violence for at least several years, ranging well beyond the time frame of this Estimate, before settling into a partially stable end-state.

Read more online www.nunes.house.gov.

IMPRESSIONS FROM IRAQ (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

the Iraqi military cannot withstand the insurgency and terrorist attacks alone. Our departure would fracture the defense forces and leave the elected leaders of Iraq vulnerable. The will of the Iraqi people, who overwhelmingly support democracy, would be crushed under the weight of sectarian and insurgent violence. As the Prime Minister indicated, such an outcome would be a travesty to the people of Iraq but it would also enhance the threat against the United States and directly threaten our security.

My impressions from Iraq are based on first-hand experience and extensive reporting to Congress. I monitor the news, and I am aware of the public perceptions concerning the war. However, I will not let the politically charged rhetoric polluting our domestic airwaves to taint my judgment. As your Congressman, I will carefully examine this issue as coalition forces continue to work on the implementation of new security initiatives.

Concluding thoughts:

At this time, I am satisfied that our leaders have a plan to deal with the violence in Iraq and I support providing the funding necessary to execute it. At the same time, I remain concerned about the political situation in the country and am skeptical about whether or not Prime Minister al Maliki will be able to make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve long-term stability without a significant U.S. military presence. Furthermore, Iran is a serious threat to the new Iraqi democracy and is a substantial obstacle to peace in the Middle East. Not only is Iran developing nuclear weapons in defiance of the international community, but Iran is also supplying terrorists in Iraq with advanced weapons. During my visit, we examined locations used by terrorists in Iraq to store Iranian weapons. Furthermore, coalition forces have captured and killed Iranian fighters. These Iranians are re-

sponsible for killing American soldiers and instigating violence between Iraqi ethnic groups. The Iraqi government must fully recognize this threat and commit to fighting it. To date, I have not been fully satisfied with the Iraqi response to Iran. However, there can be no question that failure in Iraq, the current focal point of al-Qaeda activity, would seriously threaten our own security. For this reason, we must give our soldiers every opportunity to win.

One thing is certain; Iraq will never look like the Central Valley of California. Even with a thriving democracy and a well-trained military, the government in Iraq will reflect the cultural and religious values of her citizens.

Devin

Devin Nunes
Member of Congress

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