



HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE – IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

15 September 2008

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen, and Civilians of Multi-National Force–Iraq:

It has been the greatest of privileges to have been your commander for the past 19 months. During that time, we and our civilian and Iraqi partners have been engaged in an exceedingly complex, difficult, and important task. And in the face of numerous challenges, we and our partners have helped bring new hope to a country that was besieged by extremists and engulfed in sectarian violence.

When I took command of Multi-National Force-Iraq in February 2007, I noted that the situation in Iraq was hard but not hopeless. You have proven that assessment to be correct. Indeed, your great work, sacrifice, courage, and skill have helped to reverse a downward spiral toward civil war and to wrest the initiative from the enemies of the new Iraq.

Together, Iraqi and Coalition Forces have faced determined, adaptable, and barbaric enemies. You and our Iraqi partners have taken the fight to them, and you have taken away their sanctuaries and safe havens. You have helped secure the Iraqi people and have enabled, and capitalized on, their rejection of extremism. You have also supported the Iraqi Security Forces as they have grown in number and capability and as they have increasingly shouldered more of the responsibility for security in their country.

You have not just secured the Iraqi people, you have served them, as well. By helping establish local governance, supporting reconstruction efforts, assisting with revitalization of local businesses, fostering local reconciliation, and conducting a host of other non-kinetic activities, you have contributed significantly to the communities in which you have operated. Indeed, you have been builders and diplomats as well as guardians and warriors.

The progress achieved has been hard-earned. There have been many tough days along the way, and we have suffered tragic losses. Indeed, nothing in Iraq has been anything but hard. But you have been more than equal to every task.

Your accomplishments have, in fact, been the stuff of history. Each of you should be proud of what has been achieved and of the contributions you continue to make. Although our tasks in Iraq are far from complete and hard work and tough fights lie ahead, you have helped bring about remarkable improvements.

Your new commander is precisely the right man for the job. General Ray Odierno played a central role in the progress achieved during the surge. He brings tremendous skill, experience, and understanding as he returns to Iraq for a third tour and takes the helm of MNF-I just seven months after relinquishing command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq. I have total confidence in him, and I will do all that I can as the commander of Central Command to help him, MNF-I, and our Iraqi partners to achieve the important goals that we all share for the new Iraq.

Thank you for your magnificent work here in the “Land of the Two Rivers.” And thank you for your sacrifices—and for those of your families—during this crucial phase of Operation Iraqi Freedom. I am honored to have soldiered with you in this critical endeavor.

With great respect and all best wishes,

Thank you!

David H. Petraeus
General, United States Army
Commanding