



Adjunct Professor of International Affairs

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Colonel Michael Meese
Professor and Head Dept of Social Sciences
United States Military Academy

CC: Colonel Cindy Jebb
Professor and Deputy Head Dept of Social Sciences
United States Military Academy

SUBJECT: After Action Report—General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret)
VISIT IRAQ AND KUWAIT 5-11 DECEMBER 2007

1. PURPOSE: This memo provides feedback on my strategic and operational assessment of current security operations in Iraq. Look forward to providing lectures to faculty and cadet national security seminars.

Will provide follow-on comprehensive report with attachments of current unclassified data and graphs documenting the current counter-insurgency situation in Iraq.

2. SOURCES:

- 1.) **ADM William (Fox) Fallon USN, Commander US Central Command (CENTCOM)** One-on-one meeting in Iraq. Theater strategic assessment.
- 2.) **GEN David Petraeus, Commanding General Multi-National Forces Iraq (CG, MNF-I)** One-on-one office call: strategic assessment.
- 3.) **LTG Raymond Odierno, Commanding General Multi-National Corps-Iraq (CG, MNC-I)** Campaign briefing.
- 4.) **LTG Jim Dubik, Commander, Multi-National Security Transition Command - Iraq (MNSTC-I)** MNSTC-I Overview brief and ministerial capacity discussion “Building the Iraqi Police and Army”.

- 5.) **Chargé Ambassador Pat Butenis, Deputy Chief of Mission** (Ambassador Ryan Crocker on personal leave) One-on-one diplomatic assessment.
- 6.) **MG John Paxton USMC, Chief of Staff Multi National Forces- Iraq (COS, MNF-I)** MNF-I Battle Update Assessment.
- 7.) **MG Joe Fil, Commanding General, Multi-National Division -Baghdad (CG, MND-B)** Update- “The struggle for Bagdad.”
- 8.) **MG Mark Hertling, Commanding General Multi-National Division- North (CG, MND-N)** MND-N “Battle Update Brief the northern zones...AQI final refuge.”
- 9.) **MG Rick Lynch, Commanding General Multi-National Division Center-(CG, MND-C)** MND-C Operations & Intelligence Round Table. “The struggle for the southern approaches to Baghdad.”
- 10.) **MG Mike Jones, Commander Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT)** Round table discussion at Taqaddam Airbase. **“Building the Iraqi Police.”**
- 11.) **MG Kevin Bergner, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Effects, MNF-I** Update briefing with senior MNF-I Staff.
- 12.) **MG Maston Robeson (Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategy, Plans and Assessments MNF-I), RADML Greg Smith (PAOMNF-I):** Update briefing with senior MNF-I Staff.
- 13.) **MG Dennis Hardy, Deputy Commanding General, Third Army, U.S. Army Central (USARCENT), Coalition Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC):** Briefing on strategic situation in Kuwait.
- 14.) **BG Geoff Freeman, CG, 335th Theater Sig Cmd (Prov), C6, Coalition Forces Land Component Command:** Update briefing on communications support, Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 15.) **US Embassy Baghdad Country Team Briefing – AMB Marci Ries (Pol-Mil Counselor), AMB Charlie Ries (Coordinator for Economic Transition in Iraq), Todd Schwartz (Economic Counselor), Matt Tueller (Political Counselor), Dr. Chris Schnaubelt (Chief of Joint Strategic Plans and Assessments).**
- 16.) **BG Jim Yarbrough, CG, Iraqi Assistance Group (IAG):** Update briefing MNC-I assistance group. “The status and training of US MiTT teams imbedded in Iraqi Forces.”
- 17.) **Operational Intelligence Briefings. BG (P) Vince Brooks (DCG S, MND-B), COL Jack Ballantyne (Chief of Staff and MND-B), COL Bill West (Chief ISF Cell, MND-B), LTC Steve North (G2, MND-B), LTC Chris Bonheim (Deputy G3, MND-B):** “Iraqi Forces engaged in the struggle for Baghdad.”

- 18.) **Campaign briefing with MNC-I CG Team. COL Jerry Tait (C2, MNC-I), COL John Murray (C3, MNC-I), COL J.T. Thomson (XO, MNC-I CG) “The campaign Plan.”**
- 19.) **Sensing session and open discussion with thirty-eight US battalion commanders: MND-B Battalion Commander’s Conference. Working Lunch --- BG John Campbell, DCG (S).**
- 20.) **BG Barry McManus (Joint Headquarters Transition Team CMATT), BG Robert Allardice (Air Force Transition Team CMATT), and RADM Edward Winters (Navy Transition Team CMATT), and COL Al Dochnal (Chief of Staff CMATT): MNSTC-I Overview Brief Iraqi: Security Forces and Ministerial Capacity Discussion**
- 21.) **BG Jim Kessler, CG 2nd Marine Logistic Group MNF-W, COL Rivers Johnson (PAO, CPATT), Mr. Don Lane (Chief of Training CPATT): Round Table Discussion. (Forced down by dust storm weather with the Marines!)**
- 22.) **BG Edward Cardon, DCG-S, MND-C: MND-C Battle Update Brief.**
- 23.) **BG Charles Gurganus USMC (CG Ground Component Element, II MEF), COL John Charlton USA (Commander 1st Bde, MNF-W), and COL Dave Fuquea USMC (G3-ISF MNF-W): Overview, Ramadi city visits, and working lunch Marine/US Army leadership Camp Ramadi.**
- 24.) **COL Jim Hickey, (Director, MNC-I COIC), MAJ Brian Bricker (XO, MNC-I COIC): Office call with MNC-I Counter-IED Operational Integration Center. “Strategic intelligence assessment.”**
- 25.) **COL Ricky Gibbs, (Commander 4/1 ID), LTC Pat Frank (Commander 1-28 IN): 4/1 ID BCT & 1-28 IN “O&I Brief with focus on the battle for Baghdad.” (US 80 KIA and 600+ WIA in this brigade during the campaign.)**
- 26.) **COL Rodger Cloutier (G3 MND-C), MAJ David Waldron (G3 Ops MND-C), MAJ David Stender (720th MP Bn S3), MAJ Michael Kelly (G3 ISF Cell MND-C): Lunch & Brief on Iraqi Security Forces Status & Readiness on the southern approaches to Baghdad.”**
- 27.) **COL Dominic Caracillo (Commander, 3/101 ABN), LTC Andrew Rohling (Commander, 3-187 IN), COL Ahmad (Iraqi Battalion Commander PB Kemple): Visit with 3rd BCT, 101 ABN at Patrol Base Kemple. “The battle for the southern approaches to Baghdad.”**
- 28.) **COL Wayne Grigsby (Commander 3rd Bde, 3ID), MAJ Luis Rivera (XO, 1-10 FA Bn), and CPT Pat Moffett (Commander, A/1-10 FA Bn): Battle updates “the southern belt” ... “market walk Iraqi City” with 3rd Bde, 3ID**
- 29.) **COL Bryan Watson (Chief of Staff, MND-N), COL Steve Schenk (G3 MND-N): MND-N Battle Update briefs the northern zones.**

- 30.) **COL John Broadmedow USMC, Chief 7th IA Division MiTT:** 7th IA Division Mitt Overview& Discussion at Camp Black Diamond. “The reconciliation campaign for Anbar province.”
- 31.) **COL Steve Schenk (G3 MND-N), MAJ Sam Lex (G3-ISF MND-N):** Meeting with MND-N Iraqi Security Forces Cell.
- 32.) **COL Jessie Farrington (Commander 1st CAB), LTC Jim Cutting (Commander, TF Odin), MAJ Bill Huff (Brigade S3, 1st CAB):** 1st Combat Aviation Brigade and TF Odin Briefing-- Tikrit.
- 33.) **LTC Thomas Hauerwas (Bde XO 1/101st ABN), MAJ George Bratcher (Bde S2, 1/101st ABN):** 1/101st ABN Operations and Intelligence Update “the southern approaches.”
- 34.) **Round table discussion with International Police Advisors: Donald Lane (Chief of Training CPATT), Steve Ryan, International Police Advisor, Habbaniyah, Dave Smith, International Police Advisor, Ed Weibl, International Police Advisor.** “Effectiveness of the Iraqi Police.”
- 35.) **MG Tariq Yusuf, Anbar Provincial Chief of Police:** Operational assessment at Ramadi Government Center.
- 36.) **Meeting/ briefing with 7th Iraqi Army Division Commander and senior staff.** “The struggle for Anbar Province.”
- 37.) **Sensing Session with twenty US Company Commanders. Multi National Division North.** “Morale, career plans, performance of Iraqi Security Forces, trust in Commanders.”
- 38.) **Field visit 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, MAJ Eric Weis, S3.** (Serve as honorary Colonel of the regiment. Was honored to present awards for valor and purple heart medals, as well as receive update brief on their counter-insurgency operations south of Baghdad.)
- 39.) **Visit Public Market Place. MND Center. Narhwan, Iraq** (Population 100,000)
- 40.) **Visit “Concerned Local Citizens” security group. MND Center.**
- 41.) **Visit Iraq Police Station. Ramadi, Iraq.**
- 42.) **Visit Iraq Police. MND Bagdad, Iraq.**
- 43.) **Visit Iraq Army. MND Bagdad, Iraq.**
- 44.) **Visit Iraq Regional Training Center. Police & Army. Habbaniyah, Iraq.**

1. THE BOTTOM LINE---AN OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT:

a. VIOLENCE DOWN DRAMATICALLY:

The struggle for stability in the Iraqi Civil War has entered a new phase with dramatically reduced levels of civilian sectarian violence, political assassinations, abductions, and small arms/ indirect fire and IED attacks on US and Iraqi Police and Army Forces.

This is the unmistakable new reality ---and must be taken into account as the US debates its options going forward. The national security debate must move on to an analysis of why this new political and security situation exists---not whether it exists.

General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker have provided brilliant collective leadership to US Forces and have ably engaged the Iraqi political and military leadership.

b. AL QAEDA TACTICALLY DEFEATED AND TRYING TO REGENERATE:

Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) has been defeated at a tactical and operational level in Baghdad and Anbar Province and is trying to re-constitute in the north and along the Syrian frontier.

The Iraqi people have turned on AQI because it overreached trying to impose an alien and harsh practice of Islam inconsistent with the more moderate practices of the Sunni minority. (16% of the population.) The foreign jihadist elements in AQI (with their enormous hatred of what they view as the apostate Shia) have alienated the nationalism of the broader Iraqi population. Foreign intervention across the Syrian frontier has dropped substantially. Most border-crossers are suicide bombers who are dead within four days while carrying out largely ineffective attacks on the civilian population and the Iraqi Police.

The senior leaders of AQI have become walking dead men because of the enormous number of civilian intelligence tips coming directly to US Forces. US and Brit Special Operations Forces are deadly against AQI leadership. Essentially AQI has been driven out of Baghdad and is now trying to reconstitute their capabilities.

c. IRAQI SECURITY FORCES KEY FACTOR IN SUCCESSFUL INTERNAL SECURITY:

The Iraqi Security Forces are now beginning to take a major and independent successful role in the war. Under the determined leadership of LTG Jim Dubik ---both the equipment and force levels of the Iraqi Security Forces are now for the first time in the war at a realistic level of resource planning.

The previously grossly ineffective and corrupt Iraqi Police have been forcefully re-trained and re-equipped. The majority of their formerly sectarian police leadership has been replaced. The police are now a mixed bag--- but many local units are now effectively providing security and intelligence penetration of their neighborhoods.

The Iraqi Army has made huge progress in leadership, training, and equipment capability. The embedded US training teams have simply incredible levels of trust and mutual

cooperation with their Iraqi counterparts. Corruption remains endemic. However, much remains to be done. This is the center-of-gravity of the war.

The ISF still lacks credibility as a coherent counter-insurgency and deterrent force. It has no national logistics and maintenance system. It lacks any semblance of an Air Force with a robust lift and attack helicopter force and fixed wing C-130 lift to support counter-insurgency. It lacks any semblance of a functioning military medical system to provide country-wide trauma care, evacuation, and rehabilitation. It lacks any artillery with precision munitions to provide stand-off attack of hard targets—or to assist in counter-battery fire to protect the population and military installations. It lacks any serious armor capability to act as a deterrent force to protect national sovereignty. (In my judgment the Army needs 9000+ wheel and track armored vehicles for their 13 combat divisions.)

d. CENTRAL GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WORK:

There is no functional central Iraqi Government. Incompetence, corruption, factional paranoia, and political gridlock have paralyzed the state. The constitution promotes bureaucratic stagnation and factional strife. The budgetary process cannot provide responsive financial support to the military and the police---nor local government for health, education, governance, reconstruction, and transportation.

Mr. Maliki has no political power base and commands no violent militias who have direct allegiance to him personally---making him a non-player in the Iraqi political struggle for dominance in the post-US withdrawal period which looms in front of the Iraqi people.

However, there is growing evidence of the successful re-constitution of local and provincial government. Elections for provincial government are vitally important to creating any possible form of functioning Iraqi state.

e. POPULATION AND REFUGEES IN MISERY:

There are 4 million plus dislocated Iraqis---possibly one in six citizens. Many of the intelligentsia and professional class have fled to Syria, Jordan, or abroad. 60,000 + have been murdered or died in the post-invasion violence. Medical care is primitive. Security and justice for the individual is weak. Many lack clean water or adequate food and a roof over their family. Anger and hatred for the cruelties of the ongoing Civil War overwhelm the desire for reconciliation.

There is widespread disbelief that the Iraqi government can bring the country together. The people (and in particular the women) are sick of the chaotic violence and want an end to the unpredictable violence and the dislocation of the population.

f. ECONOMY SHOWING SIGNS OF COMING BACK:

The economy is slowly reviving--- although there is massive 50% or more unemployment or under-employment.

The electrical system is slowly coming back--- but it is being overwhelmed by huge increases in demand as air conditioners, TV's, and light industry load the system.

The production and distribution of gasoline is increasing but is incapable of keeping up with a gigantic increase in private vehicle and truck ownership.

The Iraqi currency to everyone's astonishment is very stable and more valued than the weak US dollar.

The agricultural system is under-resourced and poorly managed---it potentially could feed the population and again become a source of export currency earnings.

g. US COMBAT FORCES NOW DOMINATING THE CIVIL WAR:

The morale and tactical effectiveness of engaged US military forces are striking. The "surge" of five additional US Brigade Combat Teams helped. (Although we are now forced to begin an immediate drawdown because of the inadequate resources of the worldwide US Army.)

These combat forces have become the most effective counter-insurgency (and forensic police investigative service) in history. LTG Ray Odierno the MNC-I Commander and his senior commanders have gotten out of their fixed bases and operate at platoon level in concert with small elements of the Iraqi Army and Police. Their aggressive tactics combined with simply brilliant use of the newly energized Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT's -- Superb State Department leadership and participation) for economic development have dramatically changed the tone of the war.

US Forces have now unilaterally constituted some 60,000+ armed "Iraqi Concerned Local Citizen Groups" to the consternation of the Maliki Government. These CLC Groups have added immeasurably to the security of the local populations -- as well as giving a paycheck to unemployed males to support their families. Although the majority of these CLC Groups are Sunnis -- increasingly the concept is being extended to Shia Groups south of Baghdad.

The US battalion and brigade commanders have grown up in combat with near continuous operations in the past 20 years in the Balkans, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Many of the Army combat forces are now beginning their 4th round of year+ combat tours in Iraq or Afghanistan. Many of the Marine units are now on their 5th tour of seven month combat deployments. The troops and their leaders are simply fearless---despite 34,000 US killed and wounded.

The US company and battalion commanders now operate as the de facto low-level government of the Iraqi state...schools, health, roads, police, education, governance. The Iraqis tend to defer to US company and battalion commanders based on their respect for their counterparts' energy, integrity, and the assurance of some level of security. These US combat units have enormous discretion to use CRP Funds to jump start local urban and rural economic and social reconstruction. They are rapidly mentoring and empowering local Iraqi civilian and police leadership.

Direct intelligence cooperation has sky-rocketed. The civilian population provides by-name identification of criminal leadership. They point out IED's. They directly interact with US forces at low level in much of the country. (There are still 3000+ attacks on US Forces each month...this is still a Civil War.)

h. SUNNI ARABS WANT BACK IN--- BEFORE US FORCES DEPART:

The Sunnis Arabs have stopped seeing the US as the enemy and are now cooperating to eliminate AQI -- and to position themselves for the next phase of the Civil War when the US Forces withdraw.

There is no leadership that can speak for all the Sunnis. The former regime elements have now stepped forward ---along with tribal leadership ---to assert some emerging control.

i. SHIA ARABS HOLDING IN CEASEFIRE—STRUGGLE FOR INTERNAL POWER:

The Shia JAM militia under the control of Mr. Sadr have maintained their cease-fire, are giving up rogue elements to be harvested by US Special Operations teams, and are consolidating control over their ethnic cleansing success in Baghdad---as well as maneuvering to dominate the Iranian affiliated Badr brigade forces in the south.

However, Mr. Sadr lost great credibility when his forces violently intervened in the Holy City of Najaf ---and were videoed on national TV and throughout the Arab world carrying out criminal acts against the pilgrims and protectors of the Shia population.

Sadr himself is an enigma. He may well want back into the political process. He is not a puppet of the Iranians and may lack their real support. His command and control of his own forces appears weak. He personally lacks the theological gravitas of a true Shia Islamic scholar like the venerable Sistani. He may be personally fearful of being killed or captured by ISF special operations forces if he is visibly leading inside Iraq...hence his frequent absences to Iran at the sufferance of that government.

j. DOMINANCE OF CRIMINAL ELEMENTS:

There is no clear emerging nation-wide Shia leadership for their 60% of the Iraqi population. It is difficult to separate either Shia or Sunni political factions from Mafia criminal elements-- with a primary focus on looting the government financial system and oil wealth of the nation.

In many cases neighborhoods are dominated by gangs of armed thugs who loosely legitimize their arbitrary violence by implying allegiance to a higher level militia.

The Iraqi justice system...courts, prosecutors, defense attorneys, police investigators, jails for pre-trial confinement, prisons for sentences, integrity of public institutions---does not yet exist. Vengeance is the only operative law of the land. The situation is starting to change. The Iraqi Police will be in charge of most neighborhoods by the end of next year.

k. THE KURDS---AN AUTOMOMOUS SUCCESSFUL REGION:

The Kurds are a successful separate autonomous state---with a functioning and rapidly growing economy, a strong military (Both existing Pesh Merga Forces and nominally Iraqi-Kurdish Army divisions), a free press, relative security, significant foreign

investment, and a growing tourist industry which serves as a neutral and safe meeting place for separated and terrified Sunni and Shia Arab families from the south.

There are Five Star hotels, airline connections to Europe, a functioning telephone system, strong trade relations with Syria, enormous mutually beneficial trade relations with Turkey, religious tolerance, a functional justice system, and an apparently enduring cease-fire between the traditional Kurdish warring factions.

Kurdish adventurism and appetite to confront both their external neighbors and the Iraqi central state may have been tempered in a healthy way by the prospect of invasion from the powerful Turkish Armed Forces to avenge the continued cross-border KKP terrorism.

The war-after-next will be the war of the Iraqi Arabs against the Kurds ---when Mosul as well as Kirkuk and its giant oil basin (and an even greater Kurdish claimed buffer zone to the south) is finally and inevitably absorbed (IAW the existing Constitution) by the nascent Kurdish state. The only real solution to this dread inevitability is patient US diplomacy to continually defer the fateful Kurdish decision ad infinitum.

2. THE WAY AHEAD:

a. THE CENTRAL US MILITARY PURPOSE MUST BE TO CREATE ADEQUATE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES:

The Iraqis are the key variable. The center of our military effort must be the creation of well-equipped, trained, and adequately supported Iraqi Police and Army Forces with an operational Air Force and Navy.

We have rapidly decreasing political leverage on the Iraqi factional leadership. It is evident that the American people have no continued political commitment to solving the Iraqi Civil War. The US Armed Forces cannot for much longer impose an internal skeleton of governance and security on 27 million warring people.

The US must achieve our real political objectives to withdraw most US combat forces in the coming 36 months leaving in place:

1st: A stable Iraqi government.

2nd: A strong and responsive Iraqi security force.

3rd: A functioning economy.

4th: Some form of accountable, law-based government.

5th: A government with active diplomatic and security ties to its six neighboring states.

b. THE US ARMY IS TOO SMALL AND POORLY RESOURCED TO CONTINUE SUCCESSFUL COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN AT THE CURRENT LEVEL:

An active counter-insurgency campaign in Iraq could probably succeed in the coming decade with twenty-five US Brigade Combat Teams. (Afghanistan probably needs two more US combat brigades for a total of four in the coming 15 year campaign to create an operational state--- given more robust NATO Forces and ROE). We can probably sustain a force in Iraq indefinitely (given adequate funding) of some 10+ brigades. However, the US Army is starting to unravel.

Our recruiting campaign is bringing into the Army thousands of new soldiers (perhaps 10% of the annual input) who should not be in uniform. (Criminal records, drug use, moral waivers, non-high school graduates, pregnant from Basic Training and therefore non-deployable, lowest mental category, etc.)

We are losing our combat experienced mid-career NCOs' and Captains at an excessive rate. (ROTC DMG's, West Pointers, Officers with engineering and business degrees, etc.) Their morale is high, they are proud of their service, they have enormous personal courage---however, they see a nation of 300 million people with only an under resourced Armed Forces at war. The US Army at 400,000 troops is too small to carry out the current military strategy. The active duty US Army needs to be 800,000 strong to guarantee US national security.

The National Guard and Reserves are too small, are inadequately resourced, their equipment is broken or deployed, they are beginning their second involuntary combat deployments, and they did not sign up to be a regular war-fighting force. They have done a superb job in combat but are now in peril of not being ready for serious homeland security missions or deployment to a major shooting war such as Korea.

The modernization of our high technology US Air Force and Navy is imperiled by inadequate Congressional support. Support has focused primarily on the ground war and homeland security with \$400 Billion+. We are digging a strategic hole for the US as we mono-focus on counter-insurgency capabilities ---while China inevitably emerges in the coming 15 years as a global military power.

c. HEALING THE MORAL FISSURES IN THE ARMED FORCES:

The leadership of Secretary Bob Gates in DOD has produced a dramatic transformation of our national security effort which under the Rumsfeld leadership was characterized by: a failing under-resourced counter-insurgency strategy; illegal DOD orders on the abuse of human rights; disrespect for the media and the Congress and the other departments of government; massive self-denial on wartime intelligence; and an internal civilian-imposed integrity problem in the Armed Forces---that punished candor, de-centralized operations, and commanders initiative.

Admiral Mullen as CJCS and Admiral Fallon as CENTCOM Commander bring hard-nosed realism and integrity of decision-making to an open and collaborative process which re-emerged as Mr. Rumsfeld left office. (Mr. Rumsfeld was an American patriot, of great personal talent, energy, experience, bureaucratic cleverness, and charisma---who

operated with personal arrogance, intimidation and disrespect for the military, lack of forthright candor, avoidance of personal responsibility, and fundamental bad judgment.)

Secretary Gates has turned the situation around with little drama in a remarkable display of wisdom, integrity, and effective senior leadership of a very complex and powerful organization. General Petraeus now has the complete latitude and trust in his own Departmental senior civilian leadership to have successfully changed the command climate in the combat force in Iraq. His commanders now are empowered to act in concert with strategic guidance. They can frankly level with the media and external visitors. I heard this from many senior leaders -- from three star General to Captain Company commanders.

3. THE END GAME:

It is too late to decide on the Iraqi exit strategy with the current Administration. However, the Secretary of Defense and CENTCOM can set the next Administration up for success by getting down to 12 + Brigade Combat teams before January of 2009 ---and by massively resourcing the creation of an adequate Iraqi Security Force.

We also need to make the case to Congress that significant US financial resources are needed to get the Iraqi economy going. (\$3 billion per year for five years.) The nation-building process is the key to a successful US Military withdrawal---and will save enormous money and grief in the long run to avoid a failed Iraqi state.

Clearly we must continue the current sensible approach by Secretary of State Rice to open dialog with Syria, Turkey, and the Iranians---and to focus Arab attention with Saudi leadership on a US diplomatic offensive to mitigate the confrontation between Israel and the Arab states. We must also build a coalition to mitigate the dangers of a nuclear armed Iran.

The dysfunctional central government of Iraq, the warring Shia/Sunni/Kurdish factions, and the unworkable Iraqi constitution will only be put right by the Iraqis in their own time---and in their own way. It is entirely credible that a functioning Iraqi state will slowly emerge from the bottom up...with a small US military and diplomatic presence holding together in loose fashion the central government. The US must also hold at bay Iraq's neighbors from the desperate mischief they might cause that could lead to all out Civil War with regional involvement.

A successful withdrawal from Iraq with the emergence of a responsible unified Iraqi nation is vitally important to the security of the American people and the Mid-East. We are clearly no longer on a downward spiral. However, the ultimate outcome is still quite seriously in doubt.

Barry R McCaffrey
General USA (Ret)
Adjunct Professor of International Affairs
Department of Social Sciences, USMA
West Point, NY.

