



Five Myths About the Global War on Terror

MYTH: **1** Secretary Rumsfeld ignored military advice to increase troop levels in Iraq.

FACTS: The opposite is true. Rather than ignoring the recommendations of senior military commanders, civilian leaders have relied heavily on their advice.

- In the early planning phases of the Iraq war, for example, although Secretary Rumsfeld was ready to approve plans to deploy up to 400,000 troops if needed, Gen. Tommy Franks, commander of U.S. Central Command, opted instead for a campaign emphasizing speed rather than mass.
- Whatever one's views on troop levels, it is absolutely false to suggest that civilian leaders ignored commanders' input.
- Gen. Franks described part of the Iraq war planning process on page 333 of his memoirs: "As I concluded my summary of the existing 1003 plan, I noted that we'd trimmed planned force levels from 500,000 troops to around 400,000. But even that was still way too large, I told the secretary." Gen. Franks also notes on a number of occasions that rather than "rejecting" military advice, Secretary Rumsfeld repeatedly listened to commanders' advice in designing a plan for Iraq. On page 313, for example, Gen. Franks wrote, "Don Rumsfeld was a hard taskmaster – but he never tried to control the tactics of our war-fight."
- On July 9, 2003, Gen. Franks testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee that: "There has been [the] suggestion that perhaps there should be more troops. And in fact, I can tell you, in the presence of [Secretary Rumsfeld], that if more troops are necessary, this secretary's going to say 'yes.' I mean, we have talked about this on a number of occasions. And when the tactical commanders on the ground determine that they need to raise force levels, then those forces in fact will be provided."
- On Sept. 20, 2006, Gen. John Abizaid, the current commander of U.S. Central Command, explained:
"[T]he tension in this mission has always been between how much we do and how much we ask the Iraqis to do. The longer we stay, the more we must ask the Iraqis to do. Putting another 100,000 American troops in Iraq is something that I don't think would be good for the mission overall, because it would certainly cause Americans to go to the front, [cause] Americans to take responsibility. And we're at the point in the mission

where it's got to fall upon the Iraqis. They know that; they want responsibility. The key question is having the right balance, and I believe we're maintaining the right balance."

- On Oct. 11, 2006, Gen. George W. Casey Jr., commander of Multi-National Force-Iraq, was asked whether he needed more troops in Iraq. He responded:
"I don't – right now, my answer is no. ... [I]f I think I need more, I'll ask for more and bring more in."

MYTH: **The Defense Department has pursued a “stay-the-course” strategy that does not allow for adjustments in strategy.**

2

FACTS: The suggestion of a static and unyielding approach to Iraq fails to take into account continuous adjustments in strategy that have been made on the battlefield.

Some examples:

- The program for training and equipping the Iraqi army was revised substantially to stand up a force better suited to internal security and fighting terrorists.
- The Coalition Provisional Authority's (CPA) initial plan to transfer sovereignty and hold elections was moved up to an earlier date, in response to the desire of the Iraqi people to take charge of their own country.
- The reconstruction and aid program for Iraq was adjusted to focus less on large, long-term infrastructure to funding smaller projects that could be implemented quickly with immediate impact in the community, while also providing jobs for young men who might be tempted by the insurgents or militias.
- On Oct. 24, 2006, Gen. Casey described how the Coalition has adapted to realities on the ground: "People are rightfully asking, 'How are you changing? What are you doing differently?' I can tell you that we have continuously adapted to stay ahead of the enemy and to ensure that our service men and women have the proper tools and support they need to accomplish their missions." (See the full transcript [here](#).)

MYTH: **The administration has been distracted from waging an effective war in Afghanistan by Iraq.**

3

FACTS: Today there are more Coalition forces in Afghanistan than at any time since Operation Enduring Freedom began in 2001.

- In March 2003, the United States had about 9,500 troops in Afghanistan. Today, there are more than 21,000 U.S. forces either under U.S. or NATO command in Afghanistan or directly supporting missions there. Some 20,000 troops from 37 NATO and non-NATO nations are also committed to the effort.
- As Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, commander of Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan, noted recently: “NATO and U.S.-led Coalition and Afghan national security forces are moving aggressively to deny the enemy safe havens, to interdict his movement routes, and most importantly to extend the authority of the central government. ... [T]he progress we're making in Afghanistan is significant.”
- As Qari Mohammed Yousaf Ahmadi, generally viewed as the Taliban's chief spokesman, stated on Sept. 15, 2006: “The Taliban forces have conducted a tactical retreat.”
- Further details about Afghanistan can be found in the Department’s recent [rebuttal](#) of a *Newsweek* article on this topic, and the Department’s [Five-Year Afghanistan Report](#).

MYTH: **Violence in Iraq may have “cost more than 600,000 Iraqis their lives.”**

4

FACTS: The study this figure is drawn from has been widely disputed.

- Steve Moore, who has conducted opinion polls in Iraq, noted in the Wall Street Journal: “After doing survey research in Iraq for nearly two years, I was surprised to read that a study by a group from Johns Hopkins University claims that 655,000 Iraqis have died as a result of the war. ... [That] tally is wildly at odds with any numbers I have seen in that country. ... [T]he key to the validity of cluster sampling is to use enough cluster points. ... [T]he Johns Hopkins team says it used 47 cluster points for their sample of 1,849 interviews. This is astonishing: I wouldn't survey a junior high school, no less an entire country, using only 47 cluster points.”

- Michael O'Hanlon, who produces a quarterly statistical report on Iraq for the Brookings Institution, noted: "I do not believe the new numbers. I think they're way off."

MYTH:
5 **U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki was "fired," "removed" or "cashiered" after suggesting the need for more troops.**

FACTS: This is demonstrably false.

- Gen. Shinseki was appointed to a four-year term as chief of staff of the Army and served his full term. When Gen. Shinseki made his oft-cited statement about troop levels in February 2003 during a congressional hearing, it was already well-known that his term would end six months later. Serving longer would have been extraordinary. The only two men to serve longer than four years in the entire 103-year history of the position have been Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Gen. George Marshall.

###

Oct. 31, 2006
OSD Writers Group