



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

16 September 2008

To the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians of Multi-National Force-Iraq:

At this historic juncture, it is my great honor to once again serve with the men and women of Multi-National Force-Iraq. Two short years ago, Iraq was trapped in a horrific cycle of violence that threatened to tear this nation apart. Many thought the situation was hopeless, but the brave men and women of this command proved them wrong. You courageously stepped in to break that violent cycle, and today, for the first time in a generation, the Iraqi people feel a sense of tremendous hope for the future of their nation. You and your Iraqi partners have invested your blood, your sweat, and your enormous talents to create this opportunity, and you should be very proud of all that you have accomplished.

Your distinguished record is filled with both military victories and remarkable compassion. From the courage you have shown in battle, to the smiles you have placed on children's faces throughout Iraq, your gallantry, versatility, and dedication have set new benchmarks of military and civilian professionalism. Your noble sacrifice and selfless service have improved the lives of millions, and you are the pride of your fellow countrymen and the focus of the world's admiration.

As we build upon these hard-earned gains, we must recognize that the environment in Iraq is changing. The Iraqi Security Forces have made considerable progress, and they are beginning to operate independently in provinces across the country. At the same time, Iraqi leaders are passing key legislation and setting out on the path toward reconciliation, reconstruction, and sustainable security. We welcome these steps, and as Coalition Forces gradually move into an overwatch role, we must enable our Iraqi partners to defeat extremism, defend their nation, and fully exercise their sovereignty – for this struggle is ultimately theirs to win.

While the environment in Iraq has changed, our work here is far from complete. We must continue to assist Iraqi forces as they provide the security necessary for the people to resume their normal lives. We must continue to foster local governance, facilitate the provision of essential services, and support economic development. We must encourage Iraqi leaders to work toward political reconciliation and an inclusive government that gives all Iraqis a voice. In short, we must continue to help build and reinforce the institutions that form the foundation of Iraqi society. For it is upon this foundation that a secure, unified, and prosperous nation will stand.

The way forward will not be easy, and many challenges lie ahead. But we will resolutely press on. We operate in an extremely complex, dynamic environment, and Coalition leaders at all levels have exhibited extraordinary versatility in meeting the challenges placed before them. I am confident that you will continue to perform your duties to the same high standards that have made this command the world's preeminent counterinsurgency force, and I pledge to you my full commitment as we work together with our Iraqi partners to defeat the enemies of freedom and to build a stable, prosperous, and sovereign Iraq.

With pride and determination,

Raymond T. Odierno  
General, United States Army  
Commanding