



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

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

Today, the Government of Iraq (GoI) approved an historic agreement establishing the foundation for a long-term, comprehensive, strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq. This important agreement, which will take effect on January 1, 2009, demonstrates the United States' continued commitment to Iraq, its people, and stability throughout the region. It also reflects a maturing relationship between two sovereign nations and a greater degree of cooperation between two partners.

Over the course of this campaign, you have shown enormous courage, unwavering determination, and boundless ingenuity, and together with our Iraqi partners, we have achieved significant progress. The new agreement is a result of our shared progress, and at the invitation of the GoI, we will continue to build upon these hard-earned gains. Not long ago, Iraq was a society burdened by a seemingly endless cycle of violence and destruction. Today, it is buoyed by a tremendous sense of hope in a bright and prosperous future. With the approval of the Security Agreement – along with the broader Strategic Framework Agreement – we will help our Iraqi partners to shape that future, not only in the security realm, but also in the areas of education, culture, economics, technology, health, and the rule of law.

As we prepare for operations under the new agreement, we do so with an understanding that our mission, objectives, and commitment to the Iraqi people remain unchanged. The new environment, though, will require a subtle shift in how we plan, coordinate, and execute missions throughout Iraq. For example, US Forces will continue to be authorized to engage in combat operations; however, under the terms of the new agreement, we will coordinate and execute those operations with the approval of the GoI, and we will conduct all operations by, with, and through the Iraqi Security Forces. Similarly, we will continue to focus on combating al-Qaeda and other extremist groups, but we must do so with respect for the Iraqi Constitution and laws, and we must continue to treat all Iraqi citizens with the utmost dignity and honor. New Rules of Engagement (ROE) will be issued, but there will not be any reduction in our fundamental ability to protect ourselves and the force. As we work with the GoI to determine specific implementation procedures in other areas, we will publish refined Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) for operationalizing the provisions of the agreement.

Despite some adjustments to the way we conduct operations, the agreement simply reinforces transitions that are already underway, and I want to emphasize that our overarching principles remain the same. While we must remain adaptive and steadily reduce our visibility, we must also maintain our effectiveness in accomplishing our objectives. We will continue to build Iraqi capacity to exercise full sovereignty and achieve sustainable stability, and we will continue to help Iraq progress from a fragile state to one that is secure, stable, and committed to good governance and regional stability. We will implement the agreement through phased, deliberate steps that preserve security gains, and we will complete our mission with honor and success.

As we move into 2009, I am confident that you will continue to exhibit the gallantry, adaptability, and initiative that have been your hallmark throughout this campaign. You have made – and continue to make – your countrymen proud, and it remains the greatest of privileges to soldier with you in this historic time as we continue to build a secure, stable, and prosperous Iraq.

With pride and determination,

Raymond T. Odierno
General, US Army
Commanding