





## NEWS

Updated 26 Sep 2003

 [About News](#)
 [DoD News](#)
 [Advisories](#)
 [Contracts](#)
 [Live Briefings](#)
 [Photos](#)
 [Releases](#)
 [Slides](#)
 [Speeches](#)
 [Today in DoD](#)
 [Transcripts](#)
 [American Forces News](#)
 [Articles](#)
 [Radio](#)
 [Television](#)
 [Special Reports](#)
 [Search](#)
 [News Archive](#)


United States Department of Defense

## Speech

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20030902-depsecdef0423.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html>  
or +1 (703) 428-0711

## Support Our Troops

*By Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, as published in The Wall Street Journal, Tuesday, September 2, 2003.*

When terrorists exploded a bomb outside a shrine in Najaf last week, they killed scores of Muslims who had gathered for prayers -- including one of Iraq's foremost Shiite leaders, who had been playing a key role in stabilizing post-Saddam Iraq. Similarly, when a bomb detonated in the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad recently, those killed and injured were innocent men and women -- including Iraqis -- who were engaged in the humanitarian mission of rebuilding Iraq.

But those victims weren't the only targets. Terrorists were aiming a blow at something they hate even more -- the prospect of a country freed from their control and moving to become an Iraq of, by, and for the Iraqi people. Terrorists recognize that Iraq is on a course towards self-government that is irreversible and, once achieved, will be an example to all in the Muslim world who desire freedom, pointing a way out of the hopelessness that the extremists feed on. And so, they test our will, the will of the Iraqi people, and the will of the civilized world.

While we can't yet fix blame for this most recent act of terrorism, we do know this: Despite their differences, the criminal remnants of Saddam's sadistic regime share a common goal with foreign terrorists -- to bring about the failure of Iraqi reconstruction and take the country back to the sort of tyrannical prison



[News by E-mail](#)

[Other News Sources](#)

from which it has just been freed. The recent broadcast of a taped message by an alleged al Qaeda spokesman offered congratulations to "our brothers in Iraq for their valiant struggle against the occupation, which we support and urge them to continue."

Anyone who thinks that the battle in Iraq is a distraction from the war on terror should tell it to the Marines of the 1st Marine Division who comprised the eastern flank of the force that fought its way to Baghdad last April. When I met recently with their commander, Maj. General Jim Mattis in Hillah, he said that the two groups who fought most aggressively during the major combat operations were the Fedayeen Saddam -- homegrown thugs with a cult-like attachment to Saddam -- and foreign fighters, principally from other Arab countries. The exit card found in the passport of one of these foreigners even stated that the purpose of his "visit" to Iraq was to "volunteer for jihad."

We face that poisonous mixture of former regime loyalists and foreign fighters today.

Even before the bombing of the U.N. headquarters, if you'd asked Gen. Mattis and his Marines, there was no question in their minds that the battle they wage -- the battle to secure the peace in Iraq -- is now the central battle in the war on terrorism. It's the same with the commander of the Army's 1st Armored Division, Brig. Gen. Martin Dempsey, who recently described that second group as "international terrorists or extremists who see this as the Super Bowl." They're going to Iraq, he said, "to take part in something they think will advance their cause." He added, "They're wrong, of course." Among the hundreds of enemy that we have captured in the last months are more than 200 foreign terrorists who came to Iraq to kill Americans and Iraqis and to do everything they can to prevent a free and successful Iraq from emerging. They must be defeated -- and they will be.

Our regional commander, Gen. John Abizaid, head of Central Command, echoed Gen. Dempsey, placing in larger perspective the battle in Iraq. He said, "The whole difficulty in the global war on terrorism is that this is a phenomenon without borders. And the heart of the problem is in this particular region, and the heart of the region happens to be Iraq. If we can't be successful here, we won't be successful in the global war on terrorism." Success in Iraq will not be easy. According to Gen. Abizaid, it will be long, hard and sometimes bloody; but "it is a chance, when you combine it with initiatives in the Arab/Israeli theater and initiatives elsewhere, to make life better, to bring peace to an area where people are very, very talented and resources are abundant, especially here in Iraq."

Foreign terrorists who go to Iraq to kill Americans understand this: If killing Americans leads to our defeat and the restoration of the old regime, they would score an enormous strategic victory for terrorism -- and for the forces of oppression and intolerance, rage and despair, hatred and revenge. Iraqis understand this. Alongside us, they are working hard to fight the forces of anger and hopelessness and to seize this historic opportunity to move their country forward.

Just as in the Cold War, holding the line in Berlin and Korea was not just about those places alone. It was about the resolve of the free world. Once that resolve was made clear to the Soviets, communism eventually collapsed. The same thing will happen to terrorism -- and to all those who have attempted to hijack Islam and threaten America and the rest of the free world, which now includes Iraq. They will see our resolve and the resolve of the free world. Then they, too, will take their place on the ash heap of history.

America's troops and our coalition partners are determined to win -- and they will win, if we continue to give them the moral and material support they need to do the job. As the president said recently, our forces are on the offensive. And as Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. John Keane said in congressional testimony, "They bring the values of the American people to this conflict. They understand firmness, they understand determination. But they also understand compassion. Those values are on display every day as they switch from dealing with an enemy to taking care of a family."

I saw the troops in Iraq, and Gen. Keane is absolutely right. I can tell you that they, above all, understand the war they are fighting. They understand the stakes involved. And they will not be deterred from their mission by desperate acts of a dying regime or ideology.

Not long ago, a woman named Christy Ferer traveled to Iraq along with the USO. She'd lost her husband Neil Levin at the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, and she wanted to say thank you to the troops in Baghdad. She wrote a wonderful piece about her trip, and in it, she wondered why our soldiers would want to see her, when they could see the Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders, movie stars and a model. When the soldiers heard that a trio of Sept. 11 family members were there, she found out why.

Young men and women from across America rushed to the trio, eager to touch them and talk to them. One soldier, a mother of two, told Christy she'd enlisted because of Sept. 11. Another soldier displayed the metal bracelet he wore, engraved with the name of a victim of 9/11. Others came forward with

memorabilia from the World Trade Center they carried with them into Baghdad. And when it was Christy's turn to present Gen. Tommy Franks with a piece of steel recovered from the Trade Towers, she saw this great soldier's eyes well up with tears. Then, she watched as they streamed down his face on center stage before 4,000 troops.

To those who think the battle in Iraq is a distraction from the global war against terrorism . . . tell that to our troops.



[Printer-friendly Version](#)



[Email A Copy](#)

---

[Privacy & Security Notice](#) | [External Link Disclaimer](#) | [Web Policy](#)  
[About DefenseLINK](#) | [Contact Us](#)