



CENTER FOR ARMS CONTROL AND NON-PROLIFERATION

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Ten Questions for General David Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker

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Questions for General Petraeus

1. **PETRAEUS:** General, you [told](#) Fox News in 2007 that “Historically, counterinsurgency operations have gone at least nine or 10 years.” According to that timeline, how far along are we right now in Iraq? Are we half way through, since we have been in Iraq for five years already? Or are we less than a year through, if we use the beginning of counterinsurgency operations under the surge as the starting point?
2. **PETRAEUS:** Admiral Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, [said](#) on April 2 that having forces in Iraq at the level they’re at doesn’t “allow us to fill the need that we have in Afghanistan.” But recent independent reports by the prestigious [Afghan Study Group](#) and [Atlantic Council](#) concluded that the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated to its worst level in two years. What are the opportunity costs of a prolonged military presence in Iraq? Has the stress placed on the American military by the war in Iraq impacted its ability to effectively respond to other strategic threats, such as the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan or Al Qaeda’s resurgent ability – as Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell [said](#) in February – to recruit, train, and position operatives from its refuge in Pakistan capable of carrying out attacks inside the United States?
3. **PETRAEUS:** General George Casey, Army chief of staff, told the Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee on February 27 that “Our soldiers are deploying too frequently. We can't sustain that. It's impacting on their families, it's impacting on their mental health. We just can't keep going at the rate that we're going.” At the same hearing, Army Secretary Pete Geren said that “Our soldiers and families are stretched. We are an Army out of balance, and we are consuming readiness as fast as we build it.” Furthermore, a [February 2008 poll](#) of 3,400 active duty and retired officers found that 88 percent believe that the demands of the war in Iraq have stretched the U.S. military dangerously thin. Given these dangers, what is the morale of our soldiers on the ground in Iraq today? Are we in danger of losing the non-commissioned officers and young captains who, [according to](#) General Petraeus’s own words, “plan and execute the operations that often prove the most important, at ground level, where gains are truly achieved”?
4. **PETRAEUS:** General, in the counterinsurgency manual you helped write, [Field Manual 3-24](#), you make the important point that “killing every insurgent is normally impossible. Attempting to do so can also be counterproductive in some cases; it risks generating popular resentment, creating martyrs that motivate new recruits, and producing cycles of revenge.” President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney [and, depending on questioner’s temerity, Senator John McCain] often say that the U.S. objective in Iraq is to defeat Al Qaeda. Has the

United States reached the point now where attempting to kill terrorists in Iraq has become “unproductive”? How close would you say we are to reaching the point of diminishing returns? Is it possible we are generating popular resentment, creating martyrs that motivate new recruits, and producing cycles of revenge in Iraq?

5. **PETRAEUS:** General, in the counterinsurgency manual you helped write, [Field Manual 3-24](#), you say that “Twenty counterinsurgents per 1000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations.” Given that ratio, which you noted is “dependent upon the situation,” Multi-National Force Iraq would need approximately 550,000 soldiers to protect the total Iraqi population of 27.5 million. We would need 140,000 soldiers in Baghdad alone just to protect that city’s population of seven million. Now, troop levels of this magnitude were [recommended](#) before the invasion by General Eric Shinseki, but former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz [dismissed](#) the estimate as “way too high.” General, given that you in theory seem to agree with General Shinseki’s estimate on troop levels, how exactly will the United States translate recent tactical military successes under the surge into a long-term successful counterinsurgency? Are we hoping that, with far fewer troops, Iraq will be the exception to what you have written is the historical rule?

Questions for Ambassador Ryan Crocker

6. **CROCKER:** General Petraeus has [credited](#) both the predominately Sunni *sahwa* movement, which [predated](#) the surge and was already gathering steam in 2005, and the ceasefire declared by Moqtada al Sadr, which was [extended](#) in February for another six months, with helping to bring down violence in Iraq. The August 2007 [National Intelligence Estimate](#) reported that “conflict levels have diminished to some extent because warring communities find it more difficult to penetrate communal enclaves,” especially enclaves where sectarian cleansing caused significant population displacement. U.S. officials [noted](#) last year that Baghdad, which was once 65 percent Sunni, is now 75 to 80 percent Shiite. The UN [reports](#) that nearly one out of every five Iraqis, or about five million total, are internally displaced or have left the country as refugees. Given this confluence of complicated macro-level developments, do you consider it responsible for President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney [and, depending on questioner’s temerity, Senator John McCain] to suggest that recent military progress in Iraq is entirely the result of the U.S. surge? Are there forces here that are largely beyond U.S. control? Do you think the Bush administration should be explaining these complexities to the American people?
7. **CROCKER:** General Petraeus wrote in the counterinsurgency manual, [Field Manual 3-24](#), that “Political power is the central issue in insurgencies and counterinsurgencies; each side aims to get the people to accept its governance or authority as legitimate.” But as Professor William Polk notes in his recent history of counterinsurgency, *Violent Politics* (2007), political legitimacy may be difficult for the United States to gain in Iraq because a “foreign occupying force, by definition, is alien.” During Vietnam, even though the United States established a local ally in the South Vietnamese government, that association served merely to erode the credibility of the South Vietnamese government in the eyes of the Vietnamese people, not legitimize the United States. Even attempting to merely separate insurgents from the local population, the sea in which they swim to paraphrase Mao Zedong, has proven historically problematic; for example, American strategic hamlets failed in Vietnam, and British detention camps failed to disrupt the Kikuyu, or Mau Mau, resistance in Kenya. Malaya might be offered as the exception to the rule, but it is worth noting that the ethnic Chinese insurgents in Malaya were themselves foreigners. Keeping these historical examples in mind, do you think it’s possible for the Iraqi people to ever accept America’s

influence over Iraq's national governance as legitimate? While optimism is commendable, are we willfully ignoring the historical record?

8. **CROCKER:** Can you confirm whether or not Brigadier General Qassem Suleimani, the commander of the Quds force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, did indeed [help broker](#) the negotiated settlement between Iraq's warring Shiite factions in late March? What does it say about America's ability to positively influence political reconciliation in Iraq if Suleimani and his Quds force, named on Treasury Department and U.N. Security Council watch lists for involvement in terrorism and nuclear and missile technology proliferation, was better able to play the role of honest broker than the United States? If Iran helped negotiate the ceasefire, is it fair to characterize Iranian influence in Iraq as "really, really negative," as Admiral Michael Mullen [did](#) on April 2, or to make the blanket accusation that Iran is "supporting violence and terror in Iraq," as President Bush [did](#) on March 27? Would there perhaps be benefits from direct U.S. engagement with Iran over the Iraq issue in the future?
9. **CROCKER:** Iraqi Sunnis' decision to boycott the 2005 elections, which isolated them from the decision-making process and has made political reconciliation efforts impossible because the elected parliament is not truly representative, must be viewed as one of the biggest political failures by the United States in Iraq. Now we are hearing rumors that Moqtada al Sadr may urge his followers, possibly at the behest of Iran, to boycott the provincial elections later this year, just as they did in 2005. Given al Sadr's ever-increasing influence within Iraq's Shiite community, wouldn't another electoral boycott by al Sadr torpedo American efforts, which have recently included General Petraeus [referring](#) to al Sadr with the honorific term *sayyid*, to make al Sadr a legitimate stakeholder in the future Iraq? Are there any moderate elements within al Sadr's Mahdi Army that the United States might be able to reach out to in the lead-up to the elections? Ambassador Crocker, what are you specifically doing to keep American relations with al Sadr productive?
10. **CROCKER:** President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney [and, depending on questioner's temerity, Senator John McCain] refer to Iraq as the central front in the war on terror. However, according to the Brookings Institution's [Iraq Index](#), there are no more than 2,000 foreign fighters currently in the insurgency, although these foreigners do typically occupy leadership positions. A senior administration official told the [New York Times](#) that studies show that three-quarters of the [23,000-strong](#) Iraqi prison population are not committed to the jihadist ideology. "The vast majority have nothing to do with the caliphate and the central ideology of Al Qaeda," [said](#) the official. And the heralded Anbar Awakening, where Sunnis chose to begin cooperating with U.S. forces, [was triggered](#) by Al Qaeda's brutal treatment of local Sunnis. Given these realities, is it fair to assess that Iraq will undoubtedly become a safe haven for terrorists were the United States to withdraw its forces? Is there any evidence suggesting that the Iraqi people will embrace Al Qaeda were the United States to withdraw? Do you think the Iraqis who do currently work with Al Qaeda do so more for short-term nationalistic purposes, in order to expel an occupying power, rather than out of sympathy or commitment to Al Qaeda's radical anti-Western ideology?

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