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Offensive Operations

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Abstract

The political opposition against to the war in Iraq may lead to a premature withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq at the expense of Iraqi National Security. The political parties in the U.S. remain polarized regarding future operations in Iraq. The offensive operations against the insurgents have been successful to disrupt command and control, and the supply of weapons to the insurgents. There may be no right or wrong answer concerning continued offensive operations, but the evidence suggests that maintaining regional security is essential in winning the war against the insurgency.

OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS

Even though political leaders are demanding for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq, there is a need for continued offensive operations against insurgents because it has been successful in reducing insurgent attacks, and continues to be critical in preventing insurgent buildup and in safeguarding U.S. strategic plans. A premature reduction in U.S. troops would only serve to destroy the gains made in security, allowing for continued sectarian violence, and the strengthening of Sunni and Shia leaders. It would also set back the efforts made in national reconciliation. The United States government must maintain enough troops in Iraq to help the recently formed Iraqi government to establish strong security conditions necessary to forge a durable national power-sharing government.

Political Leaders are Demanding an Immediate Withdrawal

Bipartisan political leaders continue to demand for an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. They suggest that the recent surge in troop levels will only serve to prolong the war. The opposition leaders are adamant that a timetable for withdrawal will hold the Bush administration accountable for implementing an exit strategy for Iraq. “They use polls from the television networks which indicate that more than 50% of the people in the U.S. country feel that the Iraq war wasn’t worth it to legitimize their assertions that the war needs to end soon” (Roggio & Elliot, 2007). They also feel that a quick withdrawal would provoke the Iraqi political leaders into taking necessary steps in forming a more broadly based government which would drain away support for the insurgents and militias. Opposition leaders have introduced several resolutions calling for an immediate withdrawal and an amendment to the spending bill that requires the

presidents' administration to provide an exit plan. Republican leaders have blocked their moves even though public opposition to the war and support for a withdrawal are at its highest on the premise that by removing U.S. troops would inevitably accompany deterioration in security that would reduce the chances for a national power-sharing government.

Expense to Iraqi Security

If the United States were to withdrawal from Iraq, it would be at the expense of Iraqi national security. The cost to that country and the region would be economic and political instability. It is imperative that the Coalition Forces remain vigilant in the training of the Iraqi Security Forces to prepare them for assuming the responsibly of maintaining national security in Iraqi. The U.S. spends approximately \$6 billion a year to facilitate the training of Iraqi security forces and has made progress in standing up a sizeable and capable adversary to the insurgency. It would be a sheer injustice to the Iraqi people and the coalition partners to withdrawal U.S. troops without first ensuring that Iraq and its government are stable.

Political Motivation

It is clear that with presidential elections just around the corner the topic of Iraq is a major debate issue. There is political motivation to play off the U.S. public sentiment about the war in Iraq in an effort to gain voter support for presidency. The Democrats and Republicans have different opinions on the issue of an Iraqi withdrawal and if one were to occur how to get it done. In an effort to hold the president accountable, the Democrats want in writing a timetable for troop withdrawal. The Republicans and the president suggest that a schedule withdrawal is not practical for the situation in Iraq. The

Republicans insist that the only way to win the war in Iraq is to continue the fight through offensive operations and sustained Iraqi support.

Offensive Operations Prevents Insurgent Buildup

Continued counter-insurgency operations against the Al Qaeda and other militant groups will prevent further insurgent buildup. Progress made against Al Qaeda and the insurgency is putting them both on their heels. There is mounting evidence showing that the recent U.S. military surge in Iraq has made significant achievements in depriving the insurgents of safe havens and limiting their ability to move and communicate. The coalition and Iraqi forces realize and place a priority on integrating political and economic outreach into their strategy to ensure that the secured areas do not return to the insurgents. Understanding the needs of the Iraqi communities and working with local religious leaders has been successful in building trust and cooperation in Iraq.

Successful Offensive Operations

Offensive operations are successful because the ground forces have been available to sustain large-scale counter terror and counter insurgency operations. The combatant commanders in their theater of operation have strategically utilized the increased force strength to engage the insurgents through offensive operations as opposed to the defensive operations in the past. The operations are utilizing quick-strike raids against extremist sanctuaries and staging areas. The goal of these raids is to take out the network of leaders and key members in the insurgent group that produce the improvised explosive devices and car bombs.

Disruption in Command, Control, and Supply

“By hunting the leadership and denying the insurgents a safe haven, the U.S. disrupts their supply lines and significantly reduces their operational capabilities”(Mahovic, 2006). The counter insurgent operation has resulted in a significant number of weapons and weapon caches being seized which reduces the insurgents’ ability to manufacture their weapon of choice, the improvised explosive device. The shear reduction in the number of insurgent attacks on coalition forces is a clear sign that the U.S. has achieved a tactical momentum and removed the initiative from the insurgent leadership.

Offensive operations are essential in to U.S. strategic plans

Offensive operations are essential in safeguarding U.S. strategic plans and winning the war against insurgency. With about 156,000 U.S. troops in Iraq and approximately another 20,000 in the region, the U.S. can ensure Iraqi stability.

Provides Security

Offensive operations provide regional and economic security for the Iraqis which are crucial to U.S. strategic objectives. Currently the biggest treat to the U.S. strategic objectives is sectarian violence. The Sunnis are turning away from the insurgents and toward reconciliation. The Bush administrations troop build up has enabled the coalition forces to carry out counterinsurgency strategy of “clear, hold, and build” (The White House, 2006, Strategy for Victory in Iraq). Due to the momentum and success of counter insurgency operations, the Iraqi public opinion has changed in support of reconciliation. The attitude of the Iraqi population is a key element in the progress in many areas on the ground. Local political leaders are beginning to have confidence in the Iraqi Security Forces and are coming forward to oppose the insurgents in an effort to reclaim their

neighborhoods. The improved security and strengthening of the rule of law enable local volunteers to assist with restoration and improvements of basic services.

Future Operations

During future operations the Iraqi Security Forces will assume a more dominate role in counter-insurgency operations. The Iraqi Security Forces are currently assisted with imbedded coalition teams that provide tactical and technical guidance to the Iraqi commanders. Coalition teams work together as an integral part of Iraqi units. These teams make essential contributions to the Iraqi units as liaisons to process and facilitate requests for logistical and combined arms support from U.S. and Coalition forces.

Counter Point

The loss of over 4000 U.S. military service members in the war against terrorism over the last 6 years is enough justification for an immediate withdrawal. How much more should our country sacrifice, and to what lengths should this country go to secure the freedoms of an oppressed people. The economic costs to our country are outstanding and unjustified. By putting an end to the war, the U.S. can refocus on domestic issues and begin to heal the political divide.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that reconciliation must be an Iraqi process ultimately led by Iraqis, but to give the political process the greatest chance the United States must remain proactive in building up the security situation. It takes time to build up security forces, reach political compromises with diverse political leaders, restore rule of law, and restore services to the Iraqi people. If the United States undertakes a rapid withdrawal, then the

leaders of Iraqi will likely be less willing to make political compromises which could result in a failed state in Iraq.

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