

Poland is commanding a multinational division in south-central Iraq in what they call the Shia heartland. Special forces from little El Salvador, among other nations, are in the fight. And military engineers from a country that didn't even exist 20 years ago—Kazakhstan—have cleared more than half a million explosives.

The Administration has also engaged the United Nations in the reconstruction effort in Iraq. Coalition efforts have received the endorsement of not one but four successive U.N. Security Council resolutions. Sergio Vieira de Mello, a distinguished Brazilian diplomat, served as special representative of Secretary General Kofi Annan last summer and he played a crucial role in helping to establish the Iraqi Governing Council. Tragically, he paid for those efforts with his life when the terrorists bombed the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad.

More recently, an Algerian diplomat, Ambassador Lakhdar Brahimi, representing the United Nations, has played the leading role in helping to form the new sovereign Iraqi government that took office on June 28th. For the next six months, the United Nations will be providing election expertise and assistance as Iraqis prepare for the election of their first freely-elected government this coming January.

With the passage of that fourth U.N. resolution, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1546, we hope that even more countries will contribute peacekeeping forces to Iraq, particularly to help protect the U.N. mission. However, we need to be realistic. With more than 30,000 coalition troops already deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, and thousands serving in the Balkans and Bosnia and Kosovo and in peacekeeping missions elsewhere in the world, our allies are stretched thin. Fortunately, though, the most important contributions to success in the war effort in both Iraq and Afghanistan will come not from bringing onboard more contributions, as welcome as those will be. The key to success in both those countries rests in helping the Afghans and the Iraqis build their own capacity for self-defense, along with their capacity for self government. And we're making great progress in both countries.

Working closely with Germany and Afghanistan, the United States has trained more than 19,000 Afghan police. In addition, U.S. and Coalition trainers have completed fielding battalions of the Afghan National Army and ... and current Afghan National Army strength is over 10,000 troops and growing.

Even more importantly, in Iraq, the President recently laid out a 5-point plan to get us through elections at the end of this year. The first step in that plan kicked off on June 28—two days ahead of schedule for the transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi government. The Iraqis were ready and eager to move ahead. Now that Iraq's future is clearly in their own hands, it has already made a big difference in the way they see their future and the way they fight. The big challenge now will be to pull off elections at the end of this year, or early next, in the face of an evil enemy, an enemy that is determined to stop forward progress in that country.

Right now, if we just do the numbers, we can count more than 200,000 Iraqis on duty or in training in the five different branches of Iraqi security forces—the Iraqi army, Iraqi National Guard, Iraqi police, Iraqi border service and something called the Facilities Protection Service. But I wouldn't exaggerate the numbers. While those numbers, I think, are impressive for a force that didn't even exist a year ago, numbers alone are, admittedly misleading. Iraqi forces still have significant shortcomings in training, equipment and leadership. We saw some of that this past April. But no one expected that Iraqi security forces would be ready this past April to stand up to the kind of fighting that they encountered in Fallujah and in the Najaf-Karbala region. Not surprising, many of them performed poorly, but many others stood their ground and performed creditably.

That town up north, Mosul, was a notable example. On April 9th, the enemy attacked the government headquarters at night in Mosul. The governor of Mosul, who is a Sunni Arab—I think that's significant for those of you who follow these complicated differences. The governor of Mosul, a Sunni Arab stayed here all night. The police initially did desert their posts, but the Civil Defense Corps, which has now become the national guard, stuck it out. The facilities protection people stuck it out. Eventually, the police came back. American troops from the 2nd Infantry Division were there—not there physically, but they were there connected,