

communicating, ready to come and help the Iraqis if that help was needed. I think, in part, because the help was available, it wasn't needed. And I think that is part of the key to success going forward.

To me, it's very encouraging that that performance by those security forces up in Mosul is really a product of the work that Maj. Gen. Dave Petraeus and the 101st Airborne Division did over the year that they were up there, ending in March of this year. I say it's particularly important because Maj. Gen. Petraeus is now Lt. Gen. Petraeus and he's in Baghdad. And his assignment is to manage the training and equipping and organization of all five branches of those security forces. Let me say it a little more precisely—to manage the American support for that effort, ultimately, these are Iraqi forces and they will manage them.

Already, I think, in part because of the fact that there is now an Iraqi government, we're seeing some significant changes. Some of those changes are on our side. There was a long delay in getting even some basic equipment into the hands of the Iraqi army and Iraqi police. I guess with us, we start slow and then everything kind of floods in, and equipment is flooding in now, and it's very good news. But equally important, along with the equipment is a new sense of pride and self-confidence as Iraqis now see themselves fighting for an Iraqi government under Iraqi officers. They are no longer an occupied nation. I believe that makes a very big difference. The newest battalion of the Iraqi army was trained by Iraqi trainers, no longer by American contractors, and the first reports are that they're doing even better than their predecessors. Perhaps most importantly, Iraqis are coming forward with great courage to fight for their country. It takes courage. By our own count, which General Petraeus and I both think is probably off by a factor of two, over 450 Iraqi police and soldiers and other security forces have already died in the past for the cause of an Iraq that is free from tyranny and terror.

Despite those casualties and despite the enemy's attempts to intimidate them, both directly and through their families, Iraqis continue to come forward in large numbers to defend their country. For every opening that is advertised in the new Iraqi security forces, usually 5 or 10 Iraqis come forward to volunteer. Recently, when a suicide bomber attacked volunteers who had lined up outside a recruiting station in Baghdad, and killed quite a few people and badly injured others, the very next day long lines appeared in front of that same recruiting station. According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, Iraqi security forces in Mosul conducted two operations last week that seized weapons, ammunition and people suspected of being insurgents, all with very little help from American troops. And they quote Brig. General Carter Ham, commander of the 2nd Infantry Division, quote, "There were, not unexpectedly, a few minor hiccups, but every day we are closer to the day when Iraqi security forces will have the capability to manage their own affairs."

I was in Iraq most recently about three weeks ago, principally for discussions with the new Iraqi government, particularly Prime Minister Allawi, about the shape of Iraqi security forces and what their needs will be and how we can help support them. But we also managed to get around the country and visit with every one of the U.S. coalition divisions. When we visited Fallujah, that notorious and still very difficult part of western Iraq, we met a young U.S. Marine whose life had been saved by five brave members of what we now call the Iraqi National Guard—it was the Civil Defense Corps at the time. The Marines had been living, training and fighting with these people.

And when Marine Pfc. Rodriguez fell wounded, three Iraqis immediately returned fire as two other Iraqi guardsmen raced to pull the American off the battlefield. In the eyes of their American trainers and counterparts, this response was textbook perfect. Two Navy/Marine Corps Commendation Medals and three Navy/Marine Corps Achievement Medals—all of them with a "V" for valor—were awarded to five Iraqis for that action.

One Iraqi private said after that heroic achievement, and I quote, "I feel very, very bad the Marine was shot, because they are like my brothers now. But I am ready to go out again. I am always ready."