

many doctors in Iraq have felt they've had to leave the country because they're worried about themselves or their relatives being kidnapped. What can you say to address those concerns?

General Kimmitt: Well it would appear to us that that just absolutely demonstrates why it is so important for us to move towards June 30th and transfer of sovereignty. There are terrorists out there who want to take this country and turn it into a Taleban like regime, as we saw in Afghanistan, or former regime elements that want to turn this country back to an authoritarian dictatorship as under Saddam.

Very, very few people causing very, very large problems inside this country and we're hoping that as we transfer sovereignty they will finally recognise that there is no hope, that the country of Iraq is moving towards independence, democracy, sovereignty, away from dictatorship, away from religious extremism or any extremism of any kind. The vast majority of the people in Iraq are embracing democracy, individual liberty, freedom of the press, freedom of religion.

Bridget Kendall: Let's go to our first caller, who's on the phone now, and this is Mehreen who's in New York in the USA. Merion what would you like to say to the General?

Mehreen : Hi, I'd like to ask General Kimmitt: Why is it that the US military repeatedly refuses to divulge the number of civilians killed during fighting in Falluja and Najaf because since the US is the occupying power right now it must have access to this information? Thank you.

Bridget Kendall: General Kimmitt.

General Kimmitt: Yeah I think the question I heard was why is it that the US military refuses to publish the casualty numbers of civilians inside of Falluja. Quite frankly we don't have good numbers for the civilian casualties. We always defer to the Iraqi Ministry of Health to try to determine those numbers.

It has only been a short period of time that the Ministry of Health has been allowed into the city of Falluja and we're waiting for them to come back to us with their count of what they believe to be the number of casualties that have been incurred over the past few months in Falluja.

Bridget Kendall: Mehreen, does that answer your question?

Mehreen: Yes. Also I'd like to ask a follow up. I mean there's been one year since the war has supposedly ended and we have no figures for the one year casualty figure either for the civilians.

Bridget Kendall: That's the case, General Kimmitt, isn't it. There have been other organisations who suggested the number of civilians who died might be as many as ten or eleven thousand. They tried to make an estimate but we haven't heard anything from you - why not?

General Kimmitt: Well again it's not a matter of we're trying to evade the question or hide the