

improve the infrastructure that has been neglected for many years here.

Some of the more significant programs are opening our employment offices in all major cities, initiating the adult literacy program and using unemployed teachers, and opening veterans' affairs offices. All these initiatives are creating jobs and opportunities for thousands of Iraqis.

Along the way, huge progress was also made in improving the economy of the local area, employing the formerly disenfranchised young men who would otherwise provide fertile ground for instigation of violence by extremist leaders. As part of this effort, we have expended over \$28 million of Commanders Emergency Relief Program funds and have committed another \$12 million to future and ongoing projects which will inevitably improve the economy. To those completed projects, \$6 million was spent specifically for water, sewage, electrical and utilities improvements to better the infrastructure on which a functioning economy is based.

We've also directly employed thousands of Iraqis through such innovative projects as the Al Anbar Trucking Initiative, contracting Iraqis to assist us in munitions reduction and consolidation, and through the civic improvement program that is employing Iraqis while cleaning up the streets and parks.

Finally, Task Force All-American placed tremendous energy into ensuring that Al Anbar would be safe for the Iraqi people by getting rid of the weapons and ammunition. The enormous amount of ammunition stockpiled in Al Anbar was staggering, and we initially estimated that it would take years to consolidate and reduce. Task Force All-American used innovative ways to increase the capacity and speed of this process. We started with 92 large ammunition supply points, and over the course of the last seven months destroyed or moved to a secure location over 48,000 short tons of ammunition. That's 97 million pounds. Today there are four locations remaining, fully secured, and this reduction effort will certainly provide a more secure province.

So what is it that we've done? Well, let me go ahead and tell you where I think we are. Iraqis are in control and running Al Anbar day to day. Certainly we still provide some assistance where required, and that is to be expected. However, businesses are operating. Schools are open. Children are receiving an education. Iraqi security forces are providing internal security and are respected more and more every day. This last week we opened the joint coordination center in Ar Ramadi, where all forces -- including coalition forces -- collectively manage security and emergency services. Soon, when we receive the needed body armor, radios and vehicles for these security forces, we'll turn the cities over to their local control.

Changes are evident every day. Iraqi leadership, professional engineers, doctors, lawyers and now politicians are involved in moving Iraqi forward, and it truly is a sight to see. One of the most telling signs that the tide is turning: recently 20 Imams issued a fatwa against violence. Also in Ar Ramadi, the local citizens had an anti-violence march. In fact, several demonstrations last week in Ar Ramadi brought the leadership together, preaching anti-violence and unity for all Iraqis. Bottom line is that the people are tired of the violence directed on them by terrorists. The assistance provided to coalition forces to stop these attackers has reached all-time high levels. Last October we were averaging only 20 calls per week, and now we are averaging over 300 tips per week. We've been forced to expand our telephone answering service to receive this volume of calls from local Iraqis attempting to assist in creating a safe and secure Iraq.

The outcome has never been in doubt, and the future has never been clearer than it is today. Those fighting against the Iraqi people and coalition need to listen, need to pay attention and understand that the Iraqi people want freedom, they want prosperity and they want democracy. We, the Iraqis and coalition forces, will not allow this progress toward democracy to stop.

Obviously, as commander of Task Force All American, I'm very proud of our over 18,000 troopers. I am equally proud of the brave Iraqis standing up for this cause. Democracy and freedom has never been cheap. The number of Iraqis willing to pay the price is growing faster than at any other time and place in history. For sure, Iraqis and coalition forces will stand strong and see this task through.