The U.S. presence in Iraq, now into its eighth consecutive year, is undergoing a significant transformation as emphasis shifts towards fostering a long-term strategic partnership between the United States and Iraq. Rather than disengaging from Iraq, the United States is shifting focus from a military-led to a civilian-led presence in order to transfer the skills and expertise that will enable Iraqis to unleash their country’s great potential. Correspondingly, U.S. Forces-Iraq (USF-I) has conducted a change of mission, ending Operation Iraqi Freedom and commencing Operation New Dawn on September 1, 2010. As its name implies, Operation New Dawn marks the beginning of a new chapter in the U.S. military’s endeavor in Iraq. Through the end of 2011, USF-I will focus on
conducting stability operations to achieve our national goal of a sovereign, stable and self-reliant Iraq.

Stability operations encompass the military component of our national strategy to address security threats spawned by the failure of nation-states to meet the basic needs and aspirations of their people. The goal of stability operations is to provide the foundations for enduring peace by securing the population, rebuilding government and economic institutions, providing essential services and restoring a sense of normalcy. For USF-I, stability operations are defined by three critical tasks: (1) advise, train, assist and equip the Iraqi security forces (ISF); (2) support provincial reconstruction teams, the United Nations and other nongovernmental organizations in their efforts to build civil capacity; and (3) conduct partnered counterterrorism operations and provide command-and-control and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance combat enablers to help the ISF maintain pressure on extremist networks. Guided by our bilateral agreements—the security agreement and the strategic framework agreement—USF-I is enabling the Government of Iraq (GoI) to become a self-reliant strategic partner that contributes to peace and security in the region.

Since the ISF assumed control of security within the cities on June 30, 2009, overall security incidents in Iraq have continued to decline, reaching the lowest levels since 2004. All forms of violence—including improvised explosive devices (IEDs), indirect-fire attacks and civilian casualties—have decreased from 2009 levels. The significant improvement in the capabilities of the ISF, coupled with their improved public perception, paid great dividends during the March 2010 national elections, when record numbers of Iraqis exercised their right to vote. Through the period of uncertainty and vulnerability surrounding the elections, the ISF validated their role as an apolitical arm of the government, loyal to the Iraqi Constitution and not to a single candidate or political party. With the elections behind it, Iraq is now poised for a peaceful transfer of power while the newly elected politicians work to build consensus on the nature of the new government.

The continued progress of the ISF and improvements in the security environment allowed USF-I to deliberately reduce our force structure to 50,000 servicemembers on September 1, as outlined by the President. During the “surge,” the coalition force consisted of more than 170,000 personnel spread out over 600 bases. Since then, USF-I has withdrawn more than 120,000 servicemembers, returned more than 500 bases to the GoI, and retrograded more than 40,000 pieces of rolling stock wheeled vehicles and nearly 2 million pieces of non-rolling stock containerized equipment. Over the last two years, USF-I has quietly but deliberately conducted the largest redeployment of personnel and equipment while simultaneously conducting operations since the Vietnam War.

As we make the transition to stability operations, the most important change to the composition of our forces is the shift to advise-and-assist brigades (AABs). USF-I is currently organized into six AABs with an additional AAB headquarters element, which fall under three division headquarters covering northern, central and southern Iraq. The AAB is an evolution of the brigade combat team concept, specifically tailored with additional personnel, equipment and training for the express purpose of conducting stability operations. In line with the change of mission, our AABs are primarily focused on partnering with their ISF counterparts and building civil capacity, yet they retain the combat power necessary to defend themselves and their interagency partners.

As we have reduced our force and changed our mission, our troops have also continued to evolve their mind-set. In the current operating environment, our troops understand that their success is no longer dependent on how much

**GEN Raymond T. Odierno** was commander of U.S. Forces-Iraq until September 1. He previously served as the commanding general, U.S. Army III Corps. In a 15-month deployment with III Corps, he served as the commanding general, Multi-National Corps-Iraq. He also commanded the 4th Infantry Division in Iraq in 2003 and 2004. During more than 33 years of service, he has commanded units at every echelon, from platoon to theater, with duty in Germany, Albania, Kuwait, Iraq and the United States. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, GEN Odierno has master’s degrees in nuclear effects engineering and national security and strategy from North Carolina State University and the Naval War College, respectively. He is also a graduate of the Army War College.
they accomplish, but on how much they enable their Iraqi counterparts to accomplish. Rather than focus on offensive and defensive operations, USF-I servicemembers now concentrate their efforts on further professionalizing the ISF and helping U.S. Embassy-Baghdad (USEMB-B) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) build civil capacity. As the ISF have taken the lead in day-to-day security, our forces have focused on improving the capability and capacity of the ISF. Throughout Iraq, our AABs are working shoulder to shoulder with members of the Iraqi army and federal police to build advanced capabilities such as precision targeting, intelligence fusion and counter-IED operations. USF-I servicemembers remain integrated in ISF units and regional operations centers in order to observe and advise their planning methods and improve upon command and control. USF-I special operations forces continue to conduct partnered counterterrorist operations in order to secure the population and disrupt violent extremist networks. Our AABs are using the expertise of their embedded law-enforcement professionals to improve Iraqi police investigative techniques, including the collection and analysis of forensic evidence. In the northern region of Iraq, U.S. forces conduct combined checkpoints and operations as a part of our trilateral security agreement with the GoI and the Kurdistan Regional Government in an effort to ease tensions and build trust and confidence. USF-I senior leaders also interface with the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense in order to develop their administrative and budgetary capabilities. With the emergence of a non-commissioned officer corps and an institutional acknowledgement of the importance of logistics and sustainment, the ISF are clearly developing into a modern force.

Under Operation New Dawn, USF-I is supporting provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), the United Nations and NGOs in their efforts to build civil capacity. Currently, USF-I is executing more than 60 medical engagement programs within population centers across Iraq. These engagements feature the refurbishment and reopening of clinics, the supply of medical aid, and the provision of emergency medical technician training. In addition, our AABs are partnering with PRTs to invest in vital infrastructure using Commander’s Emergency Response Program funds. By utilizing the expertise of PRT specialists in conjunction with various ministries of the GoI, USF-I personnel are supporting many important civil-capacity initiatives such as the construction of plastic greenhouses and irrigation systems that extend the growing season and allow Iraqi farmers to grow crops where they normally could not. Furthermore, USF-I is continuing to use targeted microgrants to spur sustainable economic growth and provide employment opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs. Our humanitarian and capacity-building engagements are coordinated and conducted through the ISF, which improves their relationship with the Iraqi people. As a result of the goodwill garnered through these activities, the Iraqi populace has provided valuable atmospherics and intelligence, information that several years ago would have required considerable effort and risk to obtain. These examples of USF-I stability operations demonstrate how our AABs are remaining engaged with the Iraqi people.
population and setting the conditions for a long-term, strategic partnership with Iraq.

The Way Ahead

Future improvements in Iraq’s security environment are dependent on the Iraqi government’s ability to provide security, uphold the rule of law and deliver basic services. The ISF have come a long way but still rely on USF-I for combat enabler support. USF-I and senior Iraqi leaders have worked closely to determine the minimum capabilities required to sustain and establish foundational capacity for internal and external security. Through the end of 2011, USF-I must continue to advise, train, assist and equip the Iraqi security forces to ensure they meet these goals. In addition, USF-I will assist the ISF in establishing goals and plans to begin the transition to police primacy, which will entail the Ministry of Interior and Iraqi police assuming full responsibility for internal security. This will allow the Ministry of Defense and the Iraqi army to focus on training to deter or defeat external threats.

As we approach the expiration of the security agreement at the end of 2011, USF-I must manage the strategic transition of responsibility for enduring programs, projects and activities necessary for the long-term stability of Iraq. USF-I and the USEMB-B’s charter is to set conditions conducive to establishing an enduring strategic relationship with the GoI as outlined in the strategic framework agreement. The U.S. government’s plan to make the transition from a military-led to a civilian-led presence in Iraq is outlined in the Joint Campaign Plan. As we carry out the transition to a civilian-led effort, USF-I must continually assess our effectiveness at the macro and micro levels. Our goal is to ensure that enduring programs are transferred in time to allow USF-I elements to monitor, assess and support those organizations assuming responsibility. The strategic transition plan is not simply the passing of responsibility from USF-I to the GoI, USEMB-B and U.S. Central Command, but a whole-of-government approach that sets the conditions for a long-term strategic partnership between the United States and the GoI. As we move forward, the American presence must pursue a strategic partnership through close cooperation across the spectrum of government functions to help Iraq succeed and play a constructive role in regional stability.

With the end of the military mission in sight, USF-I must remain vigilant—our actions through the end of 2011 will set the tone for our long-term strategic partnership. USF-I’s presence through 2011 provides the physical and psychological support necessary for the GoI to continue along its current trajectory as the United States makes the transition to a civilian-led presence. USF-I now faces an opportunity to solidify the progress that has been made over the past seven-and-a-half years. We must finish with honor and success to pay tribute to all the soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines and members of the Coast Guard who have served and sacrificed to bring peace and security to Iraq. They are the best that our country has to offer, and it is thanks to their adaptability, ingenuity and dedication that we have come this far.