



## **This Is Counterterrorism, Senator**

Posted GMT 4-25-2007 14:47:26

Can Petraeus pull it off? Max Boot asks the question, in the latest Weekly Standard, in an article by that name. Certain American political leaders profess already to know the answer; they almost surely had their preconceived answer even when they were unanimously voting to confirm General David Petraeus as the new Multi-National Forces - Iraq commanding general.

Only last week, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid proclaimed that the current mission in Iraq was "lost." He then couched his words by adding that the war "can only be won diplomatically, politically, and economically." Senator Charles Schumer came swiftly to Reid's defense, attempting to clarify by adding that the war would not be lost "if we change our mission and focus it more narrowly on counterterrorism, going after an al Qaeda camps that might arise in Iraq."

### Improvement in Anbar

In Ramadi, Boot observes dramatic improvement. The capital city of Anbar province "used to see 20 to 25 attacks a day, [but] now sees an average of 2 to 4 a day--and falling." In fact, Boot continues, "Entire days go by without a single attack." He also soberly notes that, while Ramadi has improved immensely, "U.S. generals now say that Baqubah has displaced Ramadi as the worst place in the entire country." Al Qaeda in Iraq has shifted its terrorist anchor from the city of Ramadi and Anbar province to the city of Baqubah and Diyala province north of Baghdad. This is due principally to two things.

First is the steady presence of Coalition forces: U.S. and Iraqi troops have not only held ground, but they have showed the local population that they were not going to abandon them and leave them to al Qaeda's ruthless hand. Naturally, and over time, this increases local cooperation with tips and intelligence gathering on al Qaeda terrorists in the area. The second reason, tightly coupled with the first, is the successful "flipping" of Anbar Sunni insurgent groups that were once either allied with or tolerant of al Qaeda in Iraq.

The most significant local ally of Coalition and Iraqi government in Anbar province -- and surely in all of Iraq -- is Sheikh Abdul Sattar Buzaigh al-Rishawi, or, more properly, Sheikh Abd al-Sattar, where "Abd" translates into "slave" or "totally subordinated" (to God, of course). Sheikh Abdul Sattar is instrumental in fighting and defeating al Qaeda; the incredibly influential Ramadi man sees al Qaeda as terrorists who seek to destroy his country and who are exploiting and murdering his people, Sunni and Shia alike. Al Qaeda wants him dead more than any other man in Iraq, and they have tried numerous times to kill him.

Sattar said recently, "The time for dictatorship is gone, and we are welcoming the new dawn of democracy and freedom here." He is a powerful Sunni from Anbar province, and, on Iraqi national television, he has pledged his allegiance to Prime Minister al-Maliki -- a Shia -- and to the democratically elected Iraqi government. In an overt (and televised) gesture of his determination and solidarity with the Iraqi government, Sheikh Abdul Sattar sliced the palm of his hand with a knife and proceeded to pound the blade into the table before him.

### The Implications of Sattar

Most Americans are unaware of this. Many of those who are aware fail to understand the profound significance it holds, even amid their own proclamations about the brutal sectarian violence and civil war in Iraq. Senators Reid and Schumer are almost certainly among those Americans. They seem oblivious to the importance of Sheikh Abdul Sattar's indigenous leadership in counterterrorism.

The perceived civil war in Iraq is in many ways more a product of foreign Iranian and al Qaeda instigation than internal Iraqi hatred. Had al Qaeda not bombed the Shia al-Askari Mosque and had Iran not provided arms and funds to both sides of the ensuing sectarian killings, there is no telling where Iraq would be right now. It certainly was not in civil war then. Both Iran and al Qaeda require chaos and instability in order to achieve their aims in Iraq. Sattar's mission is to foil their plans.

It is a mission in which he needs little guidance from sitting U.S. senators and traveling members of Congress. What he needs are resources. "I swear to God, if we have good weapons, if we have good vehicles, if we have good support, I can fight al Qaeda all the way to Afghanistan," Sattar said. Naturally, there is bravado in his words. But let it be known that what he possesses is a determination equal to or greater than that of al Qaeda in Iraq.

## The Sheikh's Movement

Some may think Sheikh Abdul Sattar's graphic televised display of slicing open his palm merely the action of yet another barbaric man in a violent land. Those same would be quite surprised to learn that Sattar is currently digesting early American and other Western political writings, as well as Greek philosophy, with vigor, interest, and intelligent questions. The 35-year-old sheikh was only five when Saddam Hussein seized power. And like the rest of Iraqis, particularly those in Sunni Anbar province, he was steeped in an iron-fisted Baathist socialism dictated by a man whose political idol was Joseph Stalin. Suddenly, in various American and Western political writings, he has discovered a quite different way, perhaps foreign and unfamiliar, but intriguing, inviting, and appealing. This is counterterrorism.

Sheikh Abdul Sattar is the leader of the Anbar Salvation Front, which is virulently anti-al Qaeda and pro-democracy. And while Sunni sheikhs largely refused to participate in the historic 2005 elections in Iraq, such is no longer the case. Sattar has created a democratic political party called Iraq Awakening. And while some Iraqi critics have voiced displeasure over the tribal nature of Sattar's movement, he seeks to reach beyond tribal barriers and limitations and make it national in scope. In the face of al Qaeda terrorists in their very midst, this, too, is counterterrorism.

Since the dramatic shift on the local level in Anbar province -- thanks chiefly, though not solely, to the efforts of Sheikh Abdul Sattar and those who have joined him -- the number of police recruits in Ramadi has risen to more than 800 per month since at least December. Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Forward and commander of Multinational Force - West in Iraq, said recently, "Last March [the number of recruits] was zero." And the successful police recruiting in Ramadi continues. This, too, is counterterrorism.

What is clear about Sattar is that he loves his country and his people, and he loathes al Qaeda. He also understands that his people cannot continue to murder each other, and that instigators like al Qaeda in Iraq must be defeated. In taking ownership of their fight against the al Qaeda terrorists murdering Iraqi civilians, Abdul Sattar's Anbar Salvation Front has been fielding Emergency Response Units throughout Anbar Province, from Hit to Ramadi, with hundreds of men in each unit. Their purpose is to engage terrorists from al Qaeda in Iraq and kill them. And this, too, is definitely counterterrorism.

## Sources of Hope

With potentially massive deposits of oil and natural gas recently discovered in western Anbar province, there is a clear choice of who will ultimately control those resources. Much of the trouble inside Iraq revolves around oil revenues, generated almost exclusively within southern Shia and northern Kurdish areas. The Sunnis were seen as owners of an unproductive lot of nearly inhospitable desert terrain. But now there is hope.

There are significant resources believed beneath Sunni soil yet to be developed, buoying the prospects of an economically productive Anbar Province beyond neglected and deteriorating cement factories. Saddam Hussein forbade oil exploration in the Anbar region in order to maintain the Sunni Iraqis in a welfare state, dependent upon Saddam. As Sheikh Abdul Sattar had said, "The time for dictatorship is gone."

Who is to hold control over Anbar's newly discovered oil and natural gas resources? The choice appears to be between al Qaeda or a potential Iraqi leader like Sattar. No war for oil, critics say? Well, if we "redeploy" to "change our mission and focus it more narrowly on counterterrorism" in Iraq, al Qaeda in Iraq will reverse its Anbar losses and control the Sunni areas of Iraq. We cannot stop their ground gains by bombing their training camps from the air. And Iran will control the oil-rich southern Shia area of Iraq. The many Saudi fighters among al Qaeda in Iraq's terrorists will be freed up to return to the peninsula. And if you think al Qaeda's aims in Saudi Arabia only involve Mecca and Medina, think again.

And yet, just as Iraqi Sunnis are beginning to stand in numbers and with determination to face down our common enemy, Senators Schumer and Reid would prefer we shift to some unarticulated "strictly counterterrorism" posture. In 1991, the United States left the Shia out to dry, abandoning after we encouraged and inspired their rebellion against Saddam Hussein. Is it any wonder then that Iraqis become distraught when American political leaders comfortably demand we "Transition the Mission" while Iraqis are in a bloody fight for their lives? They remember 1991. So, too, should America.

General David Petraeus is known affectionately and respectfully among Iraqis who have dealt with him as Malik Daoud (King David). One of them is Sheikh Abdul Sattar. And together, with their cooperating forces, they are counterterrorism in Iraq. They are a maturing counterterrorism team in Iraq like none yet seen.

Sheikh Abdul Sattar appears the man that analysts and experts far and wide have said was impossible in Sunni Iraq: An influential, pro-democracy, pro-American, anti-al-Qaeda leader who is not anti-Shia. We sure seem to appreciate those qualities in the Kurds. And for good reason.

# Assyrian International News Agency

By Steve Schippert  
National Review Online

© 2011, Assyrian International News Agency. All Rights Reserved. [Terms of Use.](#)