Offensive Operations: Crippling Al-Qaeda

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Abstract

With the current U.S. troop surge in Iraq, offensive operations have critically impacted the insurgency. Despite media reports, combatant commanders believe that the Al-Qaeda network in Iraq has been shattered. Statistics indicate the demise of the insurgency. Most recently, Al-Qaeda leaders encouraged all fighters to continue the jihad and to sustain their terroristic ideology. Despite tribal differences, local citizens have banned together in an attempt to rid the remnants of the insurgency from their villages. With the insurgency now vulnerable, MNF-I continues to gain momentum against the AQ-I and the results of offensive operations continue to yield dynamic results.
Impact of Offensive Operations in Iraq

As the United States continues to fight the war on terror, offensive combat operations have severely crippled Al-Qaeda and the insurgency in Iraq. Recently, the President of the United States increased the troop levels in Iraq by approximately 30,000. The troop surge materialized in response to the request of the combatant commanders on the ground in Iraq. Despite strong opposition from Congress, the President obtained the support needed and immediately started to deploy additional troops to Iraq. The troop increase permitted commanders to place additional Soldiers in remote areas thereby redefining the battle space once occupied by the insurgency.

As the U.S. led coalition continues to carry out countless offensive operations throughout Iraq, the U.S. is achieving overwhelming results which has critically impacted the terror tactics employed by the insurgency. There is widespread agreement that the U.S. led coalition has significantly impacted the Al-Qaeda network in Iraq seriously effecting their operations over the past few months. Key factors such as decreased suicide bombings, decreased IED attacks, and the capture and interrogations of Al-Qaeda leaders have what U.S. senior military leaders are calling a domino effect which has lead to the killing and capture of other insurgent leaders operating within Iraq. Furthermore, intelligence agencies indicate that the influx of foreign fighters from neighboring countries have diminished significantly. The magnitude of these examples demonstrate to senior military leaders that the effectiveness of offensive combat operations have dealt an overwhelming and decisive blow to the AQ-I.

Combatant Commander’s Views
As offensive operations continue to suppress the Al-Qaeda network in Iraq, the momentum gained by the multinational force has caused some U.S. generals to publicly proclaim victory over the terrorist network operating in Iraq. As stated by Marine Corps Commandant General James Conway, “The U.S. military has crippled the Al-Qaeda in Iraq” (Conway, 2007, U.S. general says Al Qaeda in Iraq crippled, not destroyed, para. 1). In addition, Lieutenant General Ray Odierno stated, “The continuous decline in attacks illustrate how our offensive operations have improved security since the surge of troops was emplaced. Insurgent activity in Baghdad has been tamped down by the aggressive U.S. strategy” (Odierno, 2007, The dark side of Iraq’s good news, para. 3).

Insurgency (Al-Qaeda) Views

As the U.S. led coalitions continues to disrupt and destroy numerous Al-Qaeda cells in Iraq, we must remember that the enemy also has a vote. With Al-Qaeda leaders trying to revitalize their cause against the American infidels in Iraq, it has led to sporadic media releases encouraging fighters to stay the course and continue the jihad. “Al-Qaeda leaders continue to see the American presence in Iraq as a boon for the terror network and prolonging the war is in their best interest” (Murphy, 2006, para. 2). The decisive blows dealt to the insurgency have forced Al-Qaeda to recruit and train younger members. Ayman Zawahiri, Al-Qaeda’s top deputy, sent a detail letter to insurgent leaders in Iraq stating, “We must take the initiative and impose a fait accompli upon our enemies, instead of the enemy imposing one on us” (Glasser & Pincus, 2007, p. a13).

Iraqi Views

Growing weary of the countless terrorist attacks against the innocent Iraqi populace, local citizens have decided to take a stand and fight the insurgency. In response, the U.S. military is
working with former Sunni insurgent organizations in an effort to remove the remaining remnants of Al-Qaeda from the Anbar province. Thousands of Iraqis are joining these local forces in an effort to secure their neighborhoods as U.S. and Iraqi forces continue to eradicate many of the insurgency’s top leaders based on intelligence received from local militias. American commanders have backed the establishment of local citizen militia’s due to the corruption and death squads operating within the police force. These newly formed groups are demonstrating the effectiveness of an armed neighborhood presence within their villages.

As military officials work to reconcile political ties with local leaders, the U.S. is rewarding local sheiks who stop aiding the insurgency in Iraq. In response to the local opposition, Al-Qaeda abducted 10 Sunni and Shiite tribal sheiks returning home after concluding talks with officials on fighting the Al-Qaeda. The insurgents killed at least one sheik and the fates of the other nine sheiks still remain unknown. As the people of Iraqi began to speak out, we begin to realize that they have grown tired of the terror tactics employed against the innocent and are fully prepared to give their life in the defense of their nation in order to rid their country of the Al-Qaeda network that has plagued their way of life for the past few years.

MNF-I Assessment

As Multi-National Force – Iraq continues to carry out the national strategy for Iraq, leaders contribute their current success to offensive operations. Just recently, MNF-I formulated a press release which claimed that, offensive operations had freed a vast amount of the Iraqi populace from the control of the AQI (Al Qaeda-Iraq) and that offensive operations were directly impacting the lives of the Iraqi people. In the month of September alone, the result of offensive operations resulted in the capture or death of 29 key senior Al-Qaeda Terrorist operating throughout Iraq. Several of these key leaders, identified as radical extremist, originated from the
neighboring countries of Syria, Jordan, Egypt, and Iran. In addition, MNF-I recently released an addition list of 41 terrorist they believe to be operating in Iraq and feel that the continue presence of offensive operations will eventually net the remaining key players creating further destruction of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. The results of offensive operations in conjunction with tribal alliances have detrimentally impacted the success of Al-Qaeda in Iraq. “We currently have achieved the tactical momentum. We must hold on to the ball and keep up the offense” (Petraeus, 2007, Is the surge working, para. 3). MNF-I continues to pursue the insurgency with decisive offensive operations. The insurgency is sustaining a casualty rate which is three times greater than the U.S. led coalition. In a study conducted by the Brookings Institution, the estimated casualty rate for Sunni insurgents was approximately 70,000 as a result of recent combat operations.

Al-Qaeda’s Assessment

As the Al-Qaeda network continues to lose momentum in Iraq, the network is attempting to stay the course and reinforce its strategy of preparing for a long war. Al Qaeda’s top deputy has implored remaining leaders of the Iraqi regime to continue political and military actions against both the U.S. military and the Iraqi’s who support the democratic cause. Even though offensive operations have seriously impacted the network, AQ-I still continues to show resilience all the while utilizing guerilla tactics in order to disrupt and harass multi-national forces who are attempting to bring stability to a war torn nation.

Counterpoint

Despite the recent troop surge of U.S. Forces, the media continues to report offensive operations have failed to cripple the insurgency in Iraq. Embedded media continues to demonstrate that the insurgency is alive and well. Contrary to some news agency reports, the drop in insurgent activities and U.S. causalities has the U.S. led coalition believing they really
impacted the networks ability to fight. Is this true or has the insurgency simply retreated out of these built up U.S. occupied areas in order to reconsolidate, train, and fight another day? Or simply, have they withdrawn to allow coalition combatant commanders to feel they have gained the advantage aiding in the U.S. troop withdraw only to rise up and carry out countless attacks against the Iraqi Government and a smaller U.S. Force?

As the U.S. led coalition continues to press Al-Qaeda with offensive operations, AQ-I has sustained inescapable circumstances that are detrimental to their overall strategy. MNF-I as well as the newly formed alliances among the local Iraqi populace are severely impacting Al-Qaeda’s ability to fight. As a result, offensive operations continue to disrupt the enemy and eradicate enemy leaders from the battlefield thereby confirming to U.S. military leaders that offensive operations have annihilated the regimes network in Iraq thereby crippling the insurgency.
References


