

**INTERVIEW**

**GENERAL RAY ODIERNO, COMMANDER, MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-IRAQ,  
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH FOX NEWS**

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**(PH) = PHONETIC**

KILMEADE: (Segment introduction) On September 16th, General David Petraeus handed over the flag of his command to his former top deputy in Iraq. His name is General Ray Odierno. As the new commander in charge of the Coalition Forces in that country, what's his game plan to lead our troops to victory, and better yet, success? General Odierno joins us live from Baghdad. General, you're back in the country; you're no stranger to the area. But now you're in charge. How would you characterize the situation General Petraeus left for you?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, well, first, obviously in 2007 and 2008, with the surge of forces, we were concentrating on improving security. Security has improved. What we have now have to do is sustain that security; we have to continue to help build Iraqi Security Force capacity. And now the problems become more complex. They've become a bit more political. And what we want to do is help Iraq to exercise its full sovereignty.

KILMEADE: We have the Sunni Awakening, we understand they formed with, what people might say, is their own militia; they police their own area. They forced out al Qaida and the bad actors. Has the Shia government been successful absorbing, taking over the payroll from those Sunnis that did such a great killing and capturing al Qaida?

GEN ODIERNO: The Government of Iraq's been clear that they are, they are they understand how important the Sons of Iraq did and were, were part of accomplishing security. They have taken over so far approximately 51,000 Sons of Iraq inside of Baghdad. So far, it's gone extremely smoothly. We'll continue to watch this very closely and work it with the Government of Iraq. We've established several agreements with them and they have been true to their word so far, and I'm very confident that this will move forward successfully.

KILMEADE: General, we're on the cusp, we think, of another election soon, and we understand that you, you were saying that you really believe Iran is paying off Iraqi lawmakers to mess up our final agreement, the final agreement we're going to have from here forward with this new Iraqi government.

GEN ODIERNO: Yeah, what I would say is Iran is meddling in the internal affairs of Iraq. They do not want a bilateral agreement between the United States and Iraq. They, they see that as, as something that will challenge their ability to influence Iraq in the future. We think they're using several different methods. There's been some reports that they potentially are trying to pay off lawmakers. We'll wait and see. But it's something that I believe I believe Iraqis are nationalists, and I believe that they will do what's best for their country.

KILMEADE: What can we do? Just sit by and watch this happen? How could you sit there in camouflage, who are used to doing things tactically on the battlefield, influence something that's so vital?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, again, we, we talked to all of the Iraqi politicians, the Council representatives, all the leaders here; we, we tell them why we think it's in their best interest. They're exercising their sovereignty by, by establishing a bilateral agreement with the United States instead of being under a U.N. sanctioned agreement, which is what we are now. So I think they're better off. They're having a chance to choose. We've negotiated this agreement. And we keep emphasizing that point. And I think that slowly, over time, they understand that it is in their best interest to have this bilateral agreement.

REP: General, we're going to talk to you again, but real quick, would you still say it's a fragile state Iraq is in?

GEN ODIERNO: It is. I think it is. It was a failed state a year and a half, two years ago. It's now a fragile state. And there's several reasons for that. One is, obviously, they have to make

sure they are able to deliver services to the people of Iraq. If they don't deliver those services, there's a chance they could look elsewhere. The other thing is the leaders have to have a unified vision to deal with still some of the complex problems remaining, whether it be Article 140 or other issues that they still have to deal with, such as the oil law.

REP: Right. And General, I want to talk more about that vision and the oil law when we come back.

From Baghdad, General Odierno, in a moment.

(Pause for commercial break.)

KILMEADE: Hey, General?

GEN ODIERNO: Yeah, Brian.

KILMEADE: We're on break right now.

GEN ODIERNO: Okay.

KILMEADE: Hey, just wondering. Can you comment on this? Are the Iraqis, since they have this surplus and that's the buzz term over here, when will the Iraqis paying their own way. Can you comment on that?

GEN ODIERNO: Absolutely.

KILMEADE: Can we start paying less so they pay more?

GEN ODIERNO: Absolutely. I can, I can definitely I can give something

KILMEADE: That is your area.

GEN ODIERNO: I can give

KILMEADE: Have they been willing to step up?

GEN ODIERNO: Yes, they have. And I can give some examples.

KILMEADE: You know, I was reading a few books, and they say that the president would say he wouldn't mind it if they expressed a little bit more gratitude for what we've sacrificed, what you guys have sacrificed ...

GEN ODIERNO: Yeah.

KILMEADE: ... for them. Do you sense that they could, they could show a little bit more graciousness?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, they do privately. The problem is the politics of the region, it makes it difficult for them to do that.

CARLSON: Welcome back. We're back now with the new commander in charge of the Coalition Forces in Iraq, General Ray Odierno. Good to see you, General. Here's a question that I have, because a lot's been made on the campaign trail between Barack Obama and John McCain with regard to this surplus, that the Iraqis apparently have gazillions of dollars, and maybe they

should be paying their own way. At least that has been the implication from Senator Barack Obama. Can you touch on that at all?

GEN ODIERNO: Sure. What I say is they're improving every year on this. Last year, they spent \$22.4 billion on reconstruction and development in, in '08. In '09 they've increased their budget in this area 10 more percent. They've taken over more in '07, for example, we spent we paid about 80 percent of their development dollars for their military. In '08 we only paid about 40 percent. And in this year, it'll be down to about 10 to 15 percent. So they're, they're increasingly taking on a share of their, their military build up as well as their developmental programs inside of Iraq.

KILMEADE: General, could you tell us about the al Qaida presence in Iraq, what it was three, four years ago, what it is today? And are you concerned that the ones that survived have moved to Afghanistan?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, a couple things. One is I think we, we have had some success against al Qaida here. We've significantly decreased their capacity and their capabilities here in Iraq. We've pushed them north. They're currently in and around Ninawa Province in Mosul. We're continuing to conduct operations jointly with the Iraqis. We're making it more and more difficult for them to be successful here. We're eliminating the passive support that they've gotten from the citizens because we've been able to provide them security.

In terms of movement to Afghanistan, it's hard to say. What we do know is we've been able to reduce somewhat the foreign fighter flow into Iraq, which has been a positive development here.

CARLSON: General, so much talk back here in the U.S. is about the economy now. So Iraq, for all practical purposes, has fallen off the face of the map here, at least for the time being, with regard to the elections in three weeks. Why should Americans care about what's going on in Iraq?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, well, first, we've invested an awful lot into Iraq. We've invested money, but more importantly, we've invested the lives of our soldiers. And I believe it is in the long-term it's in, it's in our long-term best interest to have good relationships, have a strategic relationship with Iraq inside of the Middle East. And I believe over time it will ensure that we have better security inside of the United States.

KILMEADE: Will this be the first representative democracy in the Middle East within five years? I mean, it's on the track; will it, will it stay?

GEN ODIERNO: Well, I think so. I mean, the Iraqis are, are really thrilled with elections. We're going to have this is a big year. 2009 is a big year. They're going to have provincial elections in January of 2009, followed at the end of 2009 by national elections. And I think this will be important. The second set of elections actually are more important than the first because it proves that they're serious about having elected officials run their government.

KILMEADE: General, my next question to you: Are you concerned that the next commander-in-chief will pull the plug on this operation before it's finished?

GEN ODIERNO: I'll be honest with you. What I'll do is we'll present to him, whoever it is, we'll present to them what we're doing, the mission; what we think is important, why we do it, what the risks are associated with it. And then we'll go from there. I mean, it is in our best interests, and I trust that the commander-in-chief will make the right decisions. We'll make adjustments based on that and we'll continue forward with our mission here. And hopefully it'll be a mission

that we see success in the future. That's what the American people want to see is success here in Iraq.

KILMEADE: And General, let's be honest. We really want you to be successful in Iraq; all Americans are behind you. But you're behind one football team; it's the New York Giants. (Laughter in background.) And you are pulling for them over the Browns. Will you admit that on tape, right now, that you want the Giants to win against the Browns, sir?

GEN ODIERNO: I will admit that I want them to win against the Browns, and I wish them best of luck. Coach Coughlin has them going in the right direction, and they have been great so far this year.

KILMEADE: And the general gets sideline passes. He stands out, I don't know why, on the sideline when he's in town. General, thanks so much for joining us

GEN ODIERNO: Thank you, Brian; thank you, Gretchen.

(End of interview.)