

Petraeus: Politics determine Iraq's fate

by UPI

BAGHDAD - The top U.S. commander in Iraq, U.S. Army Gen. David Petraeus told an Arabic news magazine that politics will ultimately determine Iraq's future. In an interview with the al Watan al Arabi weekly, Petraeus was asked how effective a military campaign could be in ever-changing political situations. "Our strategy does not rely on the military alone to ensure success in Iraq," Petraeus responded. "Eighty percent of counterinsurgency is political and politics -- in both Baghdad and Washington -- will ultimately determine the outcome of this war. Having said that, we must establish a secure environment in which politics can function." The general also said there was a gradual shift from Iraqis perceiving U.S. troops as an occupying force. "Al-Qaida in Iraq and criminal militia elements have overplayed their hands," he said. "In many areas and neighborhoods now, in fact, coalition forces are seen as partners in the effort to bring sustainable stability to Iraq, as opposed to occupiers." Petraeus and U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker are scheduled to report on progress in Iraq by the middle of next month.

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