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### 'Operation Al Fajr' Begins to Retake Fallujah

By Jim Garamone  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 8, 2004 – American and Iraqi forces are in combat against terrorists and insurgents in the rebel Iraqi city of Fallujah, Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. said today.

Casey, speaking from Baghdad, is commander of multinational forces in Iraq. He said between 10,000 and 15,000 American and Iraqi troops are taking part in Operation Al Fajr, the Iraqi word for dawn.

He said terrorists from Fallujah are exporting terror all across Iraq. Casey estimated about 6,000 foreign terrorists and Baathist insurgents are in the city, standing in the way of a free, democratic Iraq. "The elimination of Fallujah as a terrorist safe haven will go a long way to realizing these goals," he said.

Casey said the U.S. and Iraqi forces "are well-prepared, well-trained and well- led and ready." Once Fallujah is liberated, he added, the Iraqi interim government is set to begin rebuilding the city and restoring normal life.

The Iraqi government has developed plans for humanitarian, medical and reconstruction support, and the various ministers in the government are ready to implement those plans quickly. The general said it is important to get jobs to the people who need them. He pointed to a project in Sadr City, a portion of Baghdad, that just put 9,000 Iraqis to work building a sewage system. Something on that order would be needed in Fallujah, he said.

Casey said operations to isolate the city began Nov. 7, with Iraqi special operations forces taking the main hospital and Marines taking two bridges across the Euphrates. "All of yesterday's objectives were achieved on or ahead of schedule," he said.

The general said operations in Fallujah will be hard, but he is confident the coalition is up to the task. All commanders on the scene told him there are enough troops and other resources to accomplish the mission. Casey added that if he needed more troops, he would ask for them.

"The fight in Fallujah will be a tough one, and there will be other fights in the future here," he said. "But nothing worthwhile is ever easy, and the challenge of helping 25 million Iraqis build a better future is one that the Iraqi people and the armed forces of more than 30 freedom-loving people are clearly up to."

Casey said the American people can be very proud of the performance of U.S. troops in Iraq, because they are making a difference every day.

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