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CBS News

FACE THE NATION

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GUESTS: General GEORGE CASEY
Commander, Multi-National Force, Iraq

THOMAS FRIEDMAN
Columnist, The New York Times

LARA LOGAN
CBS News Chief Foreign Correspondent

ELIZABETH PALMER
CBS News Correspondent

MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News

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***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS
202-457-4481***

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, after Zarqawi. Is the death of the terrorist in Iraq a turning point? It took two 500-pound bombs, but US forces finally got him. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. How will his death affect the war? We'll talk with Lara Logan, our chief foreign correspondent, and CBS News correspondent Elizabeth Palmer, who is in Baghdad. Then we'll talk to our top general in Iraq, General George Casey, on where we go from here. We'll get analysis and perspective on all this from New York Times columnist Tom Friedman. And I'll have a final word on congressional ethics. Is that an oxymoron?

But first, the death of Zarqawi on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION, with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: Good morning again. And we begin this morning with our CBS News correspondents; our chief foreign correspondent Lara Logan who is in London, and Elizabeth Palmer, who is joining us this morning from Baghdad.

Elizabeth, let me start with you. Tell us about any overnight developments.

ELIZABETH PALMER reporting:

Well, we're most of the way through what's been quite a peaceful, by Iraqi standards, weekend. No big reprisals yet that the Iraqi government was clearly expecting and I supposed half the population is still expecting. There was a new communique from al-Qaeda in Iraq on the Internet, which promises more operations that are going to, and I quote, "shake the enemy." But so far no sign of it.

SCHIEFFER: Lara Logan, you're in London today. You have spent so much time with US troops in Iraq, probably more than any other correspondent that I can recall. Is this going to change their mission at all?

LARA LOGAN reporting:

No, it won't change the mission. It will be a huge morale boost for the troops, who very often, you know, are picking up men who've dropped their weapons and dropped all signs of being fighters, and now finally they have someone that is identified as their enemy, and he's the biggest name in Iraq. So for the troops, this will mean a lot. But it's not going to change the reality that they face on the ground. There are two wars, essentially, in Iraq--one against the extremist jihadists like Zarqawi, and the other against Iraqis who believe that they're fighting for their country and for their freedom.

SCHIEFFER: So it is a morale booster, and I guess you could say also for the Iraqis themselves, Lara. But what is the significance, in your view, of the death of Zarqawi?

LOGAN: Well, this is particularly significant when you look at al-Qaeda as an organization, because al-Qaeda in Iraq under Zarqawi was moving further and further away from Osama bin Laden and his vision of what al-Qaeda was meant to do. And I think it wouldn't be surprising at all to know that there may be people in the traditional hierarchy of al-Qaeda who welcomed this kind of news. Bin Laden has always wanted an Iraqi to lead al-Qaeda in Iraq. He never wanted Zarqawi. He was forced into it by Zarqawi, who elevated himself to the status of a popular leader through his actions. And so this will be very interesting to see how Osama bin Laden now tries to reassert his control of al-Qaeda in Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: Elizabeth, are you seeing any discernible difference there in Baghdad as people begin to hear about this? Are people happy, sad, do they just take it in stride? How would you describe Baghdad today?

PALMER: Overall, people are happy, especially the Shia, against whom he had declared war. Cautiously happy, most of the moderate Sunnis as well. The key, of course, is how the hardline Sunnis are going to react, and whether the Sunni-led insurgency in Al Anbar Province and north of the city are going to react. Whether now with the loss of Zarqawi they're going to be free to, to abandon their allegiance to these foreign fighters, and maybe begin to respond to the outreach program being run by the Iraqi government, saying, 'Come on, join us, there's more in, in, in it for you to join the reconciliation project--you'll be rewarded, you will get your share of power--than there is in staying on the outside as bandits pursued by not only the coalition forces, but also the--all the forces of the Iraqi state,' which are growing in sophistication and discipline and numbers weekly.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, I want to thank both of you for being with us this morning. Elizabeth Palmer, Lara Logan, two of our bravest correspondents. Thanks to both of you.

LOGAN: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: And we're going to turn now to General George Casey, who is the commanding general of the multinational force in Iraq.

General Casey, thank you very much for joining us. Let's talk first about this communique that al-Qaeda posted on a Web site that Elizabeth Palmer was just talking about. They say they're going to launch large-scale operations now in Iraq. Is this just bluster, General, or do you take it seriously?

General GEORGE CASEY (Commanding General, Multi-National Force in Iraq): Well, we take it seriously--first of all, good morning, Bob. But we, we do take it seriously, but it's not unexpected. They've lost their leader. It's a major blow not only to the network in Iraq, but to al-Qaeda. And so they've got to come out like this. Actually, frankly, what we've seen in the past is that the more rhetoric there is on the Internet, and on their Web sites, that's a good indication to us that they're--that they're hurting.

Now, that said, they do--this network is a network, and it still has the capability to generate terrorist attacks across Iraq. And we and the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi government will work very hard in the coming days to protect the Iraqi people from these attacks. But you can't protect 100 percent from terrorist attacks.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you just said they have lost their leader, that would certainly seem to increase their vulnerability. How can you take advantage of that?

Gen. CASEY: And that's a great question, and we are, in fact, taking advantage of this and have been since the very night that, that he was killed. And we have had a series of operations ongoing across central Iraq against the network using the intelligence that we gathered over the course of several, several, several weeks in tracking Zarqawi down. And so it's exactly our intent to keep the pressure on them and to work with the Iraqi government to protect Baghdad.

SCHIEFFER: Is there any sign, General, that they have chosen a leader to replace him as yet?

Gen. CASEY: There is no sign yet. We're obviously watching that carefully and we're trying to take advantage of the opportunity that is presented here by leadership turbulence. And any time you change a leader in an organization, it's a period of turbulence. It's especially critical in war. And so, we'll see how this plays out over the coming weeks.

SCHIEFFER: There have been reports, General, that you're going to increase security in Baghdad in an effort to retake the city, as it were. Could you tell us anything about that?

Gen. CASEY: I wouldn't say we're retaking the city. There is security in Baghdad. We've had an operation going on since early March to guard against and protect against the sectarian violence that sprang up as a result of the bombing of the mosque in Samarra. There has been a new dimension to the violence in Baghdad, and that has been kidnappings and murders we believe largely conducted by illegal armed groups. And this is--it's a difficult problem to work, but we are working with the Iraqi government and Iraqi security forces to address that challenge.

SCHIEFFER: General, I know you wouldn't want to talk about deadlines, but do you think that the Iraqi government, the police force, the army, is it anywhere close to being able to taking over all of this responsibility that so much of is being carried out now by American troops?

Gen. CASEY: Actually, there has been a great shift in the--what's being carried out by Americans over the last year, Bob. Last year around this time, we had less than a handful of Iraqi units, army units, that were actually in the lead providing security around the country. Today, we have two Iraqi divisions, 16--15 Iraqi brigades and over 60 Iraqi battalions that are in the lead. And this process is continuing to go forward. We think by the end of

the summer, some 75 percent of the Iraqi brigades will be in the lead, and we think by the end of the year almost all the Iraqi divisions will be capable of leading.

Now if I could, what I mean by in the lead doesn't mean that they're able to operate independently. It means that they can operate with our transition team support and with our enabling support. Logistics, intelligence, medical evacuation, those kinds of things. But they are the ones that are directing the fight with our support, and that's a very good thing.

On the police side, the development continues, but I think you know there are greater challenges with the police because they are recruited locally and often their loyalties are more toward a local leader than it is to the chief of police. And that is problematic for us, and they are more vulnerable to infiltration by militias. And so we will work--we will work very hard with the new minister of interior to address that challenge.

SCHIEFFER: General, when can you start to bring American troops out of there? When is it going to be to the point that you can begin to do that? Again, I'm not asking you for a deadline here, I'm just asking in a general sense, when do you think you can start drawing down American forces in--in Iraq?

Gen. CASEY: Bob, we started drawing down American forces last December. Right before Christmas, we announced that we were not going to bring two brigades into Iraq and we--that's--that was about 7500 soldiers that didn't come in. And then our--I've gone from about 160,000 US forces here at, at around the time of the election down to under 130,000 now.

And as I've said several times, that I will make assessments periodically, and I was waiting until we got a government seated before I gave the president another recommendation, that we have some sense of what we've got. And so, we've already begun, and I think as long as the Iraqi security forces continue to progress and as long as this national unity government continues to operate that way and move the country forward, I think we're going to be able to see continued gradual reductions of coalition forces over the coming the months and into next year.

SCHIEFFER: General, getting back to Zarqawi, would you have preferred that he be taken alive?

Gen. CASEY: Oh, that's a--that's a hypothetical I'm not sure I want to get into, Bob. We read the situation, we evaluated the situation, and we believed the--we chose the best option that guaranteed the highest likelihood that we would be able to take him out of the picture. And it was, it was a successful operation, and like I said I don't think I want to get into hypotheticals.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Let me ask you one question about exactly who he was and what you think he was up to. The New York Times this morning quote Jordanian intelligence as saying he was trying to recruit people for--to extend his power beyond Iraq. They said that about 300 people had come into Iraq, had received training there, and then he had sit them--sent them back to

their various home countries to await orders there. Can you confirm that, and can you tell me what you make of that report?

Gen. CASEY: I've not seen the article, but when you read their own writings of their own strategy, their strategy in Iraq is to get us out, to establish a caliphate and to export terror from Iraq. And they're been quite clear about that. So I don't know about the specifics of that, but that's exactly what he's doing here. And his demise--because of his demise the region is going to be safer and frankly the United State of America and our European allies are going to be somewhat safer.

SCHIEFFER: Well, General, I want to thank you very much for being with us this morning. I hope we can talk to you again soon.

Gen. CASEY: Good, Bob. Thank you very much.

SCHIEFFER: And we'll be back in a moment with Tom Friedman of The New York Times.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And with us now, Tom Friedman, the foreign affairs columnist for The New York Times and a close follower and observer of events in Iraq.

You've been there many times. Tom, what do you think the significance of Zarqawi being caught and killed means? Obviously, it's not going to be the end of the war, but it is a significant event, as General Casey just said this morning. He said basically, 'Look, they have lost their leader and now we'll try to take advantage of that vulnerability.'

Mr. THOMAS FRIEDMAN (Correspondent, The New York Times): Yeah, I mean, I think al-Qaeda is saying, "Well, we'll replace him, no problem." This guy was good, Bob. He was a first team all-star terrorist. He eluded the US military for three years and carried on some of the most wanton acts of violence not only in Iraq, but the whole Middle East. So he was good. Guys like him don't fall on--off trees.

At the same time, it's clear he was turned in. He was outed by Sunni Muslims. I mean, someone in his group and other people helped. That's a good sign, because Iraq only works if the Sunni Muslims join in.

But here's the really big question, and this is what worries me this morning: Zarqawi is dead, but has Zarqawism been so unleashed in Iraq that we've--that we can't get it back? Now, what was Zarqawism? What was his whole strategy? His whole strategy was to use the most unspeakable violence to trigger a civil war between Sunnis and Shiites. He was a Sunni and he tried to basically kill as many Shiites as he could. And now what we've got in Iraq while he's dead, the legacy of his strategy--boy, you just read the headlines this morning--is still alive and well.

And the big question for Iraq is, having killed Zarqawi, can they kill

Zarqawism? And that can only happen if Iraqis come together.

SCHIEFFER: Well, do you see any sign that they are or that they have a better chance at doing that?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: You know, good news. We have an Iraqi government now. They filled up all the key positions, including the national security ones. They've got Sunnis in the government. They voted for the government. But will they come together? And will they come together, Bob, in, in a reasonable amount of time? Because, you know, the whole Haditha incident--where Marines were alleged to have been involved in the killing of civilians--what it's a reminder of, to me, is we can't do this forever. We are so radioactive. Occupations of another, you know, people's country, they can't go on forever without these kind of incidents happening more and more. And we're so alone there. It's not like we're there with the Arab League, with the UN, with the Europeans. And so, that to me, is the question. I know what the struggle is ahead, but we're so alone right now.

SCHIEFFER: General Casey says this morning that he hopes by the end of the year he can have the Iraqi forces in front. He says, that doesn't mean they're going to do it by themselves or that we can no longer have a presence there...

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Right.

SCHIEFFER: ...but just have them out front on this. Do you think, at this point, they're capable of doing that?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: It's just not, not clear to me. You know, and to me, it's always been, Bob, a political question, not a military one. After all, who was training Zarqawi? Who--who's been training the insurgency? Nobody. So it's not about the way, it's about the will. And that's really the question. If Iraqis come together in a coherent government, oh, they'll have a coherent army. If they don't we can train them till the cows come home, and it's not going to make a difference.

SCHIEFFER: Well, it always goes back to the old thing, how long does it take to train a US Marine? About, what, 15, 16, months or something like that.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Exactly.

SCHIEFFER: As you say, if the will is not there, it's--then it's impossible.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: That's right. And a Marine fighting for America takes about five minutes to train.

SCHIEFFER: How--exactly. How about the security in Baghdad right now? We hear General Casey talking today about enhancing the security in the city itself. Are we anywhere close to being able to do that?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: I'm not there so I can't say, but I can say this: You know,

this killing of Zarqawi has certainly given the first momentum, you know, to the American effort there. And, by God, they--they need to build on this momentum, because this is psychological war, you know, and people have been sitting on the fence for a long time. You know, the best way to improve our public opinion in the Middle East is to win, OK? We win, we'll have people with us.

SCHIEFFER: Guantanamo Bay--another headline that nobody wants to see in the papers this morning. Now we have prisoners committing suicide there, and people are saying this was some sort of political act. This was not something these people did out of desperation, but to--as a political act, like these suicide bombers. What, what are we going to do about Guantanamo?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, I believed we should've torn it down a long time ago, along with Abu Ghraib. And in Abu Ghraib's place, we should've built a hospital. Guantanamo Bay, Bob, has become the anti-Statue of Liberty. It's something that terrorist groups and our opponents all over the world now use to energize themselves. You just--again, you can't keep holding people indefinitely. If they're guilty, let's try them and put them in jail. If not, let's send them home. But keeping this here as a kind of a beacon of the denial of our best values, I think is absolutely the worst possible thing to do.

SCHIEFFER: But what do we do with the people who are there? I mean, you say, if they're guilty, let's try them, but how do we figure out who's guilty? I mean, how do we decide which ones we can send home?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Well, that's for, you know, military lawyers to do, but if we can't--I think the damage Guantanamo is doing to our image and status over--across the world is much worse than if you opened the whole place and let all these guys go.

SCHIEFFER: The story that never goes away is back in the headlines again, and that is Israel and the Palestinians. Hamas says it is no longer going to abide by the truce. In fact, I think overnight they fired rockets into Israel. There were Palestinians who were killed by mistake, Israel says, by an Israeli attack. Where do you see that going right now, Tom?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: You know, Bob, I was reading the paper this morning, saw exactly what you reported from Israel-Palestine, the Taliban returning in Afghanistan, the ongoing troubles in Iraq. And you feel like, you know, we have tried--maybe maladroitly, maybe naively--you know, to implant some green space in that part of the world, and the desert just keeps coming back, you know, relentlessly. It's only going to change if the moderates there--you know, in that part of the world, the extremists tend to go all the way, and the moderates tend to just go away. And unless those moderates stand up--whether it's in, you know, Hamas--look at, right now, the Israelis took on the extremists. They pulled their settlers out of Gaza. Unless the Palestinians take on their extremists, this ain't going anywhere.

SCHIEFFER: So, should the United States--what is the role we should be

playing here? Are we doing enough?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: You know, it's--I don't really want to blame the United States on this one. Look, more is better in terms of trying to always get the sides together. But again, if Palestinians won't take on their extremists, there's not much George Bush can do.

SCHIEFFER: One of the specks of good news, if there is some today, is that that Iranians are saying that parts of this package that the Western powers have put together in an effort to convince Iran to stop their nuclear program, the Iranians are saying part of it is acceptable. I mean, for them, that's something, isn't it?

Mr. FRIEDMAN: It's a big deal and I think it's because--and to the administration's credit, they got China and Russia on board. And I think that is the decisive thing here. By this opening, joining the negotiating process, when the Iranians saw that they couldn't peel off the Russians and the Chinese, they sat up a little straighter, they read the, the document a little closer and they said, 'Maybe we won't sell this carpet one more time.' You know, 'Maybe this time we'll, we'll really strike a deal.' We'll see.

SCHIEFFER: All right. All right. Tom, always great to have you.

Mr. FRIEDMAN: Great to have you--be here.

SCHIEFFER: I'll be back with a final word in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally, on matters closer to home, the House of Representatives has an Ethics Committee. I'm not kidding, it really does. In fact, the House Ethics Committee met last week to review the reforms Congress has proposed in the wake of the current scandal over bribes and corruption. Unfortunately, what Congress has done so far is not much more than a joke. The new House proposal, for example, allows legislators to accept free airplane tickets, free almost anything if the Ethics Committee approves it and if the donor's name is made public. The ranking Democrat on the committee, Howard Berman, explained it this way, 'As a general rule,' he said, 'I think the answer is to disclose it all and take your lumps.'

As a general rule, I agree. Voters should choose any person they want to represent them. So if the Goat Roper Association buys someone else's congressman a free ticket to Hawaii so he can get drunk and do the hula, that's fine by me if it's OK with the people who elected him. But if he sobers up and secretly sticks \$10 million in the federal budget to build a memorial to goat ropers, part of that is my money and I want a say on it.

Conservatives talk about federal waste and bloated government. Democrats rail about no money to help those who need it most. But these secret appropriations called earmarks are where the money goes, and we'll never get the government back on track until Congress gets tough on itself and stops

them. Stopping these free trips won't cure the whole thing, but it is a start. It's time we got on with it.

From FACE THE NATION in Washington, I'm Bob Schieffer. We'll see you next week.