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The Death of Zarqawi: A Major Victory in the War on Terrorism

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The killing by U.S. forces of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, is a major turning point in the war on terrorism. The course of history is shaped by major events, and this is one of them. The elimination of one of the world's most brutal, barbaric terrorists will be a huge blow to al-Qaeda and its murderous cohorts, who have been operating a vicious campaign of intimidation and destruction across large swathes of central Iraq for the past three years.

There are and will be many more international terrorists to hunt down and eliminate in Iraq in the coming months and years, and al-Qaeda and its allies will remain a major threat to the new Iraqi government and the Iraqi people. However, the seeming aura of invincibility that had previously surrounded the leadership of the jihadist elements of the Iraqi insurgency has been shattered. Zarqawi was one of the most potent public faces of international terrorism, and his death is bodes well not only for winning the war in Iraq, but also the long-term global war on terrorism.

Zarqawi's Record of Terror and Murder

Zarqawi was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Iraqi men, women, and children, as well as several Western hostages. His campaign of suicide attacks, bombings, and beheadings was a display of sheer savagery and barbarism that reportedly even shocked other al-Qaeda

commanders. His death will undoubtedly save hundreds, and possibly thousands, of lives.

Zarqawi's biggest atrocities in Iraq included the attacks on the Shia shrines in Karbala and Baghdad in March 2004, which killed over 180 people, and the car bomb attacks in Najaf and Karbala in December 2004, which claimed over 60 lives. He was also responsible for the August 2003 truck bombing of the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which killed 23 UN employees. Zarqawi beheaded American engineer Nicholas Berg in May 2004, as well as Americans Jack Hensley and Eugene Armstrong and Briton Kenneth Bigley in September 2004.¹

Strengthening the International Coalition

The death of Zarqawi is an important reminder of why the United States, Great Britain, and other key allies are still fighting in Iraq, and why the West cannot withdraw its forces from the country until the war against al-Qaeda forces is won.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
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The killing of Zarqawi will be a huge morale boost to Allied forces in Iraq and should reinforce the determination of Coalition members to continue their presence in the country. In addition to the more than 130,000 American troops stationed in Iraq, there are roughly 20,000 non-U.S. international forces based in the country, including 8,000 from Britain, 3,200 from South Korea, 900 from Poland, 900 from Australia, 600 from Japan, and over 500 from Denmark.²

The goal of Zarqawi and his allies was to turn Iraq into a crucible of terror, a safe haven, training ground, and launch pad for al-Qaeda operations across the Middle East, Europe, and the rest of the world. Zarqawi's death has set this goal back, but there can be no room for complacency.

The Coalition must now be even more determined to destroy the al-Qaeda network in Iraq and see the mission through. Washington and London should call upon the new Italian government in

Rome to reverse its decision to withdraw its 2,900 troops from Iraq later this year. As well, they should urge other European powers to do more to assist in international efforts to defeat the insurgency and establish a stable, long-term democracy for the Iraqi people.

The battle between the free world and the forces of militant Islamic terrorism is fought on a daily basis on the streets of Iraqi cities, and this conflict will play a major role in shaping the future of the war on terrorism. A crushing defeat for al-Qaeda in Iraq will be a major strategic victory that will greatly reduce the long-term threat to the United States and its allies.

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1. Compiled from an extensive list of Zarqawi's terrorist acts, by Adam Fresco, "Al-Zarqawi's Toll of Atrocities", *The Times Online*, June 8, 2006, at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,3-2216485,00.html>
2. See Michael O'Hanlon and Nina Kamp, Brookings Institute, "Coalition Troop Strength in Iraq," *Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction and Security in Post-Saddam Iraq*, June 5, 2006, at <http://www.brookings.edu/fp/saban/iraq/index.pdf>.