

## HIGHLIGHTS OF U.S. BROADCAST NEWS COVERAGE OF THE MIDDLE EAST FROM JUNE 26, 2006

(Broadcasts of Monday, June 26, 2006)

### NEWS HOUR WITH JIM LEHRER, PBS TV, 6 PM, JUNE 26, 2006:

#### President Plays Down News of Troop Withdrawals: Iraq Update:

JIM LEHRER: President Bush today played down reports the United States is planning large withdrawals from Iraq. He acknowledged he held a White House meeting last Friday with Army General George Casey, the top U.S. Commander in Iraq. On Sunday, the New York Times reported Casey talked of pulling two combat brigades in September and more through the year 2007, but today Mr. Bush said again it all depends on seen progress in Iraq.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: (From tape.) In terms of our troop presence there, that decision will be made by General Casey as well as the sovereign government of Iraq based upon conditions on the ground. And one of the things General Casey assured me of is that whatever recommendation he makes, it will be aimed toward achieving victory and that's what we want.

LEHRER: Later, a White House spokesman said General Casey laid out a number of scenarios for the future, but other U.S. commanders said American Forces would have to stay in Anbar Province, one of the most violent regions, at least through next summer.

There was word today seven Iraqi insurgent groups have expressed interest in reconciliation. On Sunday, Prime Minister al-Maliki offered amnesty to insurgents who renounced violence and have not committed attacks. Today, a key supporter of Maliki said a number of small Sunni groups have contacted the government.

Bombings north and south of Baghdad killed at least 35 Iraqis and wounded nearly 90 today. In Hillah, a bomb ripped through a central market, leaving 15 dead. And in Bakubah, a bomb strapped to a motorcycle blew up in a market killing 20. Also today, a U.S. Marine died of wounds suffered in Western Iraq and the Russian foreign ministry confirmed that four Russian embassy workers have been killed by kidnappers.

### CBS EVENING NEWS, CBS TV, 6.30 PM, JUNE 26, 2006:

#### General Casey Outlines Troop Withdrawals: Iraq Update:

BOB SCHIEFFER: Another bad run in Iraq. Today, bombs tore apart marketplaces crowded with shoppers in the cities of Bakubah and Hillah; at least 40 people were killed, 140 wounded. Also, three more Americans - two soldiers and a Marine - were killed in combat. And here at home, President Bush appear to back away a bit today from a new proposal to sharply cut U.S. combat strength in Iraq.

Here's David Martin.

DAVID MARTIN: It's nothing so firm as a withdrawal plan, but General George Casey, the top commander in Iraq, has outlined a strategy that could cut the number of combat troops in Iraq by nearly two-thirds by the end of next year. The numbers are very rough, but that would bring the current total of 127,000 American troops - combat and non-combat - down to somewhere between 50,000 and 75,000. The first step would be a cut of about 7,000 troops this fall, but not even that modest reduction has been agreed on yet and the commander-in-chief made in clear again today it all depends on the ability of U.S. and Iraqi Forces to, if not defeat the insurgency, at least suppress the violence.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: (From tape.) In terms of our troop presence there, that decision will be made by General Casey as well as the sovereign government of Iraq based upon conditions on the ground.

MARTIN: Although a captured document refers to the insurgent's own bleak situation, they are still able to mount deadly attacks both on American troops and the Iraqi. In the last two days, terrorist bombings have killed dozens of Iraqis and American troops will be in the thick of the fighting for some time to come. Marine General John Sattler says he foresees no troop cutbacks in the Wild West of Iraq for at least another year. Still the current troop level is the lowest in two years and the Army has begun shipping home thousands of pieces of heavy equipment that are no longer needed as the U.S. hands over bases to the Iraqi Army, but Pentagon officials say there is still a constant, even growing demand for personnel to perform such critical tasks as training the Iraqi police.

David Martin, CBS News, the Pentagon.

### NBC NIGHTLY NEWS, NBC TV, 7 PM, JUNE 26, 2006:

#### Developments in Iraq:

BRIAN WILLIAMS: We turn now to Iraq today, where bombs killed at least 40 people at markets in two different cities there. And the timing here is worth noting: both bombs exploded just hours after reports that several Sunni Arab groups had made a truce offer to the new government, and after word this weekend the U.S. military had drawn up a withdrawal plan for Americans.

Tonight, there are some mixed messages from the administration about any such plan. We get the very latest tonight from NBC's Jim Miklaszewski at the Pentagon.

Jim, good evening.

JIM MIKLASZEWSKI: Good evening, Brian. The plan would cut substantial numbers of U.S. troops in Iraq by the end of 2007. But White House and Pentagon officials appeared to dismiss that today as one of only many proposals.

The plan comes from the U.S. military's top commander in Iraq, General George Casey. Out of the 127,000 American forces in Iraq today, Casey's plan would pull some 28,000 American troops out of Iraq by the end of next year. The first 7,000 to 10,000 could be out as early as this September.

But President Bush hasn't signed off on any troop reduction and today sounded a word of caution.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: But in terms of our troop presence there, that decision will be made by General Casey as well as the sovereign government of Iraq based upon conditions on the ground.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Reports of the Casey proposal kicked up a political firestorm in Washington. Democrats, like Senator Carl Levin, claim it's identical to their proposal for troop cuts that the White House called 'a strategy to cut and run.'

SEN. CARL LEVIN (D-MI): Probably the next person that the Republicans would accuse of being cut and run would be General Casey. They'll probably give him a nickname, 'Old Cut and Run General Casey.'

MIKLASZEWSKI: But the White House today shot back.

TONY SNOW (White House press secretary): What Senator Levin wanted to do was to get out. There was no talk about victory strategy, there was no talk about, you know, working with the Iraqi government. It was just we need a phased redeployment - get out.

MIKLASZEWSKI: Whatever the politics, military officials insist Casey's proposal does not set a timetable for U.S. troop cuts but would depend largely on the ability of the Iraqi Army and police to step up and provide their own security.

GEN. BARRY McCAFFREY (RET.) (NBC News military analyst): We've got to have the Iraqi security forces actually take charge of the urban areas or none of this can happen.

MIKLASZEWSKI: And as conditions in Iraq change, withdrawal plans will be torn up and rewritten. As one Pentagon official points out, General Casey himself had earlier predicted that there would be substantial troop withdrawal from Iraq by the end of this year, and, quote, 'that's not going to happen.'

Brian?

WILLIAMS: Jim Miklaszewski at the Pentagon for us tonight. Thanks, Jim.

Data Bank:

BRIAN WILLIAMS: Today both the president and the vice president attacked what many people consider to be this nation's leading newspaper, The New York Times. The criticism comes days after that newspaper, along with the Los Angeles Times and the Wall Street Journal, revealed that Treasury officials are monitoring bank transactions on an international financial data base as part of this government's secret anti-terrorism program. NBC's Kelly O'Donnell is with us from the White House for more on this tonight. Kelly, good evening.

KELLY O'DONNELL: Good evening, Brian. Tonight the White House escalated what amounts to a shame campaign against one of the nation's most prominent newspapers, The New York Times, angered that the paper has exposed two of its secret surveillance programs.

President Bush on a slow burn at the White House today.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: And the disclosure of this program is disgraceful.

O'DONNELL: Vice President Cheney on the campaign trail in Nebraska bluntly laid blame.

VICE PRESIDENT DICK CHENEY: The New York Times has now made it more difficult for us to prevent attacks in the future.

O'DONNELL: Outrage building since Friday's New York Times revealed that after 9/11 the government has been secretly tracking thousands of confidential banking records that electronically pass through this office building in Belgium, in an effort to break terrorist financing.

PRESIDENT BUSH: For a newspaper to publish it does great harm to the United States of America.

O'DONNELL: Senior administration officials had urged the paper to hold the story, citing national security. The New York Times' defense, in part, 'Nobody should think that we made this decision casually or without fully weighing the issues.'

From the White House point of view, this is strike two. The New York Times had earlier reported on another government secret, the NSA domestic eavesdropping.

VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY: What is doubly disturbing for me is that not only have they gone forward with these stories but they've been rewarded for it by being awarded the Pulitzer Prize for outstanding journalists. I think that is a disgrace.

O'DONNELL: Today's coordinated White House assault is more than simply shared frustration. Analysts say there is political upside as well.

CHARLIE COOK (NBC political analyst): They've gotta motivate the base, and conservatives, Republicans, tend to distrust the media. So anytime you can play off and use the media as a foil it's probably a good thing.

O'DONNELL: And so one more salvo late today from the administration - a letter from the secretary of the Treasury to The New York Times editor saying that his editors and staff 'showed breathtaking arrogance and a deep misunderstanding of the program' to think that they understood what was happening with terrorist financing in their explanation of how they reached this decision.

And The New York Times' analysis of how they came to their decision to publish the report is available online. Brian?

WILLIAMS: Kelly O'Donnell at the White house for us tonight. Kelly, thanks for that.

**SPECIAL REPORT, FOX NEWS CHANNEL, 6 PM, JUNE 26, 2006:**

**General Casey Troop Withdrawal Strategy:**

BRIT HUME: In Washington tonight, there's controversy about another New York Times report; this one suggesting there may be a concrete plan for withdrawing American forces from Iraq. As Pentagon correspondent Mike Emanuel reports, the more one learns about the story, the less there seems to be to it.

MIKE EMANUEL: The top U.S. commander in Iraq, General George Casey has drafted plans for American troop reductions according to U.S. officials. Fox reported last week Casey's considering reducing U.S. troop levels in Iraq by as many as 10,000 this fall. While senior U.S. officials say there are numerous plans, including one reported by the New York Times, for bringing thousands of additional troops home by the end of 2007, withdrawals remain entirely dependent on whether Iraqis are trained and ready to take the lead in defending their country. President Bush brushed aside any suggestion there is one concrete plan for drastically reducing American forces in Iraq.

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH: (From tape.) But in terms of our troop presence there, that decision will be made by General Casey as well as the sovereign government of Iraq based upon conditions on the ground.

EMANUEL: And the president insisted he and Casey share the same goal.

PRES. BUSH: (From tape.) And one of the things that General Casey assured me of is that whatever recommendation he makes, it will be aimed toward achieving victory.

EMANUEL: White House Spokesman Tony Snow made it clear the general had laid out more than one option and has not made a final recommendation.

TONY SNOW (White House Spokesman): (From tape.) When he makes a recommendation, the president's going to follow it. He trusts General Casey; he's made it clear.

EMANUEL: But a day after Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki presented a 24-point reconciliation plan to bring together ethnic and sectarian factions - one point is getting the most attention in the U.S.: Maliki invited insurgents to turn in their weapons in favor of joining the political process. What is not clear from the U.S. perspective is exactly who may be offered amnesty and if those who killed or wounded U.S. troops will be included. At the State Department, spokesman Sean McCormack simply restated the Iraqi plan.

SEAN MCCORMACK (State Dept. Spokesman): (From tape.) I'll just cite you from the actual proposal itself: 'Issuance of amnesty on detainees who were not involved in terrorist crimes and acts, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.'

EMANUEL: But the top Democrat in the U.S. Senate says the U.S. must send a strong signal to Maliki's government.

SENATOR HARRY REID (D-NV): (From tape.) And I hope President Bush will stand up for our troops by demanding the Iraqis drop any intentions they may have to let terrorists go. I support reconciliation in Iraq; however, not at the expense of our American troops.

EMANUEL: The U.S. ambassador to Iraq says he's not certain exactly what crimes will be covered by this amnesty, but Zalmay Khalilzad does insist the interests of the U.S. government are being represented in discussions with the Iraqi government.

At the Pentagon, Mike Emanuel, Fox News.

#### Violence in Iraq:

HUME: Two bomb attacks in Iraq today killed at least 35 people and injured scores of others. A bicycle in Bakubah, left at least 20 dead and 30 wounded. That happened not long after an attack in the main marketplace of Hillah, which killed at least 15 and injured some 56 more people. Following this latest violence in Hillah, angry survivors threw stones and denounced Iraqi police for failing to protect them.

#### Rep. Murtha Claims Military Cover-Up:

HUME: Pennsylvania Democratic Congressman John Murtha, who has called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and their removal to Okinawa, Japan, now says the America presence in Iraq is more dangerous to world peace than nuclear threats from North Korea or Iran. The South Florida Sun-Sentinel reports that Murtha not only said that, but also denounced when he called the military's cover-up of the deaths of Iraq's civilians at the hands of U.S. Marines in Haditha at a town meeting at Miami this weekend, despite a Pentagon report last week that found no evidence of a knowing cover-up.

END.