

Greetings North coast and all ships at sea,
Most of our troops have now left Iraq. While there was an initial increase in violence shortly after, matters have stabilized and the political partisan bickering and government gridlock is decreasing. Some cooperation in opposing parties is starting. We are not hearing much about Iraq in the news lately since the Arab spring is occupying much news time, especially tragic events in Syria.

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Iraq has seen and is seeing much improvement in security and infrastructure. Recently many of the security walls have been removed. Major roads have been reopened in Baghdad. Baghdad is having to implement an even and odd number license plate driving day to reduce the effect of traffic jams. The economy in Iraq has been on a strong boom.

Some political pundits are spreading the idea that had we stayed out of Iraq, Iraq would have had its own Arab Spring. I strongly disagree with their comments. The brutality and iron fist of Saddam's regime crushed the slightest dissent. The mass graves uncovered after our liberation of Iraq bear witness.

I believe the seed for the Arab spring was planted with our removal of Saddam, helping Iraq to self determination and liberty from fear of government, protection of citizen's rights. Iraqis showed their hunger and commitment to this in their Purple Revolution in January 2005 in defiance of all the terrorist threats.

The purple revolution in Iraq was closely followed by Lebanon's cedar revolution in May of 2005 which forced Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. Both these events were televised all over the Arab world with much admiration and wonder. Many dictators started to loosen their grip and offer symbolic concessions in the form of highly controlled and restrictive elections and human rights promises they did not keep. This was too late for some such as Tunisia with its revolt in December of 2010 after a street vendor burned himself in protest to oppression, and a repressive election in 2009. Egypt, Libya, Bahrain & Syria followed quickly. Jordan and Morocco have introduced many reforms to offer more freedom and more public involvement in governance and more human rights to their citizens. Others such as Saudi Arabia are giving small concessions and throwing money at the population to