

against AQI started in September 2006, several months before the surge began. By mid-March 2007, when the conversion of al Anbar was largely complete, most of the additional forces promised to al Anbar had yet to arrive. Others argued that the United States had to show staying power to persuade the sheikhs to counter AQI. Yet sentiment in the United States in favor of staying was ebbing in the fall of 2006, when Anbar Salvation Council was formed and was further weakened by the turnover of U.S. House and Senate leadership as a consequence of the November 2006 elections.⁴⁶ As one U.S. Marine noted, "For three years we fought our asses off out here and made very little progress. Now we are working with the sheikhs, and Ramadi has gone from the most dangerous city in the world to a place where I can sit on Sheik [Hamid] Heiss's front porch without my body armor and not have to worry about getting shot."⁴⁷ Some credit an offensive carried out by Marines that same month.⁴⁸ Yet, at the time, it looked no different from many other offensives that took place in earlier years. Others credit offensives carried out by U.S. forces in late February and early March.⁴⁹ They probably helped on the margins, but by then the momentum from operations carried out by newly recruited police were more decisive.

⁴⁶ To quote Colonel MacFarland, one of the Americans responsible for the Awakening,

A growing concern that the U.S. would leave Iraq and leave the Sunnis defenseless against al-Qaeda and Iranian-supported militias made these younger [tribal] leaders [who led the Awakening] open to our overtures. (Major Neil Smith and Colonel Sean MacFarland, "Anbar Awakens: The Tipping Point," *Military Review*, March–April 2008, p. 51)

⁴⁷ Jaffe (2007).

⁴⁸ John F. Burns, "Showcase and Chimera in the Desert," *New York Times*, July 8, 2007, p. A1. The problem with the Burns quote, "the sheiks turned only after a prolonged offensive by American and Iraqi forces, starting in November, that put Al Qaeda groups on the run, in Ramadi and elsewhere across western Anbar," is that Anbar Salvation Council was actually formed in September, or two months earlier.

⁴⁹ As reported by Max Boot, "Can Petraeus Pull It Off?" *Weekly Standard*, April 30, 2007, p. 24. The principal operations were code-named Murfreesboro (February 10–March 10), Okinawa (March 9–20), and Call to Freedom (March 17–30).