

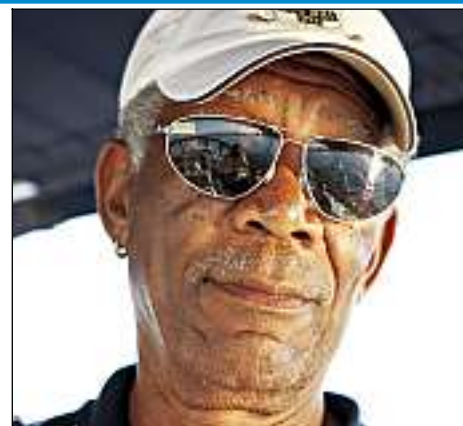
FINAL SCORES

60 QBs – and counting

■ A record number of NFL quarterbacks have started this season. Who's who, 1C



Shaun Hill: Third to start for San Francisco.



By Robert Hanashiro, USA TODAY

The long voyage of Morgan Freeman

■ His take on sailing and Jack Nicholson – and the items on his 'bucket list,' 1D

Wednesday, December 19, 2007

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Congress boosts fuel standards for vehicles

■ Bush has said he'll sign sweeping energy bill that could save billions, 1B



By Bob Strong, AP

Stop Kurdish rebels, Rice says

■ But secretary of State warns against destabilizing northern Iraq. Above, with Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari, 8A



Teens pioneer new way to shop by phone

■ Retailers scramble to meet young shoppers' demands for browsing, ads and coupons via cellphone, 1B

By Martin E. Klimek

Senate approves \$70B for wars in budget

Spending bill for domestic programs and foreign aid passes 76-17. Separate 70-25 vote OKs war funds, 2A.

Report: 13 states not ready for flu crisis

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Britain may trim stay of U.S. visitors

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Mexico's losing candidate refuses to bow

Narrow loser of presidential race holds "Cabinet" meetings and demands official recognition, 8A.

Money: FCC eases media owner rules

Panel is sharply divided on change to 32-year-old guideline preventing a company from owning a newspaper and broadcast station in the same market, 1B.

Sports: Here comes the Sun

Add a healthy Grant Hill to a surging Phoenix and the result is the third-best record in the NBA, 1C.

Life: Strike rattles Oscars' nerves

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► At 82, Arkansas doctor comes out of retirement to save local hospital from closing, 11D.

Stocks rise as Euro Bank pledges help

Index	Close	Change
Dow Jones industrial average	13,232.47	▲ 65.27
Nasdaq composite	2,596.03	▲ 21.57
Treasury note, 10-year yield	4.12%	▼ 0.03
USA TODAY Internet 50	157.05	▲ 1.02

Sources: USA TODAY research, MarketWatch.com

USA TODAY Snapshots®

Kids receiving help
Average monthly Social Security benefit for children of:

- Disabled workers: \$285
- Retired workers: \$495
- Deceased workers: \$675

Source: Social Security Administration

By David Stuckey and Bob Laird, USA TODAY

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Editorial/Opinion 11, 13A
Lotteries 9C
Marketplace Today 8D
Market scoreboard 4B
State-by-state 9A

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By Jack Gruber, USA TODAY

Area of operation: Iraqis gather around Sgt. Joseph Franklin to ask him about a clinic in Toma, a Baghdad neighborhood. An increased troop presence in the communities is part of a broader counterinsurgency strategy implemented this year.

Strategy that's making Iraq safer was snubbed for years

TROOPS AT RISK IEDs in IRAQ

It sounds simple: Get help from locals to stop bombmakers. But a USA TODAY investigation shows the Bush administration was slow to accept the idea.

Pursuing the insurgents

By Peter Eisler, Blake Morrison and Tom Vanden Brook USA TODAY

A video on how new strategy works in Baghdad.

When Army Capt. Jeremy Gwinn's company patrolled Baghdad in 2005, the approach toward roadside bombs was simple: avoid them or die.

The data

■ After tips from Iraqis rose, IED deaths began to fall. Graphic, 5A

By early 2006, that strategy had begun to shift: Instead of hunting for the bombs, the soldiers hunted for bombmakers. "We started to know a lot of people in the community and develop contacts," recalls Gwinn, now a major. "There was a noticeable change ... in the way we were doing things."

Today, that change has swept across Iraq, and attacks using improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, have declined steadily for eight months. Casualties from the bombs are at their lowest point since 2003, the first year of the war.

Troops have seized twice as many weapons caches this year as they did all of last.

"Just about every single night, we are identifying and engaging one or more cells caught in the act of planting IEDs," Gen. David Petraeus, head of U.S. forces in Iraq, said in an interview.

Efforts to stop IEDs by targeting the insurgent networks that finance, build and plant the bombs showed results only after the Bush administration adopted a broader counterinsurgency strategy this year — and sent 30,000 more troops to Iraq to support it.

But a USA TODAY investigation shows that the strategy now used to defeat the bombmaking networks and stabilize Iraq was ignored or rejected for years by key decision-makers. As early as 2004, when roadside bombs already were killing scores of troops, a top military consultant invited to ad-

Please see COVER STORY page 5A ►

Nursing home citations climb 22%

States stepping up inspections

By Brad Heath USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — More nursing homes are being cited for serious violations as inspectors face increasing pressure to crack down on dangerous conditions, a USA TODAY analysis shows.

From 2000 through 2006, the number of citations for putting patients in "immediate jeopardy" increased 22%, according to the records from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which regulates nursing homes. Those citations are the most serious reprimand inspectors can issue and often follow cases in which patients were physically or sexually abused

or left without medications.

The increase came as many states stepped up nursing home inspections. Homes that put their patients in immediate jeopardy risk fines or being told they cannot accept new Medicaid patients, a major source of their income.

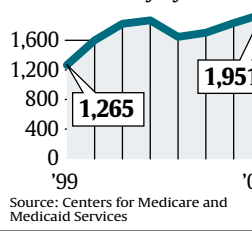
"It doesn't necessarily mean things are getting worse. It means we're finding more of the problems," said Richard Mollot, executive director of Long Term Care Community Coalition, which advocates for nursing home patients.

Inspectors found nearly 2,000 violations last year that jeopardized patients at nearly 850 of the nation's 16,000 nursing homes, according to the records. They account for about 6% of the total violations uncovered in nursing homes.

New York issued 131 immediate jeopardy citations last year, up from 41 in 2000. This

Serious problems

Citations issued to nursing homes for problems likely to cause serious injury:



year it cited one home for not stopping two elderly patients from hitting others, and another for not doing enough to check on patients who fell down, a common source of nursing home injuries.

"We have a new mind-set," said Jeffrey Hammond of the New York health department. "It's not that the quality of care has gone down, but we are be-

ing more rigorous in our enforcement."

The Medicare and Medicaid services' records for 2007, still incomplete, already show more than 1,300 "immediate jeopardy" citations. New York inspectors issued eight of them to the Vivian-Teal Howard home in Syracuse, N.Y., after a January review found more than a dozen patients had not been given their medications over several days.

"Did we have people that were at risk of losing their lives? I would say no," said the home's administrator, Joe Corradino. "There were problems there and we knew that, and we corrected all those issues."

Bruce Yarwood, the CEO of the American Health Care Association, which represents nursing homes, said in a statement that care is improving despite the increase in serious citations.

This holiday tradition is brought to you by ...

Towns tap firms for event-naming rights

By Jeff Martin USA TODAY

Depending on where you live, your town's holiday celebration may be presented by a cellphone business, a hamburger chain or a health care company this year.

Corporations increasingly are attaching their names to holiday traditions across the USA as they vie for attention in a

crowded media landscape.

► In Virginia Beach, McDonald's Holiday Lights at the Beach Presented by Verizon Wireless features about 250 animated light displays, including a surfing Santa. The companies, along with other sponsors, finance the attraction.

► In Sioux Falls, S.D., the annual Sioux Falls Parade of Lights this year became the Avera Parade of Lights. The sponsorship by the local health care system enabled organizers to add a 60-foot Christmas tree.

► In Oklahoma City, the Son-

ic Segway Santa is a big part of the Downtown in December festival. Santa rides a Segway through downtown to promote green transportation and Sonic drive-in food.

Holiday events are part of a growing sponsorship industry expected to reach \$14.9 billion this year, according to forecasts by the Chicago-based IEG Sponsorship Report, which tracks corporate sponsorship. That's an 11.7% increase over 2006, the report said.

There's no breakdown for

holiday events, but North American companies this year were expected to spend more than \$700 million in sponsorship spending for "festivals, fairs and annual events," up 15% from the previous year, according to the report.

Some say it has gone too far. "It seems like we're kind of a nation of excess sometimes," said Marguerite Oligmueller, who moved to Sioux Falls from a ranch in central South Dakota a few years ago.

The trend is likely to continue. "At the big-bucks level,

mass media is fragmented so much that it's very hard to get a large audience for anything," said George John, the Pillsbury-Gerot Chair in Marketing at the University of Minnesota.

There are upsidies for cities, said Jay Newell, an Iowa State University professor who researches media saturation.

"Governments everywhere are certainly trying to raise revenue," Newell said. "Naming rights is one way to do that."

Martin reports for the Argus Leader in Sioux Falls, S.D.

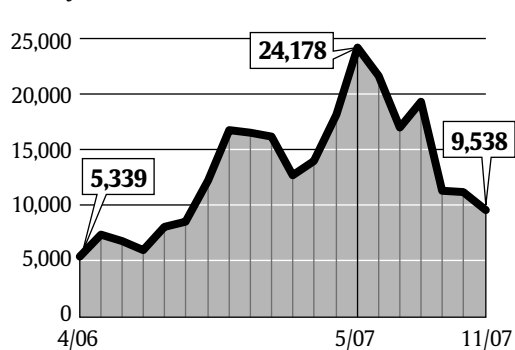
YOU WAITED TO THE LAST MINUTE? GOOD FOR YOU. HURRY IN FOR LAST MINUTE DEALS AT RADIOSHACK.



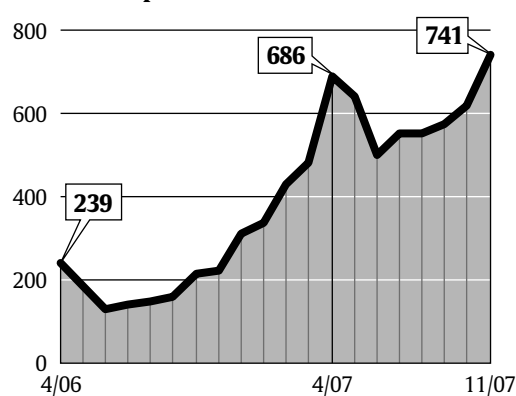
Tips from Iraqi locals cut IED deaths

U.S. troops and their allies rely on information from Iraqis to find IEDs and the caches of explosives used to make the bombs. Because of an increase in tips, more explosives are being found, and deaths from IEDs are down.

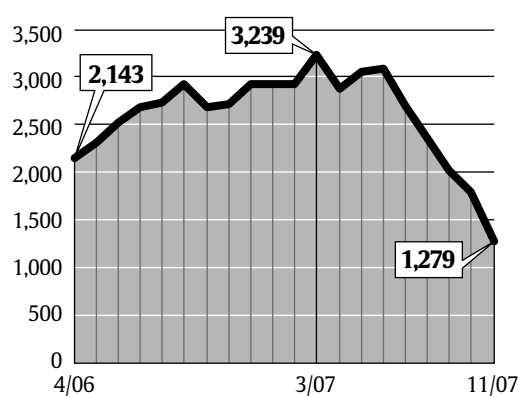
Number of tips about insurgents and weapons
Tips rose until the spring, then began to drop as insurgent activity declined.



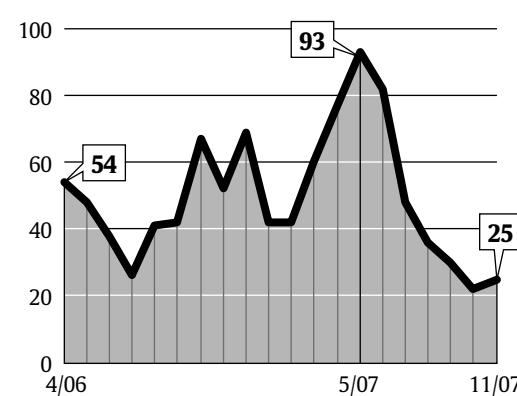
Caches of explosives found



IEDs found



Coalition deaths from IEDs



Source: U.S. Department of Defense

By Marcy E. Mullins, USA TODAY

As toll from IEDs rose, White House resisted push to change strategy

Continued from 1A

dress two dozen generals offered a "strategic alternative" for beating the insurgency and IEDs.

That plan and others mirroring the counterinsurgency blueprint that the Pentagon now hails as a success were pitched repeatedly in memos and presentations during the following two years, at meetings that included then-Defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Vice President Cheney's chief of staff, Lewis "Scooter" Libby.

The core of the strategy: Clear insurgents from key areas and provide security to win over Iraqis, who would respond by helping U.S.

Cover story

forces break IED networks and defeat the insurgency.

Bush administration officials, however, remained wedded to the idea that training the Iraqi army and leaving the country would suffice. Officials, including Cheney, insisted the insurgency was dying. Those pronouncements delayed the Pentagon from embracing new plans to stop IEDs and investing in better armored vehicles that allow troops to patrol more freely, documents and interviews show.

Even after the Pentagon began committing substantial resources to combat IEDs, USA TODAY found, its spending focused mostly on high-tech devices with limited utility. Some silver-bullet solutions, such as microwave beams designed to destroy IEDs before they blew up, never worked.

By the time the Pentagon moved to a counterinsurgency strategy at the end of last year, the bombs had been the top killer of U.S. troops for three years, claiming more than 1,160 lives. To date, they are responsible for more than 60% of combat deaths.

"What's astounding is how long we spent not applying traditional counterinsurgency principles to fighting what obviously was an insurgency," says Fred Kagan, a military analyst at the American Enterprise Institute and former West Point instructor. "It's not that we've solved the IED problem, per se. It's that we've begun to have success in defeating the insurgents."

Andrew Krepinevich, the consultant who addressed the generals in 2004 and met with Libby in 2005, says the price of that failure was profound.

"One is the human cost, both in terms of the suffering of Iraqis and the Americans killed and wounded," he says. "Second is the material cost. And third is the failure to accomplish the mission."

Krepinevich, who has advised several secretaries of Defense and the former U.S. ambassador to Iraq, says "the American military is on the clock in this war, and the American people, in a sense, gave the administration several years to make progress. Those years, to a significant extent, were wasted."

White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe says the administration weighed all strategy options and made "appropriate decisions."

"Throughout the war, many people have come forward with various suggestions and ideas, from 'more troops' to 'get out now,'" he says. "The president has listened to the commanders on the ground and the Defense Department."

Rumsfeld declined to comment.

'This mind-set of the short war'

Rumsfeld and other civilian and uniformed war planners "had this mind-set of the short war, a liberation vs. an occupation," says retired Marine general Anthony Zinni, former chief of U.S. Central Command.

He says many combat commanders were frustrated by the Pentagon's failure to recognize that a force larger than the 120,000 U.S. ground troops in the initial invasion was needed to secure the country — and its ammunition dumps, which held the explosives that insurgents continue to use to build IEDs.

Officials also failed to send the right kind of vehicles.

In July, USA TODAY reported that until 2006, the Pentagon balked at pleas from battlefield commanders to send safer armor to protect U.S.



By Jack Gruber, USA TODAY

Watchful eyes: Sgt. Joseph Franklin and Pfc. Jonathan Burton search for explosives in the Toma neighborhood in southern Baghdad.

Troop patrols — not technology — help revive war-torn neighborhoods

By Tom Vanden Brook and Blake Morrison
USA TODAY

BAGHDAD — Compared to the first four years of the war, conditions in Iraq have improved markedly since Gen. David Petraeus, architect of the counterinsurgency strategy, took charge in February.

"What we've done . . . is place a premium on being on the offensive," says Col. Jim Hickey, director of the Counter IED Operational Integration Center in Iraq. "What we see is less-effective IEDs. Some of (the) emplacements are forced off their game, so they very hastily throw IEDs on the road. Our soldiers tend to see them." And, Hickey adds, they're getting more information about insurgents

from civilians. "You can gauge your success by how open the civilians become with you."

"Who knows" whether the insurgents are merely lying low, says retired major general Robert Scales, who traveled to Iraq last month. "When you lie low for any reason, you open up the opportunities for the coalition to act."

Today, that means restoring some semblance of security for everyday Iraqis — a prospect that's welcomed in Toma, a southern Baghdad neighborhood.

On a morning two weeks ago, commerce crackled there. A slaughtered sheep hung in the window of a butcher shop. A few doors down, flatbreads steamed in baskets at a bakery. A clinic at 5th and 38th streets bustled with

patients; IED blasts in the spring had kept it shuttered for months.

Sgt. Joseph Franklin, 25, walked streets that once were killing zones for U.S. troops. On June 28, he saw five friends killed when an IED obliterated their Humvee; he helped carry out 13 wounded.

"Here I am getting grenades thrown at me while I'm carrying my guys with all their gear," says Franklin of Victorville, Calif. "That was probably the longest day of my life. Was I scared to go out the next time? You bet I was."

Yet soldiers from the Baker Company of the 2nd Battalion, 12th Regiment went out — again and again — to offer 24-hour coverage of their neighborhood.

Their presence showed residents that Americans were com-

mitted to their safety and willing to take chances on their behalf, Franklin says. Soldiers also developed proficiency at finding roadside bombs before they detonated. Franklin found five.

The approach owes little to gadgetry and much to the counterinsurgency strategy. "Technology's great but most of it is just getting out of your Humvee and doing your . . . job," says Pfc. Jonathan Burton, 23, of Louisville.

Now, Franklin says, residents call in tips on where to find roadside bombs. "There's no way for IEDs to get back in the (area) because the people" are anti-insurgent, he says. "It's awesome."

Morrison reported from McLean, Va.



"You have to live with the population to help secure it."

— Gen. David Petraeus, commander of U.S. forces in Iraq

troops from IEDs. The armored vehicles, called Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, or MRAPs, weren't fully embraced by the Pentagon until mid-2007, when Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Rumsfeld's successor, made them his top procurement priority.

Today, 11,941 MRAPs have been ordered, and about 1,200 of those are being used by troops in Iraq. "These are a vast improvement in terms of protection," Petraeus says.

Petraeus cites other crucial steps — among them the 30,000-troop "surge" — that have led to a decline in violence and a better chance to secure the country. Most are key components of the strategy favored by Krepinevich and others during the first months of the war.

Petraeus won't discuss why the Bush administration didn't pursue a counterinsurgency strategy earlier. Rather, he focuses on what's happening now — and its apparent successes. "It's not just the additional forces. It's also how they are used," Petraeus says. "The deployment of our forces and Iraqi forces into the neighborhoods, to the areas where the bad guys are located, is key. You have to live with the population to help secure it."

He says that "in the past couple of months, we have been finding greater than 50% of the IEDs (before they go off), which is a first."

Zinni credits Petraeus with shifting U.S. fortunes. "It's about Americans being out there and being visible, providing security, building



By Imad al-Khozai, Reuters

Enemy weapons cache: Iraqi soldiers display assorted arms, munitions and roadside bombs Dec. 3 at an army camp in Diwaniyah. The weapons were confiscated during a three-week operation in the Shiite stronghold.

confidence among the people," he says. "It's paying off."

No 'coherent strategy'

For years, Rumsfeld and other Pentagon officials resisted just such an approach. Although generals such as Petraeus put their theories into action on a small scale in Iraq as early as 2003, the military still lacked a detailed, nationwide plan for battling the insurgency.

In September 2004, 18 months into the war, Krepinevich flew to Nashville at the invitation of top generals. Krepinevich, then 54, wore a jacket and tie; except for the spouses many generals brought to the session, he was one of few in the hotel conference room not in uniform. It added to his trepidation.

Krepinevich had the credentials: A graduate of West Point, he had been an officer for 20 years and now ran the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, an independent Washington think tank. What he didn't have was the experience: He hadn't been to Iraq. Moreover, he was about to tell the

generals that the Pentagon's approach to the war made no sense.

He would be embarrassed if they told him he didn't understand the situation in Iraq, he recalls thinking. But if they agreed with his assessment, it meant trouble for U.S. efforts to secure the country.

"It is difficult to discern a coherent U.S. strategy for defeating the insurgency," he told them. The solution: "Win the hearts and minds, and . . . deny insurgents easy access to the population, thereby enhancing intelligence on the enemy."

Krepinevich's call for a new direction drew no criticism. "It told me they didn't have an approach" for winning the war, he says.

Retired Army major general Paul Eaton, who was at the meeting and had been directing the training of Iraqi forces, said Krepinevich "was saying what had become increasingly obvious to many of us."

"What we had was a secretary of Defense who denied (the insurgency existed) . . . and the senior leadership of the Army would not challenge him," Eaton says. "But Krepinevich could. A lot of us were thinking, 'He gets it; maybe he can reach some of the leadership.'"

Krepinevich would become one of several analysts and retired military officers who helped develop the counterinsurgency strategy. But their ideas wouldn't gain footing with decision-makers for years.

Meantime, the Pentagon had spent billions of dollars on technology to detect or defeat IEDs.

The high-tech solutions

Most of the money went toward "jammers" — devices to block the electronic signals used to detonate IEDs by remote control. Jammers remain one of the more successful electronic IED countermeasures. As insurgents shifted to new types of detonators, new jammers were introduced. This year, the Pentagon has spent \$2 billion on them.

Other high-tech initiatives in the IED fight have failed entirely:

► Forerunner, a remote-controlled truck, was to be driven ahead of convoys to detect IEDs. It was scrapped after almost \$7 million in spending. It didn't work.

► BlowTorch was designed to use microwaves to fry the circuitry in IEDs from afar. It was abandoned after more than \$8 million was invested. It didn't work either.

Defense officials acknowledged that technology alone would not defeat IEDs, but spending soared. In 2006, the Pentagon's counter-IED office, the Joint IED Defeat Organization, spent 67% of its \$3.5 billion budget on jammers and other technology to "defeat the device."

But IED deaths kept rising. Retired Army general Montgomery Meigs, who took over the IED

office at the end of 2005 and led it until this month, began pushing for a new focus in 2006. "We made attacking the network No. 1" on the priority list, he says.

Krepinevich had continued to push the same message. In an Aug. 23, 2005, memo to Gen. Peter Schoomaker, the Army's chief of staff, Krepinevich warned that technology wasn't the answer.

Instead, as Krepinevich says today, U.S. forces needed to provide "enduring" security that would make it "risky for people to go out and plant" IEDs. "You needed to think not just about technology; you needed to think about how you defeated the overall problem. The key . . . was intelligence."

Krepinevich says he told that to Libby, Cheney's chief of staff, during a July 2005 meeting in Libby's office. In May, just two months earlier, Cheney had declared that the Iraqi insurgency was in "its last throes." Now, Krepinevich was suggesting the administration refocus its approach around that insurgency. Libby "took it all in and asked a few questions," Krepinevich recalls, but that was it.

Krepinevich says the only meaningful support he got came from Zalmay Khalilzad, then the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, who was briefed by Krepinevich just before heading to Baghdad in June 2005. Despite Khalilzad's apparent interest, there was no overall change in the administration's war plan.

Khalilzad, now U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, declined through a spokesman to comment.

Failures prompt change

Turning over security to newly trained Iraqi forces remained the hallmark of U.S. strategy in Iraq until early 2007. Army Gen. George Casey, who led coalition forces in Iraq until February, often said the goal was to have U.S. forces stand down as Iraqi forces stood up.

In June 2006, Kagan and three other military experts visited Camp David for a meeting with the president's war Cabinet. Each took a turn addressing the officials, who included Rumsfeld, Rice, national security adviser Stephen Hadley, and Gen. Peter Pace, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Kagan's message — "We've got to do some counterinsurgency on these guys" — didn't take.

Within weeks, the Pentagon launched "Operation Together Forward." Coalition forces would "clear" an insurgent stronghold and Iraqi forces would "hold" it. When Iraqi forces failed to hold, violence soared. After two months, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell acknowledged that Together Forward had "not met our overall expectations."

In November 2006 — a day after Democrats won control of Congress — Bush accepted the resignation of Rumsfeld, who had backed the stand-up, stand-down strategy. Bush chose former CIA director Gates to replace him. By December, the shift to a counterinsurgency strategy had begun.

Iraq was boiling over: 69 U.S. troops would be killed that December by IEDs, the most IED deaths in any month since the war began. On Dec. 6, the Iraq Study Group, a panel of military and political thinkers, issued a report calling the Iraq situation "grave and deteriorating" and urging a phased U.S. withdrawal.

The next Monday, Dec. 11, Bush met with retired generals and top military analysts. One, retired Army general Jack Keane, pushed hard for a "surge" of U.S. troops coupled with a secure-and-hold strategy for Baghdad and other key areas.

Keane and other experts had developed the idea with Kagan, who was invited to the White House later that week to meet with Hadley. It was one of several strategy options, and the only one calling for a big increase in U.S. troops. Keane and Kagan proved persuasive.

Even so, it took what Kagan calls "a perfect storm" to put it in place. The deteriorating situation in Iraq, the grim report from the study group and growing calls for U.S. withdrawal made the administration more flexible, he says.

On Jan. 5, Bush chose Petraeus, who had finished writing the military's counterinsurgency doctrine, to take charge in Iraq. Five days later, Bush outlined a new strategy: "to help Iraqis clear and secure neighborhoods . . . protect the local population, and . . . ensure that the Iraqi forces . . . are capable of providing" security.

It was precisely what his administration had rejected — and counterinsurgency advocates had championed — for years.

TROOPS AT RISK
IEDs in IRAQ

Monday
Commanders still want MRAPs to protect troops and to limit IED attacks

Today
The change in strategy that has given U.S. troops in Iraq the upper hand

For more on this series

To see earlier installments in this series, go to the website troopsatrisk.usatoday.com