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OPENING. Representatives from the Gwinnett Place CID recently participated in a ribbon cutting to mark the launch of a new relationship benefiting Gwinnett Place Mall. The International Shopping Center Group (ISCG) and Simon Property Group have opened a unique showroom introducing the benefits of Gwinnett Place Mall to the Korean community. Those staffing the new offices will help assist in transforming Gwinnett Place Mall into an international shopping and community center, serving and meeting the demands of the area's changing demographics. ISCG and Simon Property will create a multi-dimensional shopping experience with educational, medical, entertainment and professional venues to serve the growing multicultural communities in Gwinnett County.

TODAY'S FOCUS

Doug Heckman says Americans winning the battle in Iraq

By COL. DOUG HECKMAN
Special to GwinnettForum

(Editor's Note: Colonel Doug Heckman is currently stationed in Baghdad, after being called back to duty. He has previously served tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. He is a resident of Norcross with his wife and three children. In 2008 he ran for the U.S. Congress from the Seventh District of Georgia. The opinion expressed is his and not that of the U.S. Army. His request is that each of you do more to support the men and women in uniform of the United States.)

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Sept. 25, 2009 — Pass on the word: the United States of America is winning the war in Iraq. You might not hear it from many politicians in Washington, but it's the truth.



Heckman

Since the end of my first tour of duty in early 2007, the situation in Iraq has improved dramatically. Back then, Iraq was gripped in a bloody civil war. As the 2007 "surge" boosted our combat numbers and capabilities, we established numerous small military outposts in different neighborhoods of Iraqi cities and towns. All over the country, security began to improve.

Yet when I completed my first tour in March 2007, the situation in Iraq was still very bleak. Each day saw numerous American deaths, and the Iraqi people still depended almost entirely on our military for protection. Today, after several months into my second tour in Iraq, it is clear to me that the situation has changed for the better.

First, the Iraqi people are far more secure than they were two years ago: the rate of civilian deaths has dropped over 90 percent since the worst days of 2006-07. Improving conditions have helped increase the average Iraqi life expectancy to almost 70 years. Moreover, the Iraqi government has begun to provide security, build infrastructure, and foster a just society with an ever-diminishing reliance on American resources.

Second, more and more Iraqis are taking part in the governance of their country. In any counterinsurgency strategy, the measure of success is when the people choose to rise up and take responsibility for making their country better. Iraqi police and military units are taking ownership over local and national security. This fact is made clear by a substantial increase in the number of criminals reported to police. Domestic production of electricity has risen 20 percent in the past year, and domestic oil production now averages in excess of two million barrels a day. More than 200 different political parties have registered for the January 2010 Parliamentary elections, which is evidence of widespread interest in promoting many different political views. As Iraq's economy, security, and political processes improve, Iraqis' lives will continue to improve.

TODAY'S FOCUS

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TODAY'S QUOTE

Why the youth always seem so carefree!

"The deepest definition of youth is life as yet untouched by tragedy."

— British mathematician and philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, (1861-47) via Roy McCreary, Decatur.

MODERN HISTORY OF GWINNETT



>> SPECIAL NOTICE TO GWINNETT

Those interested in the history of Gwinnett need to know that the recently published book *Gwinnett: A Little Above Atlanta*, has sold fast, with the first editions about sold out. There are less than 50 books remaining unsold, if you want the book for yourself, or to buy for a present for someone this year, you need to take action. Go to www.elliottbrack.com to order, or buy the book at a local bookstore shown on the site.

(In full disclosure, the book is authored by the publisher of this Forum, and this notice is intended not so much to hawk, but to inform, those who have delayed purchase. -eeb)