

Al Qaeda No. 2: Bush must admit defeat in Iraq

January 6, 2006

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An Arabic language news network has aired a video of al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden's top lieutenant, in which he called on U.S. President George W. Bush to admit defeat in Iraq. Al-Jazeera said the video, which is about a minute long, was made in December.

According to CNN's translation of the video, Ayman al-Zawahiri offers his condolences to Pakistan for the October 8 earthquake before congratulating fellow Muslims for what he says is a victory in Iraq.

He refers to a November 30 speech in which Bush reiterated the U.S. position that its military would leave Iraq once Iraqi forces were fully trained, without laying out a timetable. The video, which had been edited, shows the gray-bearded al-Zawahiri seated, wearing glasses, a white headdress, a white sash, a gray shirt and a clip-on microphone.

As he speaks, he is constantly pointing at the camera with his right hand, but his voice remains calm. Behind him is a gun propped up on a brown wall.

The video has English subtitles and shows the logo of the production company, As-Sahab, which has produced previous al Qaeda videos as well as videos from the 9/11 bombers.

Here is the full translation of the video as it aired on Al-Jazeera:

"Even though I send my condolences to my Islamic nation for the tragedy of the earthquake in Pakistan, today I congratulate everyone for the victory in Iraq. You remember, my dear Muslim brethren, what I told you more than a year ago, that the U.S. troops will pull out of Iraq. It was only a matter of time.

"Here they are now and in the blessing of God begging to pull out, seeking negotiations with the mujahedeen. And here is Bush who was forced to announce at the end of last November that he will be pulling his troops out of Iraq.

"He uses the pretext that the Iraqi forces reached a high level of preparedness. But he doesn't have a timetable for the pullout.

"If all of his troops -- air force, army -- are begging for a way to get out of Iraq, will the liars, traitors and infidels succeed in what the world superpower failed to achieve in Iraq?

"You have set the timetable for the withdrawal a long time ago and Bush, you have to admit that you were defeated in Iraq, you are being defeated in Afghanistan, and you will be defeated in Palestine, God willing."

Al-Zawahiri, an Egyptian doctor with a \$25 million reward on his head, released five audio and video statements last year, including several claiming responsibility for the July attacks on London's transit system.

In mid-October, U.S. officials released a letter they said was written by al-Zawahiri to the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, in July about seeking support for Iraqi insurgents ahead of a U.S. withdrawal.

Days later, al Qaeda in Iraq posted an Internet statement calling the letter "another fabrication ... by the Black House," using its term for the White House.

A U.S. counterterrorism official said that while al-Zawahiri mentions a number of recent events on the new tape, it features "the same well-worn jihadist rhetoric."

U.S. officials also noted that while the world has heard from al-Zawahiri frequently in the past year, bin Laden has been silent since October 2004. They said bin Laden may be so worried about his security that he does not dare take the risk of recording a message and relying on others to get it out securely.