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## **New Strategy Vindicates Ex-Army Chief Shinseki**

**By Thom Shanker**

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 11 — After President Bush told the nation on Wednesday night that he was ordering a rapid increase of American forces in Iraq, Gen. Eric K. Shinseki was not among the retired officers to offer instant analysis on television.

But the president's new strategy, with its explicit acknowledgment that not enough troops had been sent to Iraq to establish control, was a vindication for General Shinseki, who as Army chief of staff publicly told Congress as much just before the war began in 2003.

First vilified, then marginalized by the Bush administration after those comments, General Shinseki retired and faded away, even as lawmakers, pundits and politicians increasingly cited his prescience.

"We never had enough troops to begin with," Senator Lindsey Graham, a South Carolina Republican, said just before the president's televised

address. "A month or two ago we found out the Army is broken, and they agreed that General Shinseki was right."

Gen. John P. Abizaid, the departing commander of American forces in the Middle East, told Congress late last year, "General Shinseki was right that a greater international force contribution, U.S. force contribution and Iraqi force contribution should have been available immediately after major combat operations."

In his prime-time address on Wednesday, even President Bush said the main reason past efforts to stabilize Baghdad had failed was that "there were not enough Iraqi and American troops to secure neighborhoods that had been cleared of terrorists and insurgents."

The acknowledgment was far different from the harsh administration rebuttals after General Shinseki electrified Washington with his blunt warning that victory in Iraq would require more troops than were being deployed for the invasion.

He was the target of immediate rebuke from the Pentagon leadership, in particular from Donald H. Rumsfeld, then secretary of defense, and his deputy, Paul D. Wolfowitz. Mr. Wolfowitz dismissed the testimony as "wildly off the mark."

Some civilians in government and military officers say General Shinseki's treatment intimidated other top officers.

"It sent a very clear signal to the military leadership about how that kind of military judgment was going to be valued," said Kori Schake, the director for defense strategy on the National Security Council staff from 2002 to 2005, now a fellow at the Hoover Institution and a professor at West Point. "So it served to silence critics just at the point in time when, internal to the process, you most wanted critical judgment."

General Shinseki has kept a strict public silence since retiring in June 2003 and would often say to his associates, "I do not want to criticize while my soldiers are still bleeding and dying in Iraq."

He now splits his time between his suburban Washington home and his

native Hawaii, consulting with academic organizations, private companies and military support groups. He declined to comment for this article.



Chiefs of staff about to testify in 2003, from left: Adm. Vernon Clark, Navy; Gen. Michael Hagee, Marines; and Gen. Eric Shinseki, Army.  
Credit...

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“This is a man who is totally loyal to the Army, which was his life,” said David R. Gergen, director of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government. Mr. Gergen works with General Shinseki on the center’s advisory board, and the general regularly meets with students there.

“General Shinseki draws an enormous crowd, especially of former and active-duty military,” said Mr. Gergen, who was an adviser to Presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan and Clinton. “They hold General Shinseki in awe.”

“He has been very discreet in his comments about what happened,” Mr. Gergen added. “Just as he has been in public, he is reluctant in private to say anything that would disparage the commander in chief.”

The general, who throughout his career was known for his selfless, or at least self-effacing, bearing, did not go before Congress on that day in February 2003 planning to stir things up. But he is also not one who backs down easily; he had risen to the top of the Army after surviving grievous injury in Vietnam, and under withering cross-examination by Senator Carl Levin, Democrat of Michigan, he spoke matter-of-factly.

“Something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers are probably, you know, a figure that would be required” to stabilize Iraq after an invasion, he said.

“We’re talking about post-hostilities control over a piece of geography that’s fairly significant, with the kinds of ethnic tensions that could lead to other problems,” he added. “And so it takes a significant ground force presence to maintain a safe and secure environment, to ensure that people are fed, that water is distributed, all the normal responsibilities that go along with administering a situation like this.”

His comments brought to a boil long-simmering tensions with Mr. Rumsfeld, who had been scrubbing the war plans to reduce the number of invading troops. And they were politically explosive, coming less than a month before the start of the war, which proponents were saying confidently would be anything but a quagmire.

Former aides to the general said his estimate summarized back-of-the-envelope calculations but had been based on experiences as a commander in postwar Bosnia, where the United States sent 50,000 troops to quiet five million people, a population one-fifth that of Iraq. American troops in Iraq reached a peak of more than 160,000 in December 2005. There are now about 132,000.

General Shinseki was not fired for his comments, but his influence as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certainly was never the same. He retired as scheduled.

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing on Thursday, Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, was asked specifically why General Shinseki's recommendation of more troops had not been adopted, and he replied: "General Shinseki was not advocating for that number as an answer. He gave that as a guesstimate of what it might take. So I just want to put that in historical context."

Some critics say General Shinseki should have spoken out more after his Senate testimony, and others ask why he did not resign to protest the war plan if he thought it would not assure victory. Even in retirement he declined to join the so-called generals' revolt of retired officers calling for Mr. Rumsfeld to resign last year.

These days, Army officers are pointing to another instance of his impolitic remarks coming true years later.

In his retirement speech, General Shinseki warned against trying to carry out a "12-division strategy" with a "10-division army," counsel that the Pentagon's leaders rejected.

In his speech on Wednesday night, Mr. Bush vowed "to increase the size of the active Army and Marine Corps, so that America has the armed forces we need for the 21st century." That, too, could be heard as an affirmation of the general's long-held view.