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OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

Right the Wrong**By NATHANIEL FICK**

WITH eight months left in office, President Bush has the power to shape his successor's inheritance in Iraq. And the over-arching imperative right now, as articulated by Gen. David Petraeus and others, is to build on the reduction in violence that the surge has achieved by encouraging political reconciliation among the various factions in Iraq.

A major step toward this goal would be the formal integration of members of the Sunni Sons of Iraq movement into the Shiite-dominated Iraqi security forces. Many of these informal militiamen, who deserve much of the credit for improved security in Anbar Province and elsewhere, served in the Iraqi Army, which the United States foolishly disbanded in 2003. In a land with few second chances, we have a rare opportunity to right that wrong.

The benefits of this integration could be substantial: giving another large group of Iraqis a vested interest in stability over instability, challenging the perception of Shiite dominance in the Iraqi government and thereby providing encouragement for Iraq's Sunni neighbors to shoulder their share of the burden in the region.

To prove that the Bush administration — and the United States in general — isn't coasting to the exit, negotiations with Iraq over our eventual withdrawal should be conditional on this integration of forces.

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