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## **Galva major's thoughts on transfer of sovereignty**

*By Maj. Michael W. Kessell*

Maj. Michael W. Kessell, commander of the Galva National Guard unit serving in Iraq, e-mailed these thoughts on Monday's transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis. -- Ed.

Today, what we thought was going to occur on the 30th, suddenly happened. The Transfer of Sovereignty was signed and a new nation was born. Yet while new, Iraq is not new. Remember Iraq is actually a very ancient land. The Garden of Eden was located between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers; Noah built the ark here; Abraham was born in Ur, which we passed on the way up from Kuwait; and finally the ancient city of Babylon is about 40 miles south of Baghdad. Iraq is literally the cradle of civilization.

History will now mark June 28, 2004, as the date of the formal beginning of the new Iraq. It is a rare honor to have been here and to have able to help make this day possible. If you study the Middle East, you will soon find that if democracy and freedom are to succeed at all, it will first be in Iraq. One of the largest countries in the region, it boasts enormous resources. The country, although mostly desert, is surprisingly fertile between the rivers. The agriculture infrastructure of this country, although 60 years behind the United States, has the potential to feed not only this country but also the entire Middle East. The irrigation system is amazing in its simplicity and is capable of delivering millions of gallons of water daily to the parched fields.

Finally it has the second largest oil reserves in the world, second only to Saudi Arabia. (Note: That information is old as it was calculated using 1960's technology. It is believed using 21st Century technology, it might actually have the world's largest oil reserve.)

That is what Iraq has, but what does it's future hold? The road ahead is uncertain, but the potential is great. The people of Iraq, which we deal with, have showed great interest in self-governance. But that alone does not mean the transition to democracy will be easy. Remember that for nearly 30 years, the people of Iraq have only known dictatorship. They have been told what to do, when to do it, how to do it and failure to comply could result in imprisonment or death. This has resulted in a whole generation that is not necessarily self-starters. In our zones, the people are predominantly good people, but they have only known the socialism of Saddam, so we have to provide some education and direction. All of this coupled with the lack of a basic infrastructure, the road ahead is uphill.

Of course, security is also a major sticking point, as there are many companies ready to move into Iraq, once the security situation improves. Of course the Iraqis have no experience in self-policing either. Therefore, our job here is to continue to train the Iraq police and the security forces.

But there are many promising signs. Many of the internal insurgent groups have reportedly told their people to lay down their arms and begin working with the new government. Additionally, they have asked terrorists such as al-Qaida, Zarqawi, and the many foreign fighters to leave. In fact, not two weeks ago, there is one group, Mahdi's Army, which is aligned with al-Sadr, who we were told to shoot on sight if they had weapons. Immediately after the Transfer of Sovereignty, the same people were seen helping the US Army with traffic control.

The one thing that needs to be remembered is that in our microwave society, we want instant gratification. In Iraq we don't measure success in miles, yards, or feet, but rather inches. Progress here is slow and some days we don't even move forward an inch and some days we may even go backwards, but we are making progress all the same.

Finally, remember that our own birth as a nation was not as pleasant an experience as we like to think. There were a lot of birth and growing pains, but I believe all will agree that it was and is worth it. I look at it this way, I don't know any women who like the pain of childbirth, but after it is over they would never turn back and our grateful for their precious child. The same can be said here with the birth of a new nation, it is painful now and will be in the future, but in the end, I think it will all be worth it.

### [Office expansion disallowed](#)

KEWANEE -- The City Council voted unanimously Monday against allowing Ratliff Brothers to expand the office at their facility on Dewey Avenue -- even though at least one council member wanted to allow the expansion.

### [Motor scooters discussed](#)

KEWANEE -- Willy-nilly scooters and earsplitting motorcycles were the topics of City Council discussions Monday.

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### [Police blotter](#)

Accidents

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