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## Terrorists Won't Return to Anbar Province, General Says

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WASHINGTON, Feb. 14, 2008 – Al Qaeda has worn out its welcome with Sunni residents of western Iraq's Anbar province and, consequently, the terror group's influence there is over for good, the Marine Corps' most senior officer said here today.

The Sunnis became disgusted with al Qaeda's brutal methods and backward ideology, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James T. Conway said at a breakfast event at the National Press Club hosted by Government Executive Magazine

Determined to rid themselves of al Qaeda, Sunni leaders in Anbar province formed concerned local citizens' groups that attacked terrorists at every turn, Conway said.

During his most recent visit to Iraq in November, Conway recalled, Sunni leaders told him that Anbar province had reached a "post-hostilities" phase.

"They are convinced that the al Qaeda, in particular, and the Sunni insurgents are not coming back," Conway said. "They have entered a blood feud with the al Qaeda (terrorists)."

Anbar province's Sunnis found nothing to admire about al Qaeda's "15th-century law," Conway said, which involved suppression of individual rights, beatings and beheadings. There also were forced marriages between al Qaeda foreign-born fighters and local Sunni women, he said.

The Sunnis "recoiled from all of that" and began to ally themselves with coalition and Iraqi government forces, Conway explained.

Anbar's Sunnis also know that al Qaeda would extract bloody revenge against those who'd collaborated with U.S. and Iraqi government forces, Conway added.

"They can't let (al Qaeda) back in," the general said.

Meanwhile, U.S. Marines in Iraq have been busy patrolling and training members of the Iraqi army.

"We are pretty proud of those (Iraqi soldiers) we train out there," Conway said.

He added that when properly equipped and led by good Iraqi officers and noncommissioned officers, the Iraqi troops "do pretty well in the field."