

BG Kevin Bergner
MNF-I Press Brief – Operational Update
July 18, 2007

As Salaam Alekum
Good afternoon.

The surge of operations in Iraq continues to make progress. These operations are increasing pressure on extremists by disrupting their networks, denying safe havens and reducing operating bases. The effects of these operations are also enabling Iraqis to turn away from the terrorists and work more closely with their government, their security forces and the coalition. There has, however, been tough fighting and we have much work to do. And our commanders remind us that this effort is still likely to get even harder before it gets easier.

As we saw this week and last week with barbaric attacks in Amerli and Kirkuk, the enemy is likely to try to re-capture the focus by conducting more spectacular attacks that kill innocent civilians. This is going to further test the courage and the commitment of the Iraqi people to resist sectarian strife and remain unified against the terrorists.

The swift, courageous and effective response of Iraqi security forces is helping in that regard. Our commanders report that the performance of Iraqi forces, particularly following the tragedies in Amerli and Kirkuk, has been very impressive. They have restored order and maintained calm and, in the case of Kirkuk, they pre-empted other bombings and detained some of those believed to have been involved in the attacks.

In addition to Al Qaeda-Iraq, the so-called Special Groups continue to be a focus of operations. As we have explained previously, the Special Groups are funded, trained, armed, and often directed by operatives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Qods Force. Special Group

leaders and networks are being disrupted by operations that increasingly involve Iraqi forces:

- On 1 July, **Iraqi police** detained a Special Group Brigade Commander 50 miles South of Baghdad. He had directed attacks against Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army and Coalition Forces using explosively formed penetrator improvised explosive devices provided by Iran.
- On 5 July, Coalition Forces killed one and captured six Special Group terrorists in East Baghdad. These individuals had provided logistical support for Special Group operations and were a link with the Iranian Qods Force.
- On 7 July, **Iraqi forces** detained seven Special Group members in Baghdad who were involved in death squad activities, kidnappings and assassinations.
- On 11 July, **Iraqi Army** elements, with support from Coalition Forces, killed a Special Group cell leader, named Said Jaffer, in Eastern Baghdad. Said Jaffer controlled a cell of a 120 terrorists and was involved in kidnapping, extortion, sectarian murders and explosively formed penetrators.
- On 14 July, **Iraqi Security Forces** and Coalition Forces killed two Special Group terrorists who were emplacing an improvised explosive device and preparing an ambush site in Al Kut.
- And on 15 July, **Iraqi Army** and Coalition Forces detained three Special Group terrorists in North Baghdad. One was a Battalion Commander who organized kidnappings and death squads that conducted sectarian murders.

As Special Groups Indirect Fire Cells try to increase their attacks, these terrorists are further angering and alienating the Iraqi people who are often the targets of this indiscriminate fire and are in the areas from which these cells fire. The Multinational Force deplores the loss of innocent Iraqi life caused by these Iranian sponsored Special Groups. In fact, the attacks by these groups reflect the same disregard for human life that is turning the Iraqi people against al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Last week we discussed the effects of recent operations against the leadership network of al-Qaeda in Iraq. We identified 26 senior al-Qaeda leaders who had either been killed or captured.

Iraqi and coalition force operations continue to disrupt the AQI leadership and undermine their abilities to conduct terrorist operations. Operations in the last few days included the following:

- On 14 July, Coalition Forces captured the Security Emir of Mosul as well as a car bomb cell leader southeast of Baghdad.



- That same day, Coalition Forces found a large weapons stockpile northwest of Baghdad. As shown on the screen, the stockpile included 10 shape charges, 2 trucks prepped to become truck bombs, and 3,000 pounds of home made explosive ingredients, all trademarks of al-Qaeda operations. Coalition Forces destroyed this bomb making factory that would have no doubt led to the deaths of countless more innocent Iraqi civilians.
- And finally, on 15 July, Coalition Forces killed Abu Jurah who was in charge of an AQI cell that conducted car and truck bomb operations from the Arab Jabour area, southeast of Baghdad.

Earlier this month there was also a significant operation in the fight against the al-Qaeda leadership in Iraq.



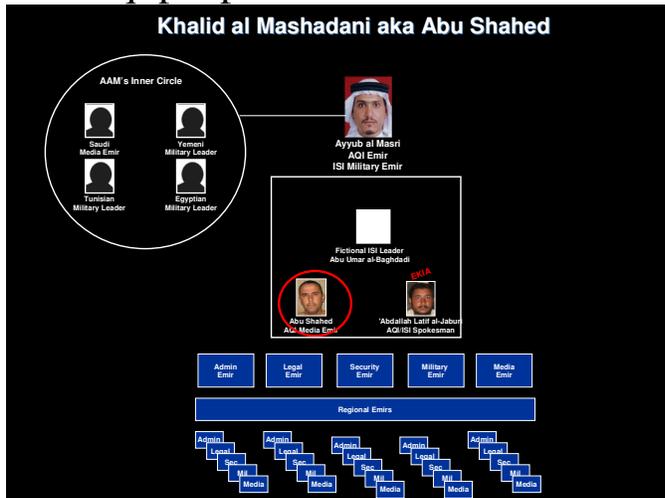
On 4 July, Coalition Forces captured a terrorist named Khalid Abdul Fatah Da'ud Mahmud Al Mashadani, also known as Abu Shahed.

Mashadani is believed to be the most senior Iraqi in the al-Qaeda in Iraq network. He is a close associate of Abu Ayub al-Masri, the Egyptian-born head of AQI. He is currently in coalition custody and providing significant insights into the nature and circumstance of al-Qaeda in Iraq.



Mashadani was a leader in the Ansar Al Sunna terrorist group before joining AQI two and half years ago. He served as the al-Qaeda Media Emir for Baghdad and then was appointed the Media Emir for all of Iraq, serving as an intermediary between AQI leader al-Masri, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. In fact, communication between senior al-Qaeda leadership and al-Masri went through Mashadani.

Along with al-Masri, Mashadani co-founded a virtual organization in cyberspace called the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006 as a new Iraqi pseudonym for AQI. The Islamic State of Iraq is the latest effort by al-Qaeda to market itself and its goal of imposing a Taliban-like state on the Iraqi people.

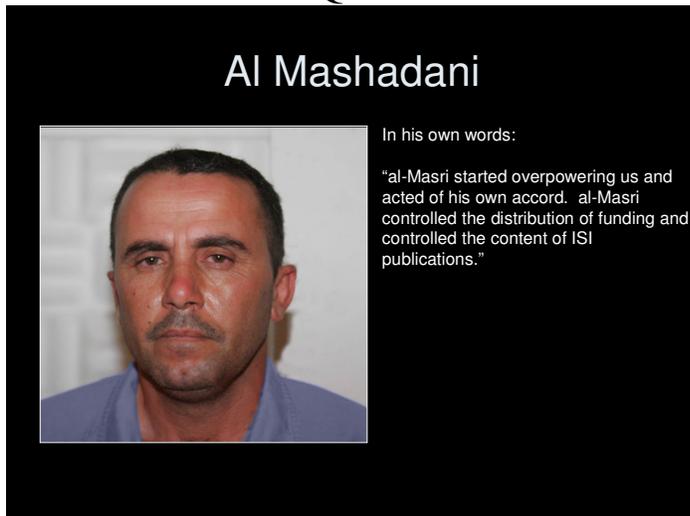


This is what we have learned or confirmed from Mashadani's capture:

- The Islamic State of Iraq is a “front” organization that masks the foreign influence and leadership within AQI in an attempt to put an Iraqi face on the leadership of AQI.
- To further this myth, al-Masri created a fictional political head of ISI known as Umar al-Baghdadi.
- Al-Baghdadi, who has never been seen, is actually an actor named Abu Abdullah al-Naima.
- Al-Masri maintains exclusive control over al-Naima as he acts the part of the fictitious al-Baghdadi character.
- To make al-Baghdadi appear credible, al-Masri swore allegiance to Baghdadi and pledged to obey him, which was essentially swearing allegiance to himself, since he knew that Baghdadi was fictitious and totally his own creation.
- Al-Zawahiri has repeatedly referred to al-Baghdadi in video and internet statements, further deceiving Iraqi followers and perpetuating the myth of al-Baghdadi.
- Mashadani confirms that Al-Masri and the foreign leaders with whom he surrounds himself, not Iraqis, make the operational

decisions for AQI. To be clear, Al-Qaeda-Iraq is run by foreigners, not Iraqis.

- According to Mashadani, in fact, Al-Masri increasingly relies only on foreigners, who make up the majority of the leadership of AQI. He does not seek or trust the advice of Iraqis in the organization. This highlights the significance of the operation our forces conducted a few weeks back to kill the Khalil, Khalid, and Khattab al-Turki, three foreign Al Qaeda leaders sent into Iraq to help al-Masri shore up the organization in northern Iraq.
- And finally, according to Mashadani, AQI leader al-Masri has increasingly become more isolated and paranoid, especially of the Iraqis within AQI, as our operations have killed or captured additional AQI leaders.



Mashadani in his own words says,

- “The idea of al-Baghdadi is very weak now because other insurgent groups have realized that the concept of al-Baghdadi is controlled by the al-Qaeda foreign fighters in Iraq.”
- “Al-Masri started over powering us and acted on his own accord, by controlling the distribution of funding. Al-Masri also controlled the content of al-Baghdadi’s publications.” – which we all now understand are based on a fictitious character.

The capture of Mashadani and his statements give us a more complete picture of AQI. Although the rank and file are largely Iraqi, the senior

leadership of AQI, as we have previously stated, is mostly foreign. The information from Mashadani further suggests the leadership has attempted to mask this foreign domination through deception. As Mashadani has explained, he and Al-Masri created the Islamic State of Iraq concept and invented the fictional leader named al-Baghdadi to create a perception of Iraqi leadership in AQI. The rank and file Iraqis in AQI believed they are following the Iraqi al-Baghdadi but all the while they have actually been following the orders of the Egyptian Abu ‘Ayyub al- Masri. Mashadani has said in his own words that the Islamic State of Iraq should be free of foreign influence, but that is not the case.

The disclosures of Mashadani show how AQI leaders misrepresent themselves and purposely deceive the Iraqi people and their own members. ISI leaders cloak themselves in Iraqi nationalism, but in fact their purpose is to subjugate the Iraqi people under a foreign-led terrorist organization that wants to impose a Taliban-like ideology on Iraqis.

Mashadani’s statements opposing the foreign domination of AQI and ISI reveal a level of disunity, conspiracies, and discord affecting al-Qaeda-Iraq... Problems originally significant enough to prompt the creation of a fictitious Iraqi leader and now significant enough to result in exposing the fiction of Umar al-Baghdadi.

The surge of operations combined with the courage of the Iraqi people to stand against AQI is having a clear effect. Clearly, there is more work to be done against the extremist networks. As we have seen this week in Kirkuk, AQI retains the ability to conduct barbaric, indiscriminate attacks against innocent civilians. We expect AQI to strike back following today’s revelation with further barbaric attacks on civilians to demonstrate their continuing ability. But the capture of Mashadani and the information he has provided are further indicators of the effects that Iraqi and coalition operations are achieving against al-Qaeda-Iraq.

This completes today’s update and now I’d be happy to take your questions.