

PRESS CONFERENCE:

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REPORTERS:

ALEXANDRA ZAVIS FROM L.A. TIMES

DEBORAH HYNES FROM THE TIMES OF LONDON

ANDREW KRAMER FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES

***REPORTERS 1-3**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

***REP1-3 = REPORTERS 1-3**

1 **BEGINNING OF RECORDING**

2 **RDML:** Good afternoon. Asalamalakum. I'm very pleased to be joined today by DR: Tahseen
3 Sheikhly, the government of Iraq civilian spokesman for Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon.
4 First, I'd like to give you an update on several different items. Iraqi and coalition
5 forces continue to maintain the initiative, disrupting and pressuring al-Qaida and
6 criminal elements. On September 21st an al-Qaida leader, Rafid Latif Jasim
7 Muhammed Sabah, also known as Abu Taghrid or Abu Azar, was killed in Baghdad.
8 This is some of what we know about Abu Taghrid. He planned and conducted
9 numerous car and truck bomb attacks throughout Baghdad. He facilitated bomb
10 making operations and the movement of foreign terrorists. He was involved in
11 kidnappings. He moved to Tikrit in the summer of 2006. In response to Iraqi and
12 coalition forces' disruption of al-Qaida of Iraq's Baghdad car bombing networks, he
13 moved back to Baghdad in mid-2007 to restructure and reorganize al-Qaida's car bomb
14 network in eastern Baghdad. On Thursday coalition forces arrested an Iranian Islamic
15 Revolutionary Guard Core Quds Force officer in Sulaymaniyah. Contrary to recent
16 diplomatic initiatives, this individual had been involved in transporting improvised
17 explosive devices and explosively formed penetrators into Iraq. When captured, the
18 Quds Force officer was posing as a businessman. In reality, he's a member of the
19 Ramazdan core, the Quads Force department responsible for all operations in Iraq. In
20 recent months, we have seen Iran smuggle advanced weaponry into Iraq, including
21 RPG 29s, explosively formed penetrators, 240 mm rockets, and the Misagh-1 surface-
22 to-air, man-transportable surface-to-air missile. We would like to be able to confirm
Iran's excellence in fulfilling their public commitments to improve security and
stability in Iraq. However, in the absence of that excellence, we are fulfilling our
professional responsibility to detain those individuals who are smuggling these illegal
and lethal weapons into Iraq. In the past week, Iraqi security and coalition forces
aggressively targeted and pursued al-Qaida elements in Diyala province and in the
southern Baghdad belts, resulting in 62 terrorists killed and captured and 17 weapons
caches found and destroyed. Iraqi security forces, working with U.S. special forces
and advisors in western Ninawa province discovered and destroyed a cache containing

1 seven-and-a-half (7 ½) tons of ammonium nitrate and ammonium phosphate twenty
2 kilometers from where the Aziziyah attacks occurred last month. These bomb making
3 materials are used to make car bombs similar to the ones that targeted the Azidi
4 population in Sinjar. We continue to see increasingly effective operations by Iraqi
5 security forces who are more and more frequently the first line of defense. In and
6 around Mosul during separate engagements this week, Iraqi army soldiers from the 2nd
7 and 3rd Iraqi army divisions, an Iraqi policeman discovered and disabled a car bomb,
8 repelled a complex attack that included RPGs and suicide car bombs, and detained two
9 dozen extremists. Through their sacrifice and dedication, the Iraqi security forces are
10 proving that they're professionals. And every day Iraqis themselves are doing their
11 part in the fight against the extremists. A local citizen in Amiriyah called in a tip to
12 local volunteers about a large munitions cache including some sixty (60) mortar
13 rounds. The volunteer seized the cache and then turned it over to coalition forces who
14 in turn removed and destroyed the weapons. In another incident an Iraqi citizen
15 reported that his neighbor was building a car bomb next door. Coalition Forces acted
16 on the tip, detained the individual along with the car bomb. On Thursday seven
17 hundred and forty-four (744) new police officers recruited from Abu Ghraib graduated
18 from the Baghdad Police College. These young police officers volunteered to protect
19 their community and join the Iraqi security force and will not return to patrol their own
20 home neighborhoods. Another class of eight hundred (800) will graduate this Tuesday.
21 Over the next six months, some twelve thousand (12,000) new Iraqi security force
22 members will be trained, a clear indication of local Iraqis taking ownership of their
own security. While Iraq remains a violent place beset by many problems and
challenges, we continue to keep pressure on the extremist networks and to build on the
tactical momentum that our soldiers, Iraqi people, and their security forces have fought
so hard to achieve. In a recent press release, coalition forces announced that a national
police officer was linked to criminal activity and characterized his links to militia
organizations. The suspect allegedly had a past association with Badir, although it is
not clear he maintains the relationship now, nor is there direct evidence that Badir
leaders were involved in the crimes committed by this suspect. I want to clarify that
there was no intention to implicate that Badir leaders were involved in this situation.

1 On a final note, we continue to support the government in Iraq in welcoming the
2 commitment by Muqtada al-Sadr to stop the attacks and reduce violence. And we will
3 continue to show restraint towards those who honor Sadr's pledge. Restraint will not
4 be shown towards criminals who continue to murder, kidnap and target the Iraqi
5 people, coalition and Iraqi security forces. This concludes my opening remarks, and
6 I'd like to turn it over to DR. Sheikhy.

7 **DR:** Thank you. Speaking in Arabic.

8 **INT:** Thank you very much Admiral Fox to give me this chance to participate in this press
9 conference so that we can talk about some of the civilian and military sides in
10 Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, which actually have been achieve in the past few weeks.
11 Admiral Fox has notes regarding the security situation are actually important, as it
12 reflects on the civilian side. We have also another side in this operation that included
13 resolving some of the vital issues for the people in Baghdad. One of these sides and
14 issues, of course you know that cholera was one of the threatening problems of the
15 people in Baghdad and Iraq. But the efforts by the Ministry of Health, and of course
16 the efforts by the other supporting ministries, were so good that we managed to contain
17 this outbreak in a good way that will not influence life in Baghdad or in any other
18 province in Iraq. We had another threat on Baghdad that was through targeting of one
19 of the oil pipes by the insurgents north of Baghdad. And we had some oil spots spread
20 into the Tigris River. And our technicians with help from the multinational forces
21 managed to contain this crisis. And we made sure that the water that gets into Baghdad
22 is clean from any of these oil spots or any of its side effects on the people. One of the
most important things that we can talk about, about the civilian side of Operation Fardh
Al-Qanoon is the national reconciliation and what's happening in Amiriyah and

1 Ghazaliyah. In Amiriyah for instance, that used to be one of the hot zones in Baghdad.
2 But now, the people of Amiriyah are getting back to their places. Most of the families
3 that have been displaced from the Amiriyah neighborhood are actually getting back to
4 those places. We actually have...And this is of course one of the positive sides or
5 indications in Amiriyah neighborhood which says that the security situation is actually
6 good in Baghdad. And also we have in Ghazaliyah district...now in Ghazaliyah we
7 have two battalions of the police and army that have been formed by the people
8 themselves. And they are working on securing the area and also providing services to
9 those places. And also we managed to remove over fifteen hundred (1500) tons of
10 trash that used to be there in Ghazaliyah district during the past week. This is an
11 indication of the improvement of the services provided to those places. There's a lot of
12 things to talk about...the services in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon, but I think that me
13 and my friend Admiral Fox, we would just give you time so that you can ask about
14 other sides and ready to answer all your questions. Thank you.

15 **REP1:** Asking question in Arabic.

16 **INT:** This question is for you, sir. There are some statements by the Ministry of Interior
17 about the Blackwater company, and there are accusations to Blackwater. But I didn't
18 understand the government's stance against this company.

19 **DR:** Responding in Arabic.

20 **INT:** Just in order to be clear what happened with Blackwater company...there was a tragic
21 accident that took place in Nisoor Square. One of the members involved were the
22 Blackwater security company. Actually, this incident rose so many questions. The
responsibility that falls upon the security forces that are not regarded as some of the

1 military troops among the multinational forces. There was some dispute on two
2 subjects, or arguments. First there was a resolution by the CBA at that time that
3 allowed to give some immunity to those security forces, and this resolution is still
4 active, or valid. And also we have the Iraqi criminal law that needs to be activated due
5 to what happened recently. This argument or dispute between two resolutions make
6 the Iraqi government and the multinational forces to form a joint security committee
7 that will...or actually have been formed on a high level. And it worked on studying all
8 the security companies, and not only Blackwater, and also to put some regulations and
9 laws in order to deal with the actions of these security companies

10 **REP1:** But now, this company resumed its work in Baghdad.

11 **DR:** If this company left, it will leave a security vacuum because most of the embassies and
12 foreign companies and institutes that work in Iraq rely on members of the security
13 company. So if we drive out or expel this company immediately, there will be a
14 security vacuum that will demand pulling some troops that work in the field so that we
15 can protect these institutes. And this will create a security imbalance that actually is
16 needed to secure the places in Baghdad. That's why the Iraqi government is still
17 serious. But there are some regulations being set up by the Iraqi government and also
18 with coordination with the United States Embassy. And this committee has been
19 formed by senior members in the Ministry of Defense and also the United States
20 Embassy. And all of them are studying the regulations and possible regulations to deal
21 with any kind of actions in the future, or such actions in the future.

22 **ZAVIS:** Hi, I'm Alexandra Zavis from the L.A. Times. A follow up question if I may. Can you
tell us a bit more about who is on this committee, have they started meeting,

1 what...how they envisage in the next few weeks, what kind of timeline before they
2 reach conclusions?

3 **DR:** Responding in Arabic.

4 **INT:** This committee has been formed by membership by Abd al-Qadir, that's the Minister
5 of Defense. Also we have someone from the United States Embassy, which is an
6 Ambassador. And this committee started its work, and it will end its studies, work on
7 its studies in the next few days.

8 **RDML:** I've got one small point to add to that. Ambassador Butenis is the...she is the co-chair
9 with General Abd al-Qadir. So it's a joint United States government-government of
10 Iraq commission that's studying all of the implications and the security contractors that
11 are conducting security operations here in Iraq. And then, as I said, it's co-chaired by
12 General Abd al-Qadir and Ambassador Butenis. And so that's the joint commission, if
13 you will, or committee. And then there's a separate investigation that's focused
14 specifically, being conducted by the U.S. Embassy, into the actual incident last week
15 that was the specific event that triggered this.

16 **REP2:** Has this commission begun meeting? I saw on a published report that it was supposed
17 to start meeting today. Is that correct?

18 **RDML:** I don't have any specific information for you on exactly when the joint commission
19 will begin to meet. The membership has been defined, and all I have right now are the
20 chairs, the co-chairs Ambassador Butenis and General Abd al-Qadir. And I think in
21 due course, and I would also defer to the U.S. Embassy in terms of the specifics on
22 that. And if there's any other amplifying information.

DR: Until now we don't have any details about the meetings, but at least we know that there

1 are serious steps and the Iraqi government is actually serious. And the United States is
2 also concerned about the security of Iraqi citizen and also setting the regulations that
3 are appropriate with the work of the security company that are actually outside the
4 control of the multinational forces.

5 **REP2:** Just to clarify. You talked about in the coming days there will be a result. And you
6 talked about two different committees, one committee that is studying the state of
7 security companies in Iraq, and the other the investigation. Which one will be coming
8 out in the coming days?

9 **DR:** Both of them. Responding in Arabic.

10 **INT:** Both of them. The two committees actually will present their work in the few coming
11 days. And the committee that is working on setting the regulations. And also we have
12 the investigation committee that is working on the incident that happened last week.

13 **RDML:** I guess the only point that I would highlight on that is there's not a specific timeline
14 that's been laid out. So obviously the investigation will take its course based on the
15 merits of its investigation. As I said, there's an investigation and then there's this joint
16 commission. Just so that there's clarity in the two evolutions. The investigation from
17 the U.S. Embassy side is being conducted by the regional support office, and it will be
18 transparent and forthcoming with the government of Iraq partners, as we are working
19 through the investigation of the actual incident itself. And then separately is this larger
20 commission that's reviewing all of the CPA era rules and that sort of thing. So I
21 wouldn't characterize a specific timeline until there's more information that's
22 available. Because right now I don't have that.

DR: We should give them enough time so they can carry out their investigations. Yeah,

1 please.

2 **HAYNES:** Hi I'm Deborah Haynes from the Times of London. I'm sorry to concentrate on this
3 topic. But this has big interest on everybody. The joint commission, you said that it's
4 going to potentially be looking at all the different rules and regulations that cover the
5 security guards. And is there a possibility that they could come up with a new set of
6 guidelines that all guidelines that all security companies are going to have to adhere to?
7 And if so, do you know the sort of things they are looking at? Sort of new rules that
8 could be implemented?

9 **DR:** Responding in Arabic.

10 **INT:** We shouldn't jump to conclusions, but I'm sure the committee is studying and working
11 on taking the whole thing seriously in activating the Iraqi law and also the international
12 law. But because the Iraqi citizen is important for both sides, for the multinational
13 forces and also for the Iraqi government. Securing the Iraqi citizen on its soil is our
14 responsibility. That's why we set regulations and the whole framework, at least, so we
15 could know the limits of the movement of those security companies that work with the
16 multinational forces. That's why I don't like to give a mature answer. We just need to
17 hear the investigations, get to know the investigations first.

18 **REP2:** The results of this commission will obviously change the way that security companies
19 have been operating in this country. I think that's fair enough to assume. Otherwise,
20 there wouldn't be a commission in place at all. So is it fair to make that
21 characterization that this incident with Blackwater has prompted the Iraqi government
22 and the U.S. Embassy -- I assume that there are also representatives from the U.S.
military involved -- to redefine the relationship of security companies? Is that an

1 accurate?

2 **RDML:** I think I'd let the commission speak for itself. Obviously there was a precipitating
3 event that has created the creation of this joint commission. But I wouldn't necessarily
4 characterize it as anything other than what it's been described, and that is an
5 opportunity now for the government of Iraq and the U.S. government to jointly review
6 and assess how private contractors in terms of the security mission are conducting their
7 business.

8 **DR:** Speaking in Arabic.

9 **INT:** I think there's a statement by Tom Casey, the deputy spokesman, regarding this issue
10 on September 19. He's actually clear. If you could go back and check the statement
11 that he said concerning the committee. And I could give you a copy of his statement.
12 We don't like to focus on Blackwater. Let's talk about different stuff, different issues.

13 **REP3:** Admiral Fox, could you clarify us the process of operations of Diyalá? There are some
14 information that al-Qaida returned to some of the places that had been cleared. Could
15 you comment about this?

16 **RDML:** Well, we've always assessed that al-Qaida would not give up without a fight. And
17 anytime you disrupt areas that had been safe sanctuaries or safe havens, we expect that
18 there will be a desire on the part of al-Qaida to try to resume or regain the influence or
19 operation capability that they once enjoyed. So it's not defined right now, not settled
20 out. But we've always felt that al-Qaida enjoyed for too long safe haven and safe
21 sanctuary. Which the product of the surge force that has been operating in full force
22 now since the middle part of June is conducting operations in more places at the same
time that we ever have seen before. And we've seen demonstrable results in terms in

1 the reduction of violence and the reduction of violent incidents within Iraq. And we've
2 also seen clear indications that al-Qaida is off balance. They are on their back foot.
3 They're responding and we on the initiative. That said, we still consider them to be a
4 dangerous enemy, and they will do everything they can to foment and to create
5 violence and to try to create spectacular results with their attacks against innocent
6 Iraqis. And that's our job here to protect the Iraqi people.

7 **KATROVAC:** Associated Press, Katarina Katrovac. Do you see any signs, Admiral, that the Mahdi
8 militia is not complying with Sadr's order to stand down. And if so, are there incidents
9 with rogue elements increasing?

10 **RDML:** What we have seen, actually is an encouraging sigh. If you look at the mosaic of all of
11 the different sources of violence here in Iraq, there has been a reduction in the total
12 number of violent incidents since Muqtada al-Sadr's statement, or his pledge of honor
13 to reduce the violence and to have his followers seize from violent activity. As we
14 have said, we stand with the government in welcoming that. Anytime we see criminal
15 activity, people who are conducting actions that are criminal, extortions, kidnapping,
16 murder, they are subject to the full weight of the consequences of those actions. And
17 so I...at this point there have been some incidents where we've seen those criminal
18 elements that continue to operate outside the rule of law, and they've suffered the
19 consequences. And we will continue, as a matter of fact, to, as I said in my opening
20 statement, we will continue to target and pursue anyone who operates outside the rule
21 of law. You know, the Iraqi people deserve to be able to go to have...to be able to go
22 to their local mosque, to have a time here where there's a reduction in violence and to
be able to allow the fabric of their society to heal. And that's exactly what we hope to

1 see coming out of this. And that's why we've been so explicit about encouraging those
2 followers of Muqtada al-Sadr to comply with his directive.

3 **KATROVAC:** Sir, I've got one more Blackwater question. And how concerned are you that the Iraqi
4 government might be forced to accept special rules for these security companies
5 because America is so reliant on the work that they do? I mean Blackwater is back to
6 work and the investigation and the commission's review hasn't been finished yet.

7 **DR:** Responding in Arabic.

8 **INT:** The multinational forces are actually partners for the Iraqi government in fighting
9 terrorism in Iraq. And Iraq represents the first line in fighting terrorism. And part of
10 the work of the multinational forces in Iraq is that some of the security companies
11 and...this is due to some regulations and laws of the military of the United States, that
12 it states that there should be some trained security companies to provide security to
13 some side that we cannot. The Iraqi government knows this very well. And as long as
14 we are working as partners, we need to discuss and need to always reach good results
15 that will ensure the rights of everyone. The rights of the multinational forces have
16 rights of having the revenues that will support it. And also we have the rights of
17 protecting the Iraqi civilians and also the rights of those security companies according
18 to rules and regulations.

19 **KATROVAC:** Since we're on the subject of Blackwater...sorry, just a detail. The commission, does it
20 in fact also include representatives of the military and of the company themselves?
21 What other sort of sectors are represented on this commission? A cholera question. Is
22 it correct that Tiarmuk has just confirmed its first cholera case now here in Baghdad?
There was a report to that effect today. Is that accurate? And what steps are being

1 done?

2 **DR:** Yeah, yeah. Speaking in Arabic.

3 **INT:** The outbreak of cholera is actually; perhaps...the Iraqi environment now due to the
4 high temperature and due to some other conditions...Iraq has been living in some non-
5 reconstruction for a long time. And with the possibilities and potentials that we have,
6 we have been able to control the outbreak of cholera that started in Kurdistan in the
7 north. And we had over fifteen hundred (1500) cases so far. And it's spread, and such
8 outbreak spreads in a good environment, which is high temperature. And also...it
9 needs also...such outbreak also...Yes we've had some cases as you mentioned. We
10 found some cases in Baghdad, but the Ministry of Health is exerting really good
11 efforts. And with its potentials, it managed to prevent cures and vaccines and also
12 some medical teams that are trained in a good way to deal with this outbreak.

13 **RDML:** In response to the second part of your question, there will be a military representation
14 on this joint commission. I think I would refer...I would leave it to the U.S. Embassy
15 to describe exactly who sits on that, but there will be military representation on that.

16 **KRAMER:** This is a question for DR. Sheikhly. Andrew Kramer from the New York Times. I'm
17 once again...I apologize a question on Blackwater. There was a statement that three of
18 the guards involved were Iraqi citizens. Can you confirm that? And have they been
19 questioned, or will charges be pressed against them?

20 **DR:** Responding in Arabic.

21 **INT:** The incident is still under investigation, and the identity of those are involved is part of
22 the investigation. And I think it's too early to talk about the investigation. We should
wait for the results. And until then we can talk about it in more details.

- 1 **REP3:** Asking question in Arabic.
- 2 **INT:** Do you think that controlling the outbreak is enough through the health, also providing
3 vaccine and medicine, while the other public services are not available, like portable
4 water and also detergents? In addition to that you mentioned that a while ago that
5 you've controlled the outbreak. So how can you explain that the outbreak spread from
6 Sulaymaniyah into Baghdad? So why haven't we seen any cases in other provinces?
7 Are the cases actually less than ten?
- 8 **DR:** I've never said that any kind of health van...led to the outbreak. And let's actually be
9 realistic about this. There are certain procedures to deal with the outbreak. And
10 particularly with cholera, one is the precautionary procedures that could be taken by all
11 sides that need to, are concerned with the health environment, like, for instance the
12 teams that are working on the hygiene for water, for instance, and food. And also
13 teams that prevent the...those who actually sell foods in the streets. And also we have
14 other teams inside the neighborhoods that could monitor the cases and also report the
15 presence of these cases. We have also other health cases like distributing vaccines and
16 also providing health services, like providing clinics and hospitals so that people can
17 go to those places. The third and important thing is that we make, statistics about the
18 outbreak, where it happened and how. The numbers that have been mentioned for now
19 are actually correct. And this is due to that these numbers have been registered in the
20 health center for the Ministry of Health, because the Ministry of Health provides
21 us...provides the commanding operation with any kind of case. So in case we have
22 any kind outbreak, they report the case. And don't imagine that this case could be
neglected, because we can't hide any information because it's important. And

1 manipulation in this case is dangerous. That's why we're trying to be very transparent
2 in our work so that we can give the real numbers that have actually given us by the
3 Ministry of Health.

4 **REP2:** Asking question in Arabic.

5 **INT:** I'd like to ask also...recently we've witnessed that there's pollution in the Tigris River
6 due to attack of a pipeline. Don't you think this will help the outbreak, particularly the
7 report that came yesterday on Hora TV? And it showed a really negative point that the
8 people are suffering from...because the water in Tikrit actually run out. How would
9 you comment about this?

10 **DR:** You've noticed the result of the criminal action of blowing the oil pipe, but you didn't
11 notice the efforts to isolate these spots of oil from the river. There are some huge
12 efforts to isolate or separate these spots of oil from the river. I think you should have
13 notice that.

14 **REP3:** I've noticed that yesterday that are so many number of fish that are actually dead on the
15 surface of water.

16 **DR:** Let's just be realistic. Of course when you have oil on the water there should be some
17 dead fish.

18 **REP3:** I've also noticed that the people had been sick due to the pollution in the water, which
19 is actually still polluted.

20 **DR:** What happened actually is that thankfully our teams were able to...I'm not denying that
21 there is any kind of pollution in the water. Of course there should be any kind of
22 pollution. We should have side effects. One of them is the pollution of water. And we
know that the people in such brutal areas, they rely on drinking water from the river

1 directly. That's why we have so many cases because the water here's not that purified,
2 which is why I say, yes, we may have cases of cholera in those places. I don't deny
3 that there are side effects, but at least we've managed to pull back from a real disaster.
4 And this is the main effort that we've done. Thank you.

5 **KATROVAC:** One more on Blackwater. We heard yesterday from the Interior Ministry that the case,
6 their investigation, the results was referred to the judicial authorities. What exactly
7 does that mean? Is it with the criminal judge or is it with the criminal courts or with an
8 investigative judge? Could you elaborate on that? And what are the chances that
9 charges will actually be raised.

10 **DR:** Okay we will finish Blackwater with this question. Speaking in Arabic:

11 **INT:** We have two kinds of investigations that Admiral Fox mentioned, that there is an
12 investigation committee at the U.S. Embassy and also there's an investigation at the
13 Ministry of Interior, the Iraqi Ministry of Interior. So the Iraqi side believes that the
14 Iraqi criminal law should be activated on the Iraqi soil against any kind of activity that
15 could be classified as a crime. Especially if it's against the Iraqi citizen. This kind of
16 dispute is still on between, or among all parts. The investigation is still in its early
17 stages. But just wait the results of the investigation, and then there will be a special
18 statement concerning Blackwater company. And I guess we should end this discussion
19 that will...

20 **KRAMER:** Out of respect to your final statement it's on something else. You've talked about the
21 successes in Amiriyah and west Baghdad. And I think we all watched the testimony in
22 Washington about the surge and the results. Do you still see violence as a whole going
down, or is it just sort of plateaued? And is there any evidence that suggests that

1 because sometimes the number of attacks and the number of thwarted attacks...it can be
2 less than convincing and clear. Do you still see that as a trend, and do you have any
3 evidence to support that? Thank you.

4 **RDML:** Yeah. Our assessment is that the overall trend lines, in terms of the numbers of attacks
5 and the numbers of violent incidents in Iraq, is on the downtrend. That as a whole, as
6 an overall observation at large. There are always going to be areas where we have
7 uneven progress, and there are areas where progress will be turned back. And we'll
8 have to reengage. But in a whole sense, there's no question about the fact in our minds
9 that the trends are in the right direction. And the question now is how well are we
10 going to be able...first of all, the violence levels remain too high. So it's not that we've
11 been able to successfully push it down to a certain level and now are satisfied with that,
12 because we're not. So we're focusing now on refining our efforts to try to continue the
13 reduction of violence and continue the trend line that will allow again Iraqi society to
14 begin amend and for economic activity and the political activity that needs to take
15 place for this to go forward, to emerge. So, it's uneven. But we still have a lot of hard
16 work to do. This is a difficult security environment. There's no question about that.
17 But we definitely feel that the trends are in the right direction and that the numbers of
18 violent incidents and attacks are going down. Thank you very much. I really
19 appreciate the opportunity to share this afternoon with you all today. Thank you.

20 **DR:** Thank you... Thank you.

21 *[END OF INTERVIEW]*

22