

PRESS CONFERENCE:

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Multi-National Force – Iraq**

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REPORTERS 1-11

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

RDML SMITH: Good afternoon and As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Today I want to talk to you about two recently captured al-Qaida Iraq documents that tell a great deal about the enemy we are facing here in Iraq. I will also highlight the continued bravery of the average Iraqi who is trying to make a difference here in Iraq. And then I will be happy to take your questions. On November 18th of last year, coalition forces were conducting operations against al-Qaida leaders near Samarra, northwest of Baghdad, as part of Operation Anchorage. During the raid, coalition forces killed Abu Maysara, a senior advisor to Abu Ayyoub al-Masri. Among his effects, we discovered a number of electronic storage devices – computer hard drives, thumb drives, compact discs and DVDs, along with original documents I’ll talk about today. One of those items seized in this operation was a 39-page typed document, undated and unsigned. Our analytical work on this document has been going on since that time, and leads us to believe that it was written in the summer of 2007 by a mid- to high-level al-Qaida Iraq emir. The intended audience for the document appears to have been this author’s superiors. These assessments are based on numerous factors, including the author’s comprehensive knowledge of al-Qaida operations in al-Anbar specifically, as well as the tone and content of his writing. The author quotes, “The Islamic State of Iraq is faced with an extraordinary crisis, especially

in al-Anbar.” Unquote. Overall, the document is a pessimistic assessment of al-Qaida’s long-term prospects in the al-Anbar area. The author describes the difficulties involved with trying to manage foreign fighters. He states that al-Qaida Iraq has lost popular support in the province. He recommends that al-Qaida Iraq’s remaining foreign fighters in al-Anbar be moved to other areas of Iraq, where the terrorists might have greater freedom of movement, freedom of action. I need to stress before going on that this document does not suggest, nor do we, that al-Qaida is defeated in al-Anbar or across Iraq. Al-Qaida remains a significant and dangerous threat here in Iraq. Their goals have not changed and they will continue to intimidate, extort and kill innocent men, women, and children to gain their foothold in Iraq. But this document does show – in the words of one senior emir – that al-Qaida has witnessed and assessed itself in the summer of 2007 as experiencing grave difficulties and serious setbacks, especially in al-Anbar. Here are some other highlights from the document. He credits Iraqi and coalition forces with having learned lessons itself from the mistakes they’ve made. The author describes the growth of the Awakening, writing that quote, “traitors and factions,” unquote, are taking on al-Qaida. He warns his superiors that the Sunni citizens of the area are growing weary of the misfortunes and tribulations brought upon by such violence caused by al-Qaida. He

says that Sunni Anbaris are becoming more willing to join the Iraqi Security Forces and to participate in the elections. He also laments the Americans have waged, quote, “a ferocious media campaign against al-Qaida.” The document also describes the growing problems al-Qaida is having with its recruits and terrorist operations. It says foreign terrorists are having a hard time moving around al-Anbar due to their distinctive dialects. Improved security in the province is making it much harder for foreign terrorists to carry weapons and suicide belts. This improved security is paralyzing many al-Qaida operatives, forcing them to sit idle, afraid to move. Foreign terrorists are becoming disillusioned and disgruntled after arriving in al-Anbar. They resent being forced to turn over all their possessions to al-Qaida at the borders. They are noticing a disconnect between the media images they were shown as they were being recruited with the reality inside of Iraq. They sense that suicide terrorists are being misused and undervalued. And many are losing their fervor and asking to be assigned new missions, or even to return to their home countries. Because of these difficulties, al-Qaida only wants newly recruited foreign terrorists who are willing to conduct suicide missions. Al-Qaida is often refusing the requests of suicide recruits to serve as terrorist fighters instead of suicide bombers. Sometimes, they are even allowing these operatives to return home. The author criticizes his

fellow emirs for failing to cooperate and for being overly reliant on suicide missions. One portion of the document goes into detail about the problems of fellow al-Qaida emirs in al-Anbar. The author writes that emirs too often lack leadership and military experience. They suffer from lack of support from local residents. They are forced to confront more than one enemy at a time, the most dangerous to al-Qaida being, quote, “the renegade tribes,” unquote, or the Awakenings. The author says, quote, “The renegades and Americans started launching their attacks to destroy us. We lost cities, and afterwards villages, and the desert became a dangerous refuge. We got away from people and we found ourselves in a wasteland desert,” unquote. As I said earlier, the discovery of this document does not suggest that al-Qaida has decided to change its ways or no longer murder innocents. It does not mean that the Iraqi people have defeated the foreign scourge plaguing their country. What it does show is that as Iraqis stood up to al-Qaida, rejected foreign terrorism, denied them safe haven, it had a direct impact on al-Qaida. The citizen volunteers have made a real difference. Let me talk about those citizen volunteers for a second. We continue to see examples of these citizen volunteer groups and the Iraqi Security Forces protecting the Iraqi people. Last Monday, a Concerned Local Citizens group operating near Samarra contacted their local Iraqi Police unit and gave them

information about two hostages being held by al-Qaida. The information was quickly relayed from the Iraqi police to coalition forces, who responded immediately. Using the information provided by the Iraqi citizen volunteers, the coalition forces soldiers liberated two men who were being held prisoner inside a large storage container buried in the al-Jazeera desert near Samarra. The men, both from the village Yethrib, near Balad, had been abducted by al-Qaida from a gas station fifteen days earlier. The two men told their rescuers that al-Qaida had seized them, along with their fuel truck, because the station refused to pay extortion money to the terrorist group. On Tuesday, February 5th, two brave members of a volunteer citizen group paid the ultimate sacrifice by giving their lives to protect fellow Iraqis. The men were patrolling the market in the town of al-Awad, northwest of Baghdad, when they saw a suspicious man outside a photo shop. They detained the individual, who it turned out was wearing a suicide vest. They wrestled the terrorist to the ground, giving time for shoppers to flee to safety. Regrettably, the suicide bomber managed to explode the suicide vest, killing the two brave volunteers, undoubtedly saving the lives of countless others. The integration of citizen volunteers into the uniformed services of the police and army continues to grow. 490 men who first responded to the call to reject terror by serving as Concerned Local Citizens completed their transition to full public

servants by being sworn in as police officers at a graduation ceremony held at the Camp Fiji Iraq, near...I'm sorry, at the Camp Fiji Iraq Training Facility on February 2nd. More than 260 of the new officers will patrol and protect the Mansour district of Baghdad, operating in the neighborhoods of Amiriyah, Adil, Khadra and Jamia. As of today, there are approximately 77,500 Iraqis who are members of Concerned Local Citizen groups. 7,700 of those have already been integrated into the Iraqi Security Force. And more are transitioning every day. Let me now turn to the second al-Qaida Iraq document found near Balad late last year. On November 3rd, while conducting a raid south of Balad, coalition Force soldiers captured a diary kept by an al-Qaida operative named Abu Tariq. Abu Tariq claims to be a sector emir for the al-Qaida Iraq. He wrote in his diary in the fall of last year. Abu Tariq's diary provides clear and compelling evidence that Iraq's volunteer citizen groups are making their country safer by weakening al-Qaida and restricting the terrorists' freedom of movement. His diary shows that al-Qaida regards these volunteer citizen groups as a grave threat and that the terrorists are increasingly targeting them. This helps to explain why in recent months, as overall terrorist attacks have maintained a steady pace or even declined, attacks against citizen groups have risen. Despite this, these volunteer groups have continued to expand their influence. I'll share a few excerpts of

Abu Tariq's diary. We will provide copies following the press brief. We have also redacted the names referenced in the diary for safety reasons. It will also be posted on the Multi-National Force – Iraq web site at www.mnfi/iraq.com. The focus of Tariq's diary is that Iraq's volunteer citizen groups have severely undermined al-Qaida Iraq, at least in the area around Balad. He described his anger and frustration with the people of Iraq who reject terrorism. He referred to the volunteer citizens as quote, "traitors, Sahwa deserters," unquote. On the first page, shown here in his diary, the al-Qaida emir claimed that he once commanded almost 600 fighters, but that after quote, "the tribes changed course," unquote, many of his fighters quit, while others joined, quote, "the deserters." In these pages, the al-Qaida emir said that the changing turn of events reduced the strength from almost 600 fighters to just 20 or fewer terrorists in his units. Abu Tariq went on to provide greater details on the decline of the five battalions he claimed to lead. He wrote that the Battalion of Laylat al-Qadr Martyrs once was made up of 200 well-equipped fighters. The al-Qaida emir said that "some were killed, some arrested, but the majority betrayed us and joined the Awakening." He wrote that after those events, the unit was left with only ten fighters. Describing the Battalion of Abu-Haydar al-Ansari, the al-Qaida emir claimed that once, that particular battalion had 300 fighters that were well-equipped with

weapons and vehicles. He then tells that the leader of his unit deserted just before the Awakening movement was organized.

After this, the unit's strength declined to just 16 fighters, and then later only two. Of these two, the emir wrote that one was arrested, and the other was captured as well. The rest of the fighters joined the Awakening groups. He wrote about the other two battalions and in describing his final unit, the Battalion of Muhammad Bin Muslimah, the al-Qaida emir wrote that its leader was killed by the traitors of the Islamic Army with the help of the invader's helicopters. He lamented that some of the fighters of this unit deserted, even taking their weapons with them. He noted that one became a leader of the Awakening group. Just as with the captured Samarra document I discussed earlier, this diary does not signal the end of al-Qaida Iraq. But it is a contemporaneous account of the challenges posed to the terrorists by the people of Iraq, by a terrorist leader, writing down his private thoughts in his own words. I have outlined today two al-Qaida Iraq documents that tell narrow but compelling stories of the challenges al-Qaida Iraq is facing, as Iraqis have stood up against their indiscriminate violence and broken ideology. By no means does either of these documents tell the whole story, but it is heartening to know that at least in two areas in Iraq, al-Qaida is feeling the pressure of our operations and the rejection of the Iraqi people. And with that I would be happy to

take your questions. Yes sir, first row.

REP1:

Sir, were these documents last week with the video of the kids being trained, as well as the teenage female suicide bombers in Baghdad, obviously paint a picture of an al-Qaida that's desperate and sort of on the ropes. Yet, you continue to stress that they remain the number one enemy. There were a couple of statements made by US military officers elsewhere in the country about al-Qaida being very smart at the moment and not maybe enforcing the Islamic code of conduct and behavior in some places like Mosul in order to, sort of, reclaim the support of the citizens there. So what is it exactly, sir? Is al-Qaida on the ropes, desperate, using kids and women? Or is it still a serious enemy to contend with in Iraq? Thank you.

RDML SMITH:

Well, we do think they're a serious threat to Iraq. And the reasons for that are many. Most important is the resiliency that al-Qaida over the years has shown. They're an adaptive force. They do have the ability to regenerate. We know that as we take out leaders, others fall into their place. There is an ability to recruit, both within and outside of Iraq through foreign fighters. Financing of their efforts remain within their means to be able to achieve, whether it's through extortion, intimidation, or kidnapping. So you've got an enemy that's not going to lay down. It may have taken some tough

shots, and it may in fact have been moved out of certain areas of Iraq. But it is far from being defeated across Iraq. And it's an enemy you must keep an eye on in terms of where it's moving and what its intents are and focus your energies to make certain that you continue to drive towards their eventual destruction in Iraq. But we are far from that. And evidence of the last few weeks of their ability to still penetrate cities, as the Baghdad and bombings of the market showed, or elsewhere as they conduct kidnapping operations, have wired up in Diyala, for instance, multiple houses as house-borne IEDs. They have still a great deal of capacity to generate violence here in Iraq and must be taken very seriously. Yes, sir.

ZIEZULEWICZ: Geoff Ziezulewicz with Stars and Stripes. I just got back from Anbar, where I heard much of the leadership complaining about the pace of aid coming from the federal government in Baghdad. Also, you just mentioned that, you know, scores of former AQI had joined the Awakening. With the extensive training of IPs that's going on in Anbar right now, is there any concern that if disillusionment with the federal government continues on the part of Anbaris towards Baghdad, that the US could essentially be training...well, could be become an Anbar militia for secession or independence? And is there anything US authorities can do to

counter that or prevent that in your mind?

RDML SMITH: I think everyone understands that what's necessary to come behind security are essential services, and part of that is through the central government's distribution of funds into the provinces. Anbar has received a significant increase in funding in 2007 and 2008. The province of Anbar clearly has many challenges in terms of infrastructure development, in the major cities of Fallujah and Ramadi, as an example. But I think we all agree that a considerable amount of work has been done. There will clearly be an impatience with the level of support when you consider just how far many of these areas need to come from in terms of essential services, employment, and so forth. And so, I think the government of Iraq understands that. We certainly understand that. We do not think that the Awakening groups, by themselves, represent a threat beyond...a threat to Iraq, certainly a threat to the government of Iraq. Just the opposite. I believe they do represent the kind of stability that's been necessarily gained by their presence to allow for, again, the security to be maintained at a level for services to enter into the cities, to be supportive of investment, both internal and external investment that is necessary. And their support and their support of that has been critical. And so I don't think that's really an issue as necessarily of a future threat by Awakening

groups. In fact, I think their presence demonstrates their desire to maintain security, to allow for that investment and that growth of economic development and so forth.

ZIEZULEWICZ: Sir, in, you know, the coalition forces' mind in terms of, you know, the patience of the Sunni leadership in Anbar? In terms of getting aid for example? The Sinai district of Fallujah has been waiting on about \$100 million for at least a few years to come from the Baghdad government. Everybody I talk to says it's a pretty big part of getting that city kind of rolling again. You know, is there a finite timeline patience here or do you think, you know?

RDML SMITH: Well, I don't think there's a finite patience. I think there is clearly a frustration on the part of all Iraqis that the essential services and economic development in Iraq is not as fast as it perhaps could be. But you have to consider the fact that with the distribution of funds that Iraq has done so far, they've done a lot to build up basic essential services, whether it's electrical generation, power, sewer, water in support of these major cities. But I do think that the Anbaris have great faith in the future of Anbar, and they're going to work in partnership with the government of Iraq in a peaceful way. Yes, ma'am.

REP2: I'm just wondering if you can just give us a little bit more information about the second diary that was found, Abu Tariq. Were you familiar with this guy before you found this diary? How much of a player was he? How much credence should we give to his writings? And did his writings – you know I saw a lot of the names redacted and stuff – did it lead to any arrests? I mean, was there any substance to come from anything that was found during this?

RDML SMITH: Well, I think we did see a very similar pattern of our activity against al-Qaida in the Balad area did match up greatly with what he was referring to. Not so much by names, not names of units, not his name in particular. But our operations in Balad, for instance, in that area and the days leading up to the findings of this document, the rate al-Qaida will kill in very near proximity of where we found the document. So we know we had degraded al-Qaida in that area. And the credence given to this is I think the originality of the document itself and the specifics that he provided in that. But again, it's just a single look at a very small sector of Iraq.

REP2: Do you know where he is now, though?

RDML SMITH: We do not. We do not know where he's at today.

REP3: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from al-Maddah newspaper. You've mentioned the numbers of volunteers in the Iraqi army and police. Could you please say those numbers again? And also, regarding those who joined, are they Sahwa? Are they Awakenings?

RDML SMITH: I did mentioned earlier, but I will again, because I've done it in the past is that the numbers that are joined the Iraqi Security Forces from Awakening groups number well over 10,000 if you take into consideration those that came from the original Anbar Awakening. But separate from that, there have been 7,700 additional Awakening members that have gone through the process of transition. Their names have now been vetted by the government of Iraq. And they're in or going to be going to training that will eventually lead to their employment as police officers or in the army. And I mentioned 490 of those had graduated this past week, and are now police officers. Sir. We'll go here in the front row.

CHON: Gina Chon, Wall Street Journal. I actually had a non-al-Qaida question. I was just wondering if you could talk about what's been happening lately in Sadr City, and what, if anything, coalition

forces have gotten in terms Muqtada's willingness to continue with the ceasefire or what the status of that is, given some of the rising tensions we've seen in the last week.

RDML SMITH: We continue to be encouraged by the comments made by the Sadr trend on behalf of Muqtada al-Sadr that suggest that, certainly the maintaining of the current freeze – he's stressed that with his people just this past week in which he also identifies those who do not honor that ceasefire as being criminals. So our operations in areas in Baghdad, Sadr City you mentioned, are to target those individuals who are not honoring that pledge. As to its extension beyond the current six months, again I think we're encouraged by the effects it has had thus far. I believe Muqtada al-Sadr understands the positive impact and influence the Sadr trend has had with peace overall in Iraq, because that has allowed not only reduced violence by his trend members but also, when you consider that allowed us to have a greater effort against al-Qaida, as an example here. So, we'll wait and see what Muqtada al-Sadr and Sadr trend elect to do. But we're very encouraged by what has happened to date. And we certainly would encourage it to be extended beyond the current six months. New person. Okay, go ahead.

REP4: Just real quick, will you all make the first document you revealed today available as well?

RDML SMITH: Not at the present time. The four pages we provided are the only four we'll put out today. The document is still being exploited. It's a very detailed document, unlike the diary, which was fairly – as you'll read it – very easy to read and understand and very focused very narrowly to his just four or five battalions he commanded. This particular document Samarra was very complex. It involved a great deal of analysis on the part of this emir's understanding of the vulnerabilities of al-Qaida. He had great many recommendations to make to leadership. And we want to make certain we exploit those to the extent we can before we share them more widely than we currently we have...you can understand that we don't believe that necessarily all of al-Qaida's leadership had read this document. We do believe that it had made its way into some leadership circles, but to the extent that it was broadly shared, we don't think it was.

REP4: Also, can you speak briefly about what's coming up next for Mosul?

RDML SMITH: The one thing about Mosul you need to understand is that we've been there operating now for several years. And you'll see a steady

push to deal with the security in Mosul, and not dramatic ways in terms of major force movements or major operations that may have been seen in other parts of Iraq in the past couple years, but more along the lines of security stations being established, working with local patrols, small patrols, working neighborhood by neighborhood to rid those neighborhoods of al-Qaida in much the same sort of model without precisely saying it's exactly the same as Baghdad, because no two parts of Iraq are the same. But more along those lines.

REP4: Sir, is there a big operation in the works for Mosul?

RDML SMITH: Well again, I think what I just described is the effort will be comprehensive across Mosul. It will involve use of local joint security stations, coalition and Iraqi Security Force personnel, along with volunteers to help police neighborhoods one neighborhood at a time.

REP5: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Qassam Fehsel from the Middle East Agency. Recently, there were some religious movements, especially in southern Iraq like in Maqdawiyah and the Soldiers of Heaven. And we've witnessed

that the Iraqi Security Forces and the Multinational Forces are using force against those groups. And this led to the killing of many of the members, and some of them were detained. Don't you think it would have been better to negotiate with those people and see what they have in order not to create new sites of violence?

RDML SMITH: Well, the thing specific to your question deals with what happened in Basra earlier during Ashoura. And I believe, if I understand correctly, those groups were conducting themselves in a violent way. They came out with arms. They came out in a way that was very aggressive, and the Iraqi Security Forces were compelled to push back with that kind of violence with equal or greater measures of power. Negotiation is certainly an accommodation, certainly, the way in which you want to solve problems. But in some cases, you're dealing with a security crisis in which armed members of groups are attempting to control parts of the city. And they were dealt with by using force by both the police and the army. I think in a very level-handed way, quite frankly. And the violence was dealt with, I believe, within the first 24 hours. Most of the city was returned to a peaceful level, so that I would say that's a constructive way to deal with that particular issue. But you're right. In the end, you've got to deal with the difference amongst Iraqis through accommodation and discussion. And hopefully that will occur.

Yes, sir.

REP6: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question from a weekly magazine. There are some reports saying that a number of the public fighters in Diyala withdrew because their demands were not met, like removing the Diyala police chief and also releasing some of the innocent detainees from the Awakening. What is your response about this?

RDML SMITH: I guess you could look at it as a “half glass, half full-half empty” kind of discussion. My view is that you’re seeing democracy at work here. You’re seeing Awakening groups who have, again, risked everything to provide peace and security in their neighborhood. But at the present time have differences with, in this case, potentially the police chief. And that’s being dealt with by them saying, essentially until you solve our problems, we can work our way out, we’re not going to participate in supporting you and providing security in the area. That’s being done, I think, in a way that’s much more beneficial than perhaps, again, the alternative, which could be through violence. And so, it’s a constructive dialogue. It’s a purposeful attempt on the part of the Awakening groups to make their voices known. And I think that’s an

encouraging sign. I do believe these things will get worked out and worked out peacefully on the benefit of all. Sir.

SMITH (NPR): Graham Smith from NPR. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about the switch from CLCs to the Sons of Iraq. Certainly, the folks we talk to a lot pretty much call everybody “Awakening,” whether it’s a Shiite group in Sadr City or anywhere around. It seems to be a distinction that’s mainly reserved for the western press, at least at this point. Can you talk a little bit about the theory there, and what you’re hoping is going to happen because of it?

RDML SMITH: Well, my understanding is that the term “Sons of Iraq” translates more clearly in terms of what it means by Concerned Local Citizens. And there are officials within the government of Iraq that encouraged that transition of terminology. You’re right. I think people refer to the volunteers in many different ways. Individual groups are called different things. They’ve identified themselves. Whether they’re called Sons of Iraq, Concerned Local Citizens, Iraqi Security Volunteers, I don’t know that that makes any real difference to the individuals and what their purpose is. But it does allow for perhaps a more clear translation of the true intent of the groups by calling them Adnan al-Iraq, in terms of Sons of Iraq.

SMITH (NPR): Why would you separate the two?

RDML SMITH: I don't think they are separated. I think there's a naming convention that's been adopted that applies to that broader group, just like Concerned Local Citizen had in the past.

REP7: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Safil Hayat from the Japanese News Agency. I would like to ask about this document. Don't you think that... could you think that al-Qaida left this document to play a game because they might include some inaccurate information so that they could mislead you? You are also talking in the past about al-Qaida and you said that al-Qaida's being financed by some countries like Iran and Syria. And why do you think this financing has been stopped? And now they're heading towards kidnapping...

RDML SMITH: You have to look at anything you receive off the battlefield with somewhat circumspect, and clearly that's what are our last couple months worth of exploitation has done. We feel pretty confident though this document is written by a mid- to senior-grade emir in the Samarra area, purposely written to demonstrate to his leadership his frustration and concern, his advice and counsel, if you will, up the chain of command. But to take everything literally inside any

captured document, we do not. We criticize. We critically look at those things and we understand that there potentially are ways in which those communications could be used...if they were to fall in the wrong hands to be used against us. But we understand that. But this document we don't believe is in that genre...of kind of documents you might see. It's not written as a propaganda document in the way you sort of described it. As far as financing goes, though, I think you're looking at still an availability of funds coming from outside the country, but a growing sense that inside the country they need to finance their own efforts. And what's being made difficult for al-Qaida is as they are moved out of the major cities, sources of funding tend to dry up, unless they are able to extort and to kidnap. And you're seeing like what I mentioned this morning, the one instance where two gentlemen who were driving a fuel truck were kidnapped because the gas station itself did not agree to the extortion that they were trying to achieve at that particular place. So, financing internally is a main means for al-Qaida to finance its local operations. But there still is external financing occurring. Sir.

HOWARD:

Sir, Michael Howard from The Guardian. You mentioned that there are 77,000 citizen volunteers at the moment. Out of those, how many are in Baghdad area? And are they still recruiting? Do you

want to expand that number? And also, what is their relation with the Sadras, with the Jaish al-Mahdi for example? What sort of tensions are you seeing there?

RDML SMITH: The total number in the Baghdad area itself is probably 20 percent of that number, around 15,000 or so. And the growth is not necessarily occurring in the Baghdad area. Where you're seeing the growth of Awakening members is as you push your operations up through Diyala and up through the areas in the northern provinces, that's where you're seeing new formations of Awakening groups. As far as the Awakening groups' relationship with other groups in the country, the distribution across those 77,000, around 20 percent are Shia, 80 percent are Sunni. And so, they're made up of all sects here in Iraq. And I don't know that there's a relationship per se. I think again they're working on their local neighborhood problems. And if Jaish al-Mahdi has an influence in that area, that's clearly who you're trying to accommodate with, as opposed to the more Sunni-dominated area, where a CLC group might be working more with extreme groups that are on the fringes of their environment. So, that's about the best answer I can give you as far relationships between a CLC group and Jaish al-Mahdi. Sir.

REP8: Sir, just a follow up on the earlier question on tensions in Baqubah

between the CLCs and the police. There's been fighting in Baghdad actually between the CLCs and the police and al-Fadhil. And there have been reports coming out of Amiriyah that government forces have arrested 17 of those neighborhood guards and that in turn, the leadership in Amiriyah, the leadership of the guards has actually threatened to attack the police and army if these people were not released. Can you comment on those two incidents in Fadhil and in Amiriyah? Thank you.

RDML SMITH: I can't specifically, because I don't have any detail for you. But it does show the tension between trying to work security in which you've got not clear lines of distinction. You've got neighborhoods that are blending into neighborhoods. You've got police units that work across neighborhoods, army units and so forth. And often times in the fog of battle, there's a misunderstanding perhaps of who is the enemy. You may be in fact unaware of a Concerned Local Citizen group being in the area, providing security. A firefight breaks out, shots are exchanged. In the meantime, obviously, the police will do their job to sweep up that activity and hold people responsible. I suspect in both these cases that's what we're referring to really is, trying to sort through some problems associated with local security. And it will get worked out in the long run. We have not seen any pattern of activity where you've

got Concerned Local Citizens purposely targeting Iraqi Security Forces or vice versa. But we have seen instances where, in the end when all the dust clears, there is in many cases a clear confusion and misunderstanding that resulted in that kind of activity. But we'll see how these two turn out. All the way in the back please.

REP9: Al-Jazeera English. Going back to the recently released videos about al-Qaida using kids in attacks and training. Is it only al-Qaida who are using kids in such attacks? Or we have any other groups using kids? Thank you.

RDML SMITH: I don't have any good specific examples on use of children by other extremist groups in the country. But I suspect there have been. I just don't have any details. What we did show you was specifically al-Qaida's use of children to produce training propaganda footage to encourage young boys to join the Jihad and become part of that movement as they turn into adulthood. But we do know that children have been used as couriers, as spotters. And I suspect that other groups besides al-Qaida has used children in the past.

REP10: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Hulut from the [unintelligible] Agency. Operation Fardh al-Qanoon

will finish its one year. What is your evaluation of this? And do you think the future will be much better than the past?

RDML SMITH: If you were to think just back over a year ago before Fardh al-Qanoon started and the great pressures on Baghdadis at that time, the violence that was just overwhelming. And then you consider where we're at today, it is a great change. And it's a significant effort by both the local citizens, the Iraqi Security Forces that have done a tremendous job, and of course, the coalition that participated in that effort through the surge. But I think people understand that there is still a significant amount of work to be done to really give Baghdad completely back to the people. There are still elements inside Baghdad that want to see a turn, a change back to those days of violence. And there are still challenges associated with ensuring that people are given options beyond violence, that employment and education is returned to a level that supports all the needs of the Baghdad area. But there's great hope in 2008 that the trends will continue, and that the positive direction that Iraq is one will be witnessed here in Baghdad. Yes, sir.

REP11: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: A question from Al Watan. I have two questions. First, regarding

the al-Qaida present in Mosul, do you think that, do you have an idea about the amount of al-Qaida in Mosul and their nationalities? And do you think they're mostly Arabs or Iraqis that are working? The second question is about the al-Yamani and the Mahdawiya movement in southern Iraq. Do you have any idea about their activities, their current activities?

RDML SMITH: I'll come back to your second question. It will have to get it restated. We don't know precisely the number of al-Qaida operating in the Mosul area. We do believe that the number of foreign fighters in al-Qaida have dropped off significantly since last summer, so I suspect you're still seeing inside Mosul the majority of fighters, the rank and file, being Iraqis. We do know that the foreign leadership of al-Qaida is presumably in the north, whether they're inside Mosul city proper, hard to know at this point. But they clearly are conducting their operations in the north from leadership positions held there. And your second question please. Could you restate please? I'll have the translator restate. Could you restate his second question please? Go ahead.

REP11: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: Yes, I ask concerning the activities of the Mahdawiya and the

Yamani groups in the southern, in southern...do they have any kind of activity recently? Are they still conducting any kind of activity in southern Iraq?

RDML SMITH: Your question was, are the Awakening groups operating or conducting supporting in the south? Is that your question?

INT: No, sir. It's about the Yamani and the Mahdawiya movements that caused some violence in southern Iraq recently. Are they still active? Do they have any active...are they active in Iraq, southern Iraq?

RDML SMITH: I don't know the answer to your question specifically on the second one. I apologize. Sir. Yes, ma'am.

SUDANI: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Sar al-Sudani from the Parliament Newspaper. Regarding the video that you showed about children being used by al-Qaida and also being trained inside Iraq. There are some reports by the media saying that they're smuggling the children outside and they've been trained outside the country. So, how do you think the children are being smuggled outside? We have some checkpoints on the

borders. What is your response to this?

RDML SMITH: Well I don't know specifically if they are being smuggled, but I think that's a question you've asked perhaps in the past relative to the borders in Iraq, and how could anything be that easy to smuggle back and forth, whether it's children or weapons. And I think we all understand that Iraq's borders are certainly vast, and they cover areas of great deserts that are very hard to control. The checkpoints clearly have been improved dramatically in the last few years as Iraqis invested in both the people and the technology. But between those checkpoints, along those borders between areas of Iran or Syria or Saudi Arabia or the north, human trafficking and the trafficking of illegal arms, of illegal supplies continues much the way they have historically over the many years here in Iraq. And that has not changed. But the checkpoints themselves and the areas where vehicles can transfer back and forth have been greatly increased in terms of its vigilance, to look for those kinds of things. Any other questions? Why thank you. I appreciate it.

REP12: Sir, just a final confirmation on the number of pages of each of the documents.

RDML SMITH: The original document was 39 pages long, type-written 39 pages.

And I showed you four. And then the diary is I believe 16 pages in Arabic. When you see it down in English I think it comes down to five or six pages.