

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Major General Kevin Bergner, Spokesman and Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Effects,
Multi-National Force – Iraq**

**Major General Mark Hertling, Commander of Multi-National Division – North, Task
Force Iron**

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**Ray Olmstead from NPR News
Brad Brooks from The Associated Press
Debbie Block from Voice of America Radio and TV
Josh Partlow from The Washington Post
Peter Kraft[ph] from Reuters
Mark [unintelligible] from Time Magazine
Debbie Hendrick from McClatchy**

REPORTERS 1-16

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Good afternoon everyone. I'm joined by somebody you've met before: Major General Mark Hertling, who commands Multi-National Division – North, Task Force Iron. And he's here to provide you an update on his area of operations and activities there. I have just a couple of points to start with first. The United States and the Multi-National Force – Iraq congratulate the Iraqi people and the Iraqi security forces and the Government of Iraq for a successful Hajj pilgrimage. The Government of Iraq and their security forces organized the visa processing, the accountability of travelers as well as the transportation and security through two major ports of entry. Air travel was provided in and out of Baghdad, Basra, Irbil, Sulaimaniya as well as the recently reopened Mosul Airport which welcomed its first flights in 14 years. As a result of this impressive effort, more than 30,000 Iraqi citizens safely traveled to and from the holy sites in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The successful Hajj is another example of the Government of Iraq and its security forces that signals their continuing commitment to improved security and stability for all Iraqis. Earlier this week, Iraqi forces and concerned local citizens were again the first line of defense in courageously confronting the terrorists. On Sunday, in the Karadah District of Baghdad, a suicide terrorist detonated an explosive vest after being subdued by three

heroic Iraqi Army soldiers. The attack occurred outside a neighborhood advisory council building killing all three soldiers and two civilian bystanders. The selfless sacrifices of these three martyrs, saved the lives of many others that day and embodies the courage of the Iraqi Army. On Monday, al-Qaeda targeted the Sunni Endowment and a prominent leader within the community of Iraqis who are volunteering to protect their neighborhoods from al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremists. This is yet another instance of the courage and sacrifice of concerned local citizens standing up to brutal killers. The attacks against the Iraqi Army, the Sunni Endowment, [and] the concerned local citizens are tragic. They are also examples of why Iraqi citizens have increasingly rejected al-Qaeda. These attacks and the heartless attack on a funeral last week are disturbing evidence that al-Qaeda is willing to kill even those it needs for its support. These attacks will only strengthen our resolve to further support the courage and strength of the Iraqi people, close ranks against the terrorists, and pursue those who wreak this senseless violence. As operations continue against those who are perpetrating the violence, there are also steps being taken to promote peace and reconciliation at an important moment for Iraq; and these are happening at the local level as well. On Thursday in the Saha neighborhood in Baghdad, over 60 local leaders met at a national police headquarters for a reconciliation meeting. The

meeting was attended by the local police commanders, civic leaders, and sheiks. And the group agreed to improve infrastructure security, create a reconciliation council, and guide the efforts to properly resettle displaced citizens in that neighborhood. And on Friday in Adhamiyah, key leaders from the Iraqi Army and local security volunteers held a meeting to discuss the way forward there. And at the meeting, soldiers and security volunteers worked to form a stronger collaborative relationship. We also welcome the recent commitment by al-Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr calling for the continued compliance with his pledge of honor to halt attacks and outreach from him with other Iraqi leaders to expand the peace. The Sadr Trends compliance with this pledge of honor is improving the conditions for national reconciliation and security for all Iraqis. It also continues to allow coalition and Iraqi security forces to increase the pressure on al-Qaeda terrorists. Though bands of criminals are seeking to tarnish Sadr's pledge of honor, the coalition forces will continue to show restraint against the faithful followers who fulfill his commitment. The criminals who do not honor his pledge and who terrorize Iraqi citizens, assassinate Iraqi officials, and turn further towards Iranian support for extremists will not be shown the same restraint as they dishonor the pledge made by al-Sayyid Muqtada al-Sadr. We applaud Iraq's political, civic, and religious leadership for their courage and commitment. It is helping

galvanize and unify Iraqis from all communities to look forward and find the shared vision for achieving their goals. Finally, coalition and Iraqi forces began Operation Phantom Phoenix yesterday to pursue al-Qaeda in Iraq and other extremist elements. Operation Iron Harvest is part of Phantom Phoenix and is being led by Major General Hertling who is here today to give you an update on his unit's component of this corps-level offensive operation. Mark.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Good afternoon and As-Salāmu `Alaykum. It's good to see you all again. A few weeks ago I was here and told you about Multi-National Division-North's area of responsibility which is shown on the map board to my right. I also told you we had approximately 24,000 coalition force soldiers, airmen, Marines, and sailors under our command and about 50,000 Iraqi security forces...Iraqi Army forces rather and about 80,000 Iraqi police in the Multi-National Division – North area. It's also about the size of the state of Georgia. Our primary mission continues to be pursuing, capturing, and destroying al-Qaeda and other extremist groups that hinder the security of the Iraqi people. As I was talking to you here last month, we were in the early stages of gathering intelligence and setting forces, both U.S. and Iraqi, for operation Iron Harvest which Kevin just mentioned. We began collection efforts in key areas to find out

how al-Qaeda in Iraq is operating in the northern region, specifically in Diyala Province although we're conducting operations in all four of the provinces where we have soldiers. Coalition forces and Iraqi security forces conducted several intelligence-driven operations over the last several weeks which resulted in [a] significant amount of information we are now using to continue to attack AQI. As an update, the intelligence we gathered over the last month allowed coalition forces and Iraqi security forces to capture or kill over 20 key emirs—AQI and other extremist group leaders—in every one of our four provinces. Some specific examples are Haider al-Afri who was the main security emir of Mosul [and] who was responsible for organizing the flow of foreign fighters into Iraq and for operations in western Mosul. Moula Jassem[ph], the emir of Jaish al-Islami in Kirkuk Province who had ties to AQI as well as Ali Hansel[ph] the financial emir of Kirkuk. And we have also captured Mohammed Omar Alawi[ph] and Leith Khalid Havi[ph], both of whom were involved in financial support to AQI in Kirkuk. Abu Bilal who is a military emir responsible for deadly IED and VBIED attacks throughout Iraq who we captured in Salah ad Din Province. Maqmour Dalawi[ph], the facilitator of the second Golden Mosque bombing in Samarra which destroyed the minarets there and I would specifically like to congratulate the Iraqi security forces on their

capture of that individual. And in Diyala, one of the individuals we've captured was Ali al-Jabouri[ph] who planned, coordinated, and directed numerous suicide attacks in Baqubah and Kalas[ph]. As many of you reported recently, while we have seen a reduction in the number of attacks in most of the areas of Iraq and to a lesser degree in Northern Iraq, there has been a marked increase in AQI activity in Diyala Province in the form of high profile, spectacular events. This does not mean an increase of attacks, but it does mean an increase in these kinds of high-profile events. You have all reported on instances of intimidation of the population; increases in the use of suicide vests against civilian, Iraqi security force, and coalition force targets; and a variety of brutal and barbaric acts against civilians who are attempting to secure stability. You all and we are calling them the CLCs, the concerned local citizens. So, while the number of attacks are actually down throughout Iraq and in our area as well, these spectacular events and individual acts of intimidations are designed to incite fear in the population and I'd like to show you a film of an example. What you are about to see on the film are three individuals pulling another individual from the trunk of a car in the middle of an open field and then throwing him into a ditch and assassinating him. You can see these three individuals now pulling them off. There will be a little bit of a break in the film shortly as the camera slews. This was off of a[n]

unmanned aerial vehicle. And now you see several of them shooting him and leaving him in the ditch. What you are seeing on the screen is the brutal execution of an individual in Diyala. We followed the individuals who committed this act to a bed-down location through that same video, through the same Predator, captured them, and then found additional information linking all three of them to AQI. This is one of four videos I have personally viewed in the last three weeks demonstrating the nature of the enemy we face. In one of those videos which we decided not to show today, after the terrorists shot the individual and left him in the ditch, they then beheaded him. On Monday, the citizens of Diyala found five severed heads in their towns with Arabic writing in blood on the forehead that said, "Join the concerned citizens and you will end up like this." Those five heads were left in a road leading into Baquba. These are the actions of the desperate and barbaric organization we know as al-Qaeda in Iraq. With our brothers in the Iraqi security forces and the brave men and women of Iraq, we will continue to pursue these brutal murderers. This is what we—coalition and Iraqi forces—are doing during Operation Iron Harvest. We are pursuing AQI and other extremists in the MND-North area of operations. It will be a difficult fight but we will continue to execute simultaneous operations in each one of our four provinces. Operation Phantom Phoenix was announced by Lieutenant General Odierno yesterday.

Our portion of this overall corps operation, Iron Harvest, is underway and it has been for the last few days. The main effort of that operation is taking place in Diyala near Muqdadiyah with a reinforced Stryker brigade, a reinforced 5th Iraqi Army Division, and a variety of other forces to include aviation, U.S. and Iraqi special operations forces, and other enablers. Governor Ra'ad of Diyala and Major General Salem, the commander of the 5th IA, are committed to ensuring the security of the people of Diyala and we will all work toward that end. While we will continue to pursue extremists, we know we won't measure the success of this operation by the kinetic affects over the next few weeks. Instead, success will be found in the weeks and months after this operation is complete as citizens see improved security and economic advancements. I just came from the town of Sherween where I talked to several of the local citizens who are already beginning to see the affects of al-Qaeda leaving their area and it was a significant emotional event for me. With that, we'll take your questions on Operation Iron Harvest or anything else you'd like to talk about. Yes, sir.

REP1:

Ray Olmstead from NPR News. In Iron Harvest, we have reports that in addition to the American and Iraqi troops, Iraqi police and also some of the Awakening council militias were involved in that. Is that what you mean by the other enablers? And can you talk a

little more about that?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING**

Well, when I was talking about the enablers—specifically in Diyala Province—it's more military enablers; different types of equipment and different types of forces. But you are right about the participation by Iraqi police and the concerned local citizens. And as you look at the map, some of those things are happening in towns like Hawija and Samarra, in Tikrit, Baiji, and the Awakening movement in the north are all beginning to occur now. We have about 15,000, a little less, concerned local citizens who are standing up to help the Iraqi security forces because they are sick of the violence. That movement is beginning to come about in Diyala as well.

REP1:

But when you were talking about this operation, were there armed members of the Awakening who participated in, you know, the actual offensive or ...?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

In Diyala? No.

REP1:

They weren't. And IP?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

But they will participate as we secure the area. This was a very

highly kinetic operation and it was...we required a lot of synchronization of efforts so we worked very closely with Major General Salem of the 5th Iraqi Army, with Major General Abdul Kareem out of the Diyala Operations Center. So this was more, at least early on, an Army effort, both U.S. and Iraqi. It will gradually evolve where more police will come in and concerned local citizens groups will stand up.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Yeah. And what I think...just to follow on to General Hertling's point is they are generally used for defensive security—to help secure neighborhoods—not in the kind of offensive operation that the MND is involved in.

REP1:

And just as a quick follow up. After what happened in Mosul, I'm wondering, you know, how much coordination of concerns over infiltration in the Iraqi Army with these two soldiers who were killed.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Oh, I'd love to address that. And what I'll tell you is that has been an interesting event. Because what happened in Mosul was the act of one, possibly two or three—and we're still trying to determine that through investigations—individual who had infiltrated a great unit. And what I'll tell you, I spent some time with General

Moutha[ph] who is the commander of the 2nd Infantry...2nd Iraqi Army Division and the brigade commander of the brigade in which that occurred, Colonel Taha. And they were both devastated by that event. That was a criminal act by a murderous individual who had infiltrated the ranks. And some of the reports that have been discussed about what did or did not occur there, I've found extremely interesting because some of the reports that I've seen have been totally false in terms of what occurred.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Sir.

REP2:

Brad Brooks with the Associated Press. Could you speak to us a little bit generally about the scope of Phantom Phoenix and maybe how it compares to past operations? For instance, like Phantom Thunder or something like that, in terms of how many troops are involved, how long it might last, just...?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Yeah. I can talk about the Iron Harvest piece of Phantom Phoenix. The Phantom Phoenix is the corps levels event. It's a corps level operation. And General Odierno is pulling together MND-North, MND-Baghdad, MNF-West, [and] MND-Central into that operation. And we all have a part to play as part of Phantom Phoenix. I can tell you in the MND-North area of operations as part

of Phantom Phoenix—the Iron Harvest operation that we’re conducting now—we’ve got about, as I said before, about 24,000 U.S. soldiers and about 50,000 Iraqi Army soldiers all doing different operations throughout the area of operations.

REP2: How long do you see Iron Harvest lasting?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** We’re going to continue to pursue AQI in our area of operations. I will not or cannot give you an end date of that. Yes, ma’am.

REP3: I’m Debbie Block, Voice of America Radio and TV. Would you please explain what you mean by spectacular events? That could mean a lot of things. And secondly, would you also talk about the CLCs? Are they backing off in any way since some of these heads were found on the road? How are you encouraging people to continue being in that? It’s always easier of course when you have a peaceful area to get more people involved.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Right.

REP4: But you’ve got a different situation.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Yeah, we do. First, your first question—and because I’m now focused on CLCs I forgot what the first question was.

REP4: Spectacular events...

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Spectacular events, yeah. Thanks. A spectacular event is when a woman with a suicide vest, an individual, goes up to a group of people and blows themselves up. And it immediately becomes newsworthy because of the uniqueness and by—I hate to use the word to describe it—but by the spectacular event that it is. A large truck filled with explosives blowing up a bridge when nothing else has happened in the area for months. When the people who are trying to destroy the infrastructure of Iraq will go after a specific target with all their might to not only affect that target, but also get a splash on the news or in media outlets so it appears that things are still reeling from violence which in many cases they are not. But because of one event, it appears this is happening everywhere. So that's what I would categorize as a spectacular event. Something that happens once or twice and it leaves a mark on an entire area or an entire province that things are out of control. In terms of the CLC, and maybe Kevin can help me out here, but I'll tell you in the MND-North area, it is literally different in every one of our provinces in terms of the size and strength and capability. In Kirkuk, as an example, the CLCs are contributing significantly. And in fact, today alone, we got four more caches that...tips from

CLC members. Last night, we were able to get six IEDs off the road only because of tips from concerned local citizens in Kirkuk. That's because the police force is very good and the Army is very active. As we go into Diyala Province, which is more exemplary of the police just beginning to stand up and the Iraqi Army, specifically the 5th Iraqi Army Division, beginning to wield power in that area, the CLCs don't have as much support from the formalized security forces so they're not as strong. As we do this operation in Muqdadiyah as an example, we will immediately flood the area with Iraqi Army followed on by Iraqi police stations in the middle of the towns which haven't seen that kind of security lately. And then follow up by signing up concerned citizens to help protect the static locations as Kevin said earlier.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

And I would just follow up what General Hertling said by saying if you look across Iraq and you look at the experience of the concerned local citizen effort in a variety of different communities, many of them are very different—they reflect the diversity of Iraq—perhaps the most distinctive, common characteristic has been their courage. And it continues to be courage even in the face of the kinds of barbaric attacks that we have seen in the last several days. Which currently reflect the level of effort that al-Qaeda is now having to generate because the Iraqi people have rejected their

ideology, their corrupt practices, and their oppressive behavior. So whether it was on the heels of Sheik Sattar's brutal assassination in Anbar, we saw, in this case really, his brother step up and immediately assume the mantle of responsibility in Anbar Province. We have seen the same thing as concerned local citizens have been attacked in other communities. They have been very courageous in standing their post and continuing to serve their country and their fellow citizens and the neighborhoods they are protecting. So it is a very common characteristic is the courage of these CLCs.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

If I can give an example and I'm smiling because I've got this picture of Moustafa in my head. Earlier...late last week, I'm sorry, I was on a patrol with a battalion out of the 5th Iraqi Army Division in a town called Hashnavat[ph]. And the battalion commander was introducing me to his soldiers. And there was a group of individuals off to the side, all in civilian dress, and one individual specifically looked like he was a leader. That was Moustafa. He had jeans, a plaid shirt, and a bandanna on his head with an AK-47. And I started talking to him through my interpreter who was in the room and he said, "I'm just a farmer." He said, "I don't know a general from a private but I want...." He says, "My brother's cars have been stolen, my land has been raped, and I want to come out and protect my community from these terrorists who were intimidating

me.” He was a little bit over weight. You could tell that he wasn’t a soldier from the standpoint of how he looked. But he was just out there helping the soldiers to drive these evil people from his town of Hashnavat[ph].

REP4: May I just ask you...I wanted to get some figures; how many CLCs do you figure there are in Kirkuk? How many in Diyala altogether at this point?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** In my four provinces, we have a total of 15,000. Actually it’s 14,094. And I could break it down a little bit more. I can talk to you later on because we’ve got a list by province and what it is. Yes, sir.

REP5: Josh Partlow with The Washington Post. Can you tell us a little bit about what sort of resistance your soldiers have been facing so far in this operation? We’ve read some reports from the people up there that there’s been some roadside bombs; that there’s been small arms fire like kind of combat on the streets.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Yeah. In the specific area of the bread basket in Eastern Diyala, it’s been less than we anticipated. And we think there are several factors behind that. We...and I’d prefer not to discuss those now but we’re continuing to pursue. It was interesting because there

were a couple of embeds saying, “Hey, this hasn’t been so bad. A couple of small arms fires. A couple of RPGs fired yesterday. Several roadside bombs yesterday.” But not the major defense that we initially thought. Now this operation’s only been going on for about a day and a half in full force right now. I think I’ll be able to report a little bit more toward the end of the month how it went. But I think we have some areas that we’re still very interested in where we think the enemy has withdrawn to and we’re continuing to pursue.

REP5: A quick follow up. As one Iraqi Army official up there told us, they estimated 20 to 30 suspected insurgents killed. Is that...?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Yeah, that’s about right.

REP5: That’s about it?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** In the bread basket area, the Muqdadiyah area which is this area right in here; about right. Yeah. But I...yeah, I don’t want to put a body count on it. But what I’ll tell you is we are tracking some of the leaders and we are also tracking where some of the fighters have gone and we’re continuing to pursue. Yes, sir.

REP6: Asks question in Arabic.

INT: Question to General Bergner. In some areas in Baghdad, and particularly in Rusafa District, some of the Awakening members and leaders have been attacked and they have been threatened. Yesterday the...there were some flyers distributed by the Islamic Army and al-Qaeda and is threatening the Awakening members. So how would you respond to this?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Well, the first thing I would say in response to that is I would speak to the courage of those members of the Awakening and their commitment as citizens in their neighborhoods to reject al-Qaeda, to reject the terrorists, and to work with the Iraqi security forces, with their government—the Government of Iraq—and with coalition forces to take the courageous stand that they're taking. It is intimidating. And it is intimidating in the face of the kinds of brutal attacks that al-Qaeda has conducted in the last ten days or so. So the fact that those concerned local citizens are continuing to serve their community and work closely with their security forces and their government is a great testimony to them. Shukran.

MAJ GEN HERTLING: Yes, sir.

REP7: Sir, when you were talking about the groups who were fighting in

the north, you said other extremist groups. Does this include P.K.K.? Because yesterday the U.S. president, George Bush said P.K.K. is a common threat to Turkey and to America.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Uh-huh. It currently is not someone we are in...it's not an organization we personally in MND-North are engaging because they are not in any of the provinces where we have soldiers. We have not seen any elements of P.K.K. in Salah ad Din, Ninawa, Kirkuk, or Diyala. So I would have to answer no.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

The point that was made though is that all three countries—Turkey, Iraq, and the United States—all recognize the P.K.K. as the terrorist organization that it is. They all recognize the threat that it represents. And most recently to the citizens of Turkey. And so there is that trilateral recognition of them as a terrorist organization. Sir.

REP8:

Could you give us a little bit of detail on the civilian projects that go along with these operations?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Yeah, that's a great question. Thanks for asking that. As we complete kinetic operations, one of the things that we try to do is follow up immediately with joint security stations which are the

stations in the middle of key areas where there has been violence in the past. It will have both coalition...will have all coalition forces, Iraqi security forces, Iraqi police, and the concerned local citizens in the center parts of town to ensure security stays...remains. What we're doing in Diyala as a follow on to that is rapidly pushing money back into the area to improve the destruction of living quarters, of houses, of mosques. Things that the governor is very interested in standing back up and helping the people get the essential services back and running. That's a very difficult task but it's something we want to do immediately after the kinetic operations cease. And then quickly following that, we hope, are some investment opportunities from business organizations to get things like micro grants or actual infrastructure repair from the Government of Iraq. So the ministries within the government play a very critical piece in terms of getting money into the areas that are most savaged by the AQI elements. I hope that answers your questions.

REP8: Just a quick follow up...

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** If I could add one more thing to that though. I mean one of the things that is critical to our operations is the linkages with the PRTs, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams. And what I'll tell you is this

time, my tour this time is very different than last time because that PRT representative from the State Department is an instrumental member of our force as we do the campaign plans. Every time we've done the planning for one of the operations, the PRT leader in each one of our provinces is right in there with the military planners saying, "Okay. As soon as you are done with this operation, we're going to come in and attempt to do this and bring USAID in or bring the State Department money or bring the monies from the ministers in, or bring the rule of law courts in." So it's a series of things. It's been interesting to me to watch the State Department evolve as part of our mission planning and literally do the sort of sync matrixes that we've been taught to do as military officers through our whole career. They're doing the same things now with the military partners that they have.

REP8: Just a quick follow up. Do you have any specific metrics on how you would, like, gauge the success of any of these projects?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Yeah, it's really linked to what the governors want to do. And we're tied to them very closely in terms of either things like rule of law and how many courses could or how many cases could be tried by the courts or how fast we stand up the agricultural capabilities of the communities or how fast we get money from micro grants down

to the small businesses depending on what province you're in. The area that we're in right now, the Muqdadiyah area—the bread basket—is largely agricultural so we're trying to do a rapid infusion as soon as we're done with the military operations with agricultural factors that will help get them back on their feet there. It was interesting walking through that same town of Sherween this morning, one of the young men of the town told me, with his family standing nearby, that 70 percent of the town had left during the AQI intimidation campaign. And the fields, you could almost tell where they had been because they were fallow and overgrown. And his father was out working the field at the time and he said, "You know, we just want to get back to farming our crops." And so we're going to try to help them do that. Yes, sir.

REP9:

Hi. Peter Kraft[ph] from Reuters. I wonder if you can comment, given the success that we saw in really 2006 and 2007 in other parts of the country like Anbar and even parts of Baghdad in really driving out al-Qaeda and coming to a point where brigade-size maneuver or kinetic operations aren't really necessary anymore, why does it still seem to be so persistent a problem in your area? And do you think there needs to be, perhaps, a rebalancing of forces to give you more troops to do this kind of job?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Well, first of all, I'm not sure I buy your premise that there wasn't brigade-sized operations. The main reason those enemy forces were expelled from Anbar and Baghdad were, in fact, because there were brigade-sized operations down there. I'm sorry?

REP9:

But now, you still have...

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Well, but now because the people that left Anbar and Baghdad have moved up into my area. And quite frankly, there has been a reallocation of forces into MND-North. I'd prefer not to go into it but what I found was interesting was there was a lot of conjecture about what was or was not happening in Diyala in terms of force sizing as the surge diminished. But what I'll tell you is there is more force...there's more U.S. coalition forces and Iraqi security forces in Diyala now than there ever has been. So we're attempting to increase the tempo of operations in that specific province because it has not seen the kind of tempo that the other provinces have seen lately. And I think another factor in terms of the northern area is, if you're a student of this part of Iraq, it's fascinating the different dynamics that are involved in each one of the provinces. Each one of our four provinces has different threats, different dynamics, and different requirements for both the military and the security forces. So that's what we're looking at right now. And in fact, in the past, it

has been an area where there was an economy of force from both U.S. and, to a lesser degree, Iraqi. Now that economy of force is turning around, I've been given more forces by General Odierno to conduct operations and the Iraqi security forces have grown significantly in the last year. So that's allowing us to continue to pursue...

REP9: Can you give any specific [unintelligible] forces how much more you're going to get?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** No. I can't be any more...I will be...I could be more specific but I won't be. I've got enough to do what we need to do right now. Yes, sir.

REP10: Hi.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** And I'm sorry for being so flip about that but I'd prefer not to tell the enemy what I have because we're going to continue to go after them. Yes, sir.

REP10: Hi. Mark [unintelligible], Time Magazine. Just following up, could you maybe offer your own assessment as to why things are so persistently violent in Diyala Province given the steady build up of

U.S. forces? And secondly, could you share your thinking on why you needed to launch this operation now?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Yeah. Diyala Province specifically, as Governor Ra'ad reminds me every time I see him, is a little Iraq. It has all the problems and challenges in this province that all of Iraq has in terms of culture, tribal affiliations, religions, and just overall dynamics. It also was a province that didn't see a lot of forces ensuring stability over the long haul. There would be forces that would go in and then come out just because it was an econ...all of Northern Iraq has been an economy of force region over the last several years. So I think that may be part of it; that there wasn't the stable security that we're trying to establish now with the Iraqi Army. As well as the fact that the Iraqi Army division that's standing up in this particular province is one of the newer ones. So as General Salem gets his feet on the ground and continues to build his organization—which he's doing by the way, he's building another brigade in the next several months—I think that will provide security as well as some increases in police forces in that particular province as well.

REP10:

And the second question: why now?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Why now? Because we can. Baghdad is more secure. Anbar is more

secure. And we can focus a little bit on...we're pursuing. That's what we're doing. Why now? Because the other places are more secure and the enemy has moved into these provinces more. Yes, sir.

REP11: Grant...

REP10: Just want to...sorry. When you talk about that there was less resistance—and I'm sort of returning to the question I had a little earlier about coordination with the Iraqi Army—you know there was concern that, you know, some of the people who are in Diyala are people who squirted out of Baghdad, who've come out of other places, and that perhaps why you met less resistance than you thought was that, you know, they knew...some of them may have known what was going on and gotten out ahead of time. And I'm wondering if you can talk as much as you can about to what extent you're able to coordinate with the Iraqi Army at this point. And about where these people, you know, how are they kind of seeing it. Are they just seeing operations or seeing helicopters. I mean...

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Well, that's part of it and I think that was even reported today that—by one of the media reps who were embedded with us—that in fact, some of the people on the ground had told them they left

yesterday because they saw increased amounts of helicopters. And that's probably true. A commander is always concerned with operational security. We have coordinated actions with the various division commanders. But I think the operational security within Iraq, even the use of cell phones or unsecured radio devices by the Iraqi Army because they haven't...they don't have the secure encrypted communications here like we have, can be picked up by others. So that may be a part of it. But just the fact that soldiers talk. When our soldiers talk, when U.S. soldiers talk, they're usually on a patrol base and they don't tell anybody about it. When Iraqi soldiers are talking, they're at home or in their neighborhoods or in their encampments. So we are still very concerned about operational security as we call it. But what I will tell you is that I'm very comfortable dealing with every single one of the commanders I deal with in the four divisions that I work with. I'm very comfortable with them.

REP10:

That all, I mean, that all sounds like, sort of benign, that it may have been word of mouth. But you're not concerned there's actually active leaking of communication between people in the know...?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

No, I would tell you I'm sure there is. I'm sure there is active leaking of communication. And that's why we've got to keep a tight

bond in operational security. Hell, there's active leaking in U.S. forces when we're at home. I mean they'll go home and tell their wives something that'll happen and it will be on a phone and, you know, it will be off and about. So you always have to be savvy in terms of what does and does not get out of your organization in terms of plans for upcoming operations.

REP10:

Sorry. I just want...I guess I'm wondering...I'm concerned about what might be essentially moles; I mean people who are members of the forces who are affiliated with al-Qaeda.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Are they in the military and the security forces? I'm assuming they are. Yes. And that's why...I mean we had an incident of it with this shooting death. So I am sure there are some infiltrators within the Iraqi Army; some that might not be as patriotic to the nation of Iraq as we would like soldiers to be. I can't comment any more about that. Sometimes that's human nature. There have been instances in our Army as recently as a few years ago where soldiers did things that we didn't want them to do against their fellow soldiers. So I mean that's just...I hate to say it but it's a bad part of human nature. So that's why commanders have to be very careful in terms of discussing plans and operations. Yes, ma'am.

REP12:

Debbie Hendrick from McClatchy. Can you describe a bit how what is happening in the other provinces outside Diyala is different from what's going on in Diyala?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

I can. We're conducting operations in all four of our provinces today. In fact, this morning we had 15 different company level or higher combined operations with Iraqi security forces going on just today. Outside of Diyala, we've got an operation in al-Tuk[ph] Kirkuk first. We've got operations going on outside...just south of Hawija. We've got an...we had an air assault of an entire battalion in the Riyadh valley which is south of Hawija over the last few days which has been very successful in uncovering caches. We've got a battalion of U.S. forces along with national police from Iraq in Samarra which is doing some very interesting operations in terms of ensuring that city comes back to life. And over the last three weeks they've been very successful at doing that. To the west of Samarra, I'm sorry, to the west of Baiji, we've got an operation going on in that desert right where that eagle patch is, right around in that area, going after caches that we've had tips from local citizens telling us about. And up in Mosul, both in the city itself and just north of Tal Afar, we have operations ongoing based on some intel-driven raids or some intelligence operations which is allowing us to do company and above higher raids.

REP12:

How do you expect it to progress in those other provinces? It seems like you're targeting something a little bit different; it's much more intense in Diyala.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

It's different in Diyala. Each one of the provinces is intense in a different way. And each one of the governors and the various Iraqi Army divisions in each one of the provinces are contributing based on what they know about that province itself. For example, General Kershid[ph] who is in Western Ninawa Province, has got a very interesting fight against border leakers. He also has some very interesting attacks going on against those who would flow across Iraq's borders and attempt to find safe houses between the western border with Syria and the town of Mosul which has been a critical piece for the terrorists to try and hold on to. So there's a lot of fights going on in Mosul itself. I mean I...if you've got an hour or two I could give you some things about each one of the provinces because they're all very interesting. And that's kind of another interesting thing which we talked about in terms of the CLCs. In Anbar Province, it was truly an Awakening by a bunch of sheiks in the same tribe that brought people together that had the same view of things. We've got 126 different tribes in the MND-North area of operations. Seven different religions. Four different provinces and

then the Kurdish regions as well. So it is a very diverse area within Iraq all with different challenges and things that the provincial governors want to happen. Yes, sir.

REP13: General Petraeus told us a couple of weeks ago that Nina...Mosul in Ninawah, I guess, Province were the...was the one province in the country that the number of attacks was not going down but was going up.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** Right.

REP 13: I guess could you compare the relative al-Qaeda threat in that province to Diyala? And I guess, you know, is there...do you expect more operations in that province as well?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** We are. And in fact, while right now the focus of all our enablers—the term I used before—is on Diyala, we are beginning to build intelligence in Mosul. We have seen many of the AQI leaders in Ninawa Province and specifically in Mosul coming in and out of the country and changing their techniques of attack and we're continuing to track them. We've got some very interesting reflections about AQI leadership in ISI and Mosul in terms of them running out of money and doing things like kidnapping and

intimidations and murders for hire that's trying to get them money. And we've also seen some reflections that the lower level fighters are very upset with their leaders for two reasons. Number one that they are taking some of the money they're supposed to use to pay them, those fighters, and leaving the country with it. And number two, the number of people that have been captured in Ninawa Province, specifically in and around Mosul, have been telling about the disorganization and naming other names within AQI which has allowed us to continue to target others. So yeah, Mosul...General Petraeus is exactly on it. Mosul is an area that we're continuing to try and derive new targets from and we're attacking in that area every day. Yes, sir.

REP14: Can you offer an assessment as to why Mosul is showing signs of trouble lately after being quiet for awhile?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:** I'm not sure it was ever quiet for awhile. I think just the number of attacks have risen and fallen given different things. But I also think, again, it's the evolution of the organization and what is important to al-Qaeda. Diyala is important to al-Qaeda because it is their center of the caliphate. Mosul is important because as you look at it, and I was looking at it the other day and one of my staff officers who is somewhat of an historian said that it's a lot like Gettysburg because

it allows you to go different places and it links a lot of different roads to different things. And that also was exactly right. I mean you look how it flows up to the Syrian border into the western desert. It has...it's a very cosmopolitan city because it has so many different cultures: Chaldeans, Assyrians, Sunnis, Shi'as, Kurds. So people can hide in there. And it's an important city. It's always been an important city to al-Qaeda. And they've always stated Mosul's been an important city.

REP15:

Two questions. How can you measure your success? And secondly, I have not been in your area but I've been in other areas so I'm aware that...I've been on these air assaults and things where al-Qaeda is being pushed out. But then what seems to happen as you well know yourselves, is that these people tend to go to other areas. You specifically have an area where people came from Anbar and Baghdad; moved up. Are you concerned that they're going to continue to move up, let's say to Mosul? Is your plan to try to kind of get people in one place and then push everybody out? What is your thinking on this?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

My belief is that as long as we're pursuing them and they haven't set up stakes, we're in great shape. We're continuing to pursue al-Qaeda throughout the width and depth of the battle space. What's

very different now though is with what's occurred over the last couple of years, as you well know, is the stand up of the Iraqi security forces. The places we can't be, they are. And as the Iraqi Army gets stronger and the Iraqi police stand up and as they're being helped, at least in the interim, by these concerned local citizens who are tired of the violence, there's no place left for these folks to go. We think there's a couple of key areas that they will continue to move to and from and if you were to visit us up in the MND-North, you know there's a lot of open space and a lot of very different terrain from mountains to jungles up there and jungles...date palm groves. It's a very diverse terrain and a lot of places for people to hide. But as police take over the block or as the Army keeps going in an area, the places to hide become less and less. So we just have to continue to pursue.

REP15:

Is that how you're going to measure your success?

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

I think we're going to measure our success in a couple of...and if I were to show you the ways we measure our success in terms of decreased attacks, reduction in IEDs, less small arms fire, all the normal kinetic things are one area. But the other thing is the improvement, and this is where the PRTs help, the improvement in the economy. The improvement in the local government. Some

things that you see now that you wouldn't have expected a year ago in terms of how governors are talking to the central government, how businesses are beginning to stand up. The momentum is there. We just have to continue to help it and help the Iraqi people maintain security.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

And that's really the point that I'd just echo for General Hertling is it's about population security. You have to go into these areas, you have to go re-establish local security so that the population feels that. And it gives rise to things like concerned local citizens, the courage to help protect their own community. It enables the further expansion of the Iraqi security forces into those areas. And all of those are the precursors, obviously, to the kinds of economic development, return of the rule of law, reconstruction activities that the Iraqi people need very much. And so in the process of pursuing al-Qaeda, you are expanding population security into these communities. And you're going to leave the necessary Iraqi forces and the right conditions there for them to sustain that security over time. Okay. One last question. Yes, sir.

REP16:

I guess if we could talk about the spectacular attacks again because we have seen this sort of worsening in those...just over the last two weeks or so. I wonder if you can talk about that sort of increased

frequency of these spectacular attacks. Is that something you guys predicted and is that something you see going on for awhile? Do you have a way to deal with that or is that your Achilles' heel?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Well, first of all, I would point to the fact that al-Qaeda—and we have said this for quite some time—continues to seek the spectacular attack as a tool to incite the sectarian tensions that were so damaging to the Iraqi people and to the country of Iraq over the course of 2006 and early 2007. So it is part of their modus operandi, it is part of the barbaric violence that they have relied upon. The most recent attacks are interesting in the sense that they are, at least in the most recent ones I talked about today, they are targeting concerned local citizens and those who have rejected al-Qaeda which in and of itself is perhaps an indication that al-Qaeda recognizes that they've...the paradigm has changed. And so that is why they're targeting concerned local citizens or targeting members of the Awakening in addition to other indiscriminate violence that they're continuing to perpetrate. So in terms of the number and the density of attacks and so forth, I'd say we're a little close still to those attacks to make an assessment of what they...what the trend is. And so we'll look at it over time. But it's one of those that I think you have to have a little time and space from those most recent attacks to see what the trend might be.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

I think it's interesting you use the phrase of Achilles' heel because I think these spectacular attacks of suicide bombers and suicide vests are, in fact, going to be AQI's Achilles' heel. They're going to continue to kill innocent people. And that, in fact, is what's generated the concerned local citizens in the first place and it's sort of a reverse counterintuitive logic. They're trying to intimidate people to join them by killing them and it's causing more people to go against them.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Yeah.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

It's unfortunate and it's tragic and it's horrific and brutal when you see the kind of murders that the Iraqis and our soldiers have seen on the street. When you see severed heads. When you see people kidnapped, have their family held, and them being told that unless you drive this suicide truck laden with ammunition, your family is going to die; that's not an ideology, that's a threat. And that's why I think the good people of Iraq, the 90 percent of the people of Iraq who just want to get back to normal, are rejecting this barbaric brand of extremism. And it will continue. And I'm lecturing a little bit here but that's the things that we're seeing every day on the street. And 90 percent of the Iraqi people just want to go to school,

have a job, and enjoy their families, and practice their religion. They don't want to be intimidated or have their heads cut off because they don't happen to believe what someone wants them to believe.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Okay. I want to close by saying, again, thanks to General Hertling for coming down here today and talking directly to you and give you a sense of his operations up north. And we really, really appreciate him taking the time to do it. And thank you all very much. Masalama.

**MAJ GEN
HERTLING:**

Masalama.