

**PRESS CONFERENCE:**

**Major General Kevin Bergner, Senior Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq  
Major General Qassim Atta, Military Spokesman for Operation Fardh al-Qanoon**

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Major General Qassim Atta**

**REPORTERS:**

**Amil[ph] Jabar[ph] from the Irayat[ph] Newspaper  
Ahmed Jassem from Al Arabiya Newspaper  
Haidr[ph] Nasir[ph]. Baghdadiyah TV  
Mike Tharp from McClatchy Newspapers  
Hafida[ph] Safi[ph] from Cultural Agency**

**Unidentified reporters from Salam TV, Radio Sawa, Aswat Al-Iraq Agency, Nina Agency, Al Wasat Magazine, Al Hura TV**

**REPORTERS 1-13**

**\*REP1 = REPORTER 1**

**\*INT = INTERPRETER**

**MAJ GEN                    [Speaks in Arabic.]  
ATTA:**

**INT:**

In the name of God. Ladies and gentlemen. As-Salāmu `Alaykum everyone. We welcome you today in this updating of the operations for the Iraqi forces and for the Multi-National Forces. And I have to thank Major General Bergner for his attendance and participation with us in this press conference and also for the presentation of the update until...from 15 until...15 May...from 15 May until 3...June 3rd. First, the reports and the database at the Commanding Operations in Baghdad and the ministries of interior and defense and health indicated that there is a decrease...a huge decrease in the casualties in May compared with the percentage of the casualties of the same month in the years of 2004, 2005, and [200]6 and 2007. I think that the slide that you can see could show the comparison of the ten days since the 21st [of] May until 31st of May in 2007. And also the difference between 21st [of] May until 31<sup>st</sup> [of] May in 2008. And you can witness that there was a huge decrease in the activities of the enemy. And in 2007 we had 15 car bombs, while in this month, in 2008, we didn't witness any car bombs in those ten days. There was one IED. One...there was no...any belt bombs. We used to have 172 incidents of indirect fire in 2007. For the same period, in 21st until 31st May, 2008, we have 27 incidents. Thirty-nine indirect fires in 2007 and seven in 2008. We found 1 unidentified body or 37 in 2007. In 2008, the same period, 9 only.

The assassinations...the first period, 9; now it's 2. The kidnapping operations were none. The total activities of the enemy in 2007 for the same time period were 316 activities or incidents. For the same period in 2008 it is 68 incidents. And this is from documents at the ministries of defense, interior, and health. This huge success and the decrease is an indication that there is a growing capability of the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi security forces that conduct the operation of Fardh Al-Qanoon and also an indication to the success of the other operations conducted by the Commanding Operations in Baghdad. Also, there is a presence for Prime Minister Maliki in the field to lead the security operations in Basra Province, Ninawa, and Baghdad as well. This gave a momentum to the security forces and raised their morale. Also, the presence of the commanders from the ministers of defense and interior in the field and also the commanding general of the Baghdad operation – all those helped in addition to the cooperation between the citizen...all those...and the Iraqi security forces. This helped in decreasing the violence and also contributed to the success of the operations. And also, we should also mention the support by the Multi-National Forces. You know that the Iraqi security forces started entering Sadr City on May 20, 2008 to carry out a security operation to provide the services called Peace Operation to enforce the law and also to restore the stability in the city. The performance of the security

forces was good and it witnessed a huge respect of human rights. And there was a follow up by Prime Minister Maliki for this operation so that we could have an update to the developments of the success – not only on the security level but also on the services and the committees that were formed to provide the services in Sadr City. And the commanding general of operations in Baghdad was one of the members in those committee. And we follow up in our leadership from the chief of staff and the commanding general of the operations in Baghdad and also the commanders of the 9th and 10th Division of the Iraqi Army. All those follow up the security development and also the services provided...the essential services provided to the people in Sadr City. And now the services and also through the Amanat Baghdad and other ministries are also providing the services. And also we praise the citizens and what they do to cooperate with us to eliminate the armed aspects and also to restrict the weapons to the citizens...to the government and to pursue the wanted individuals. We also ask through the media for the people of Sadr City to continue to provide support to the security forces so that we could eliminate all the armed aspects and we could apprehend all the wanted individuals so that this will facilitate the services and providing the services and will facilitate the work of the committees that provide the basic or essential services because this city needs those services. And the people in

Sadr City – starting from the children, women and elder, the tribe leaders – they welcomed the Iraqi security forces from the first day in operation...in Peace Operation. And I think those are the first moments of the entrance of the Iraqi security forces to Sadr City and how the citizens in Sadr City and the tribe leaders are welcoming those troops. And everyone, as I've said, welcomes the Iraqi security forces. And our forces now are deployed in all areas in Sadr City and they have full control over all the areas in Sadr City. But it is also well known to you that the final examinations for the intermediate level have...schools have started yesterday, on May 3rd...June 3rd, sorry. And also protecting the students and providing a good environment in the examination is...has become a part of the job of the Iraqi security forces that carry out Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. And the security forces provide protection and...for the citizens, that is, that...and tell them that the situation has changed and everyone could go to the schools and carry out the examinations without any fear or concern from the presence of the outlaws or the gangs. The security forces, of course, will respond quickly against any negative aspect that will show up during the aspects of examination not only in Sadr City but also in different...in all places in Baghdad. The Iraqi security forces and the commanding operation in Rusafa and the commanding gen-...the commanding of the 9th Iraqi Army managed...and also the

national police...the Iraqi national police in Rusafa also managed to capture 44 wanted individuals and seized 1,821 weapons...different kinds of weapons -- 35 different pistols and 46 RPGs, 29 mortar launchers and 215 IEDs, 110 anti-tank missiles...or mines, 134 kilograms of TNT and C4, 406 different kinds of rockets and 645 different mortar rounds, 300 different kinds of weapons and detonation cords, 26,199 different kinds of weapons, 18 rocket rails, 124 communication devices. All those were found in a total of 94 caches in Sadr City and most of those weapons were hidden in the public parks and schools and the government institutes and also in the public parking lots. And the citizen...the Iraqi citizen was the one who told us about those weapon caches. The children also contributed through the tips...through give us tips on those...on the locations of those explosives. And as you can see, there is a video about the weapons and caches found in this area. The Iraqi security forces are continuing their work in Rusafa. They continue the search operations and to pursue the wanted individuals. And, as I've said, there is a good welcoming by the forc-...the Iraqi citizens to the Iraqi security forces and we expect to find much more than...much more weapons now because the operation is still in its first stages. And the search operations will continue in Sadr City and also in Rusafa and in all areas until we make Baghdad a safe and stable area hopefully. In Karkh the 6th and the 2nd

national...Iraqi National Police managed to pursue 44 individuals and defused 66 IEDs and they seized a large amount of weapons and explosives and IEDs as well. In Khadamiyah, Al Amil neighborhood, Rahmaniya, Abu Ghraib and Mahmudiyah and Yusufiyah. And four days ago the security forces found...from the national...the Iraqi National Police found a large cache of weapons and explosives in Al Amil neighborhood in Quarter 300...803. And this is due to the tips provided from the citizens. And we took some media with us so that they could take a look at the cache that was hidden in one of the families—of the displaced families, in fact. And I think... as I recall, the weapons that we found there were 41 Katyusha rockets, 550 mortar rounds, 4 BKC machine guns, and also a large amount of explosives and...were buried in the garden of this particular house. And the TV stations also showed pictures of the cache. What we have accomplished: we killed five terrorists, we captured 460 wanted individuals, we detained 134 suspects, we freed eight kidnaps, we defused three car bombs and 138 IEDs. Also, we seized 38 vehicles or have no registration or license and those are stolen that belong to the government and some of them goes for the government...belongs to the government and the rest are for the citizens. And we make...and now those cars are under the control of the Iraqi security forces. We found 48,000 different kinds of weapons and also 11,000 small-arm weapons and 50

rocket, 450 pounds of TNT and C4. The Commanding Operation in Baghdad and based from operation...instructions from Prime Minister Maliki after, hopefully, the search operations end, we will make sort of an exhibition for the weapons that the Iraqi security forces seized. And we are now seeking a...to find a place that is large enough to present all those weapons because...and, hopefully, we will let the citizens know about this and we will invite the citizens and the officials starting from the members of the Parliament and the ministers to come and view the weapons that the Iraqi security forces seized in Rusafa and Karkh from the period starting from May 20th until now. It's been like two weeks ever since Operation Peace started. And the amount is...of weapons and explosives are like tons. And we have found hundreds of rockets and missiles. And there is a great development and, hopefully, we expect that more will be accomplished in the coming few period. Thank you very much. Now I'll give space to Major General Bergner.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Major General Qassim Atta, shukran jaziilan. As Major General Atta has described in his remarks, for the third week in a row, security incidents in Iraq are at the lowest levels in some four years. These numbers reflect fewer attacks on Iraqi civilians, as General Qassim pointed out; fewer attacks on Iraqi and coalition

forces; and fewer attacks on government infrastructure. These security gains follow the coordinated offensive operations over the past year and the recent security operations that General Qassim mentioned in Baghdad, Mosul, and Basra. They are being achieved today even as the fourth of five Brigade Combat Teams which were part of the surge of forces a year ago are now returning home. And that includes two Marine battalions and a Marine Expeditionary Unit that have already returned home. A key factor in these joint operations has been the steadily increasing capacity of the Iraqi security forces. Iraqi military leaders have planned, led, and executed recent operations in Iraq's largest cities. Iraqi soldiers and police have shown their capacity to clear neighborhoods of thugs and criminals and, at the same time, distribute emergency aid and take care of the local citizens. Iraqi pilots have increased the number of sorties being flown to support ground operations. And Iraqi sailors have re-established security at Iraq's vital ports. As a whole, the Iraqi security forces have made great strides in expanding their capability. As the I...as the Iraqi security forces grow in capabilities, they have also been surging in numbers. The Iraqi security forces have grown from about 400,000 in June of 2007 to some 559,000 in May of this year. The growing strength of the Iraqi security forces is another key factor in contributing to the security gains that General Qassim has described. As the security

forces grow in size and capability, local citizens are also providing more tips and the Sons of Iraq are helping Iraqi and coalition forces protect their communities. So there is a growing level of popular support for the rule of law and for the security forces of Iraq. Another factor in recent operations in the reductions in violence is the fact that Iraqi and coalition forces are finding and clearing an increasing number of the weapons before they can be used by the extremists. The number of weapons found by Iraqi and coalition forces has increased in the last six months. In 2007, security forces made some 6,900 finds of weapons caches. But in the first five months of 2008, they have already made some 4,500 finds of weapons caches. That is close to double the numbers for 2005 and 2006. And they are on pace to exceed the number of finds in 2007. In the following summary and photographs, you can get a sense of the scope, the scale, and the pace of weapons being seized by Iraqi and coalition forces – some of which General Qassim has described already. In Mosul, on May 25th, Iraqi police detained 5 al-Qaeda terrorists and discovered a weapons cache of 80 unassembled improvised explosive devices, 60 other IEDs that were already completed, and a vehicle-borne IED, some 250 pounds of TNT, and more than 40 homemade sticks of dynamite and various artillery projectiles. Also in Mosul, on May 26th, soldiers of the 2nd Iraqi Army Division raided a building and discovered a weapons cache

consisting of 11.5 tons of homemade explosive materials, 100 kilograms of ball bearings, 500 kilograms of aluminum powder, bottles of liquid nitrate, and other bomb-making materials. Close to Samarra, on this past Monday, Iraqi and coalition forces detained two individuals with ties to al-Qaida in Iraq. The suspects led coalition forces to a cache nearby. And then later in the day, security forces uncovered a second cache at the bottom of a well. These caches included some 300 57 millimeter rockets, close to 60 mortar rounds of different sizes, and several mortar tubes and rocket launchers. General Qassim mentioned a recent weapons cache found in the West Rashid District of Baghdad. And on May 27th the Iraqi National Police – the 2nd Battalion of the 5th Brigade of the 2nd National Police Division – discovered two abandoned houses that contained two sizeable weapons collections belonging to special groups. Some of the weapons found included 11 explosively-formed penetrators, some 250 mortar rounds of various sizes – these included Iranian-made 120 millimeter and 60 millimeter mortars, 50 pounds of homemade explosive materials, 60 blocks of C4 explosive material, and 20 rocket-propelled grenades, and some 10,000 rounds of 7.62 millimeter ammunition. In Sadr City, since May 20th, the Iraqi Army has found a total of 94 weapons caches as General Qassim mentioned and this is the roll-up of the IEDs and the other weapons that were captured during

those operations. Two of these weapons caches were found in a mosque, which we showed recently on a previous occasion. Another stockpile of weapons in Sadr City was found by the 9th Iraqi Army Division near the Al-Sadr Hospital. It included more than 65 rockets and mortars, 7 explosively-formed projectile plates, rocket launchers and rails, and other bomb-making equipment. Weapons were also found in a Sadr City school including five – 10-inch in diameter – explosively-formed penetrators, and five rocket-propelled grenade components. In Basra, from March 23rd through May 20th, Operation Sawlat al-Fursan or Charge of the Knights uncovered large numbers of weapons including 3,000 mortar and artillery rounds, some 1,300 rocket-propelled grenades, 684 rockets, 21 surface-to-air missiles, and some 400 IEDs and components for making explosively...improvised explosive devices. As more and more weapons like these are taken out of the hands of extremists, their capability to conduct attacks is disrupted. These increasing numbers of weapons caches are being enabled by the expanding breadth of Iraqi and coalition operations that are now going into places that used to be safe havens or operating bases for the extremists. There is no doubt though that extremists retain the ability to replenish these weapons stocks so operations to pursue and continue to [put] pressure on their networks must be sustained. Al-Qaida in Iraq is still capable of high-profile attacks against the

Iraqi people and we continue to find evidence that special groups are receiving training, funding, and equipment from Iran. Iraqi and coalition forces are, therefore, continuing to relentlessly pursue these groups and will remain focused on strengthening the stability and the rule of law in Iraq. In recent days, there has been a broad range of commentary about the negotiations concerning the Strategic Framework and Status of Forces Agreement. Yesterday, the U.S. Embassy spokeswoman here, Mirembe Nantongo, clarified the facts associated with the negotiations and refuted misinformation that has been reported. She pointed out that the agreement currently under negotiation between the U.S. and Iraq will explicitly state that the U.S. does not desire and will not seek permanent bases in Iraq. She also stated that the U.S. forces in Iraq are focused on supporting the Iraqi government and will not be used for offensive operations against any of Iraq's neighbors. The deputy speaker of the council of representatives and Dr. Al-Dabbagh, the spokesman for the Government of Iraq, also pointed out that the negotiations are still in their early stages and that it was too early to talk about items still in negotiation. The deputy speaker of the Parliament also pointed out the agreements will be discussed in a transparent manner with the Executive Council and the Political Council for National Security. The final agreement would be one between two fully sovereign states. These are points, among

others, that have been widely misunderstood and so it is important to reiterate what our government has stated publicly: there is absolutely no plan or any desire for permanent bases in Iraq. The Multi-National Force in Iraq is here only at the request of the Government of Iraq and will only stay at the request of the sovereign Government of Iraq. And any agreement on the presence of forces will also include the necessary coordinating mechanisms that would further respect Iraq's sovereignty. With that we would like to take your questions and I'll let General Qassim Atta lead the question and answer. Shukran jaziiilan.

**REP1:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Amil[ph] Jabar[ph] from the Irayat[ph] Newspaper. Question to.... You've said...you presented through your...several operations that support Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and Operation Peace is ongoing through...but the [unintelligible] in Baghdad ask you to provide any crisis due to the trash that has not been...have not been removed there and there is also the shortage in the electricity in the Jamilah area. Until now, there were so many complaints by the tradesmen to the Iraqi security forces to take care of this area. But the security forces said that this is not our specialty but the services and the committees that provide the services should do this. But nobody provided any help for us. So what do you think Operation

Fardh Al-Qanoon or the civilian...?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** So what is your request?

**REP1:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Our request is to remove the trashes[sic] and also the expired food from that area.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** Well, the role of the security forces, as you know, [is] to provide the environment for other services or other committees. And we also exceeded that and we provided the...from the rations of the Army to the people. And also we removed the trash using the military vehicles and I think everyone noticed this through the work of the Engineering Battalions that we have. And, hopefully, we will take your complaint and I think that our brothers in Amanat Baghdad do follow up this. And I personally went to the city council in Sadr City and, hopefully, this problem will be resolved.

**REP2:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Ahmed Jassem. Al Arabiya Newspaper. Question to Atta. You have talked awhile ago about the accomplishment that have been

achieved in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon. And this actually reliev-  
...is a source of relief for the Iraqi citizen when they hear that you  
have full control in the field so that you could drive out the outlaws.  
The Iraqi citizen demands you with the same level of...they  
demand to build the City of Baghdad with the same spirit and with  
the same courage. And also they demand you to open the closed  
bridges and roads as well. And question to General Bergner. A year  
ago five British kidnap...or experts were kidnapped and the Iraqi  
minister of finance. And have you had any update about those?  
Who kidnapped them or are there any negotiations with the  
kidnappers?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Regarding your question or the first question, the Iraqi security  
forces and the role of the ministers, yes, did great job in bringing  
back life in Baghdad in most areas. And Prime Minister Maliki last  
week also supervised the inauguration of the Serafiya Bridge. As  
you know, this bridge was totally destroyed. And all this was done  
through an Iraqi effort. We managed through...in one year, through  
the efforts of the Ministry of Reconstruction and Defense and the  
Commanding Operation in Baghdad that also provided a good  
environment for the operation. We managed to reconstruct the

Serafiyah Bridge and I think all those who attended that inauguration could see that. And hopefully, within the coming few days, the bridge will be open so that all the vehicles could use it and as well the pedestrians. Of course we have a limited kind of vehicles that could use it because we are doing a study with the traffic control so that we can decide what kind of small vehicles could pass. And, hopefully, we will give you some details about this in a few days. The bridge has been rehabilitated by the Amanat Baghdad and also the city councils in Khadamiyah and Adhamiyah area. And, hopefully, we will set a date within a few days that is to reopen the Al Amma[ph] Bridge. And most of the routes have been opened and we have also other plans to reopen other roads. And of course, as you know, when we reopen a closed road or a bridge, this is an indication that there is a good stability in the country and, hopefully, this operation of opening the closed roads and bridges will be continued.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Senior Deputy Minister of Interior Adnan Al-Asadi mentioned last week the continue investigation that the Ministry of Interior forces and Government of Iraq continue to pursue to try to locate the British citizens that you mentioned. And the Multi-National Force has been and continues to be involved and cooperative and supportive of those efforts in support of the Government of Great

Britain. But there is nothing today that I can report to you that is new information or any specific developments relative to that. Shukran.

**REP3:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question to General Atta. Biladi TV. As Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon enforced law in the citizen, the citizen demands to enforce the law over the convoys of the officials that drive in the streets because...and sometimes they damage the properties of the citizen. The second question is to General Bergner. A few days ago, General Petraeus asked to freeze the...or stop the withdrawing of the American forces. Now, with the security improvement in Baghdad, will the commanding operation...or the coalition forces – will they stop the withdrawal or will they go on withdrawing the troops?

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Well, I do agree with you – that is on the issue of the convoys of the Iraqi officials. And we also would like to stress that the bodyguards of the Iraqi officials should also abide by the rules and the law. And we also...we have a study in the Commanding Operation in Baghdad because it has to do with enforcing the law in all areas in

Baghdad. And hopefully, when an official feels that everything is stable and secure, he will normally reduce the number of bodyguards accompanying him. And this is an important issue to make the citizen that things are good. We have to ask the officials to reduce the number of bodyguards and also the accompanying vehicles with them.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Yeah. First remember that there are five Brigade Combat Teams that comprise the majority of the surge forces that were deployed to Iraq just over a year ago. Four of those five brigades are either already back at their home station or in the process of redeploying. The fourth brigade of those five is in the process of redeploying now. And so that leaves one brigade still to return to the United States later this summer as planned. And so the redeployment of the surge forces has continued and will continue as General Petraeus briefed Congress and others last fall. That also includes two Marine battalions and the Marine Expeditionary Unit which were part of the surge. And so the significant part of the surge force has already departed Iraq and the rest of it, the remaining brigade if you will, is on track for its redeployment this summer. What General Petraeus has said is that after that fifth brigade of the surge forces has returned to its home station, at that point it would be appropriate to have a period of consolidation and evaluation and then take any

additional decisions on further redeployments of forces. And so that is the path that we continue on. And it is not a freeze, per se, but there will be a period of consolidation and evaluation to ensure that the arrangements that are in place and the security situation informs whatever decision is then taken. Shukran.

**REP4:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Haidr[ph] Nasir[ph]. Baghdadiyah TV. Question...first question to General Atta. You have talked about the accomplishment...the security accomplishment in Sadr City and those accomplishment was witnessed by the city...the people in Sadr City. But there is a cordon in Sadr City and...because there is a heavy population there. So why do we have a security cordon despite the improvement? There is only one entrance.

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** No, I don't agree with you. There are three entrances for Sadr City now. Well, with all due respect, it's not one entrance now. Ever since Operation Peace started we have allocated three entries or...to Sadr City. The first one is the Waharan[ph] Square that goes to Al Hamsaa. This was closed at the beginning and due to the ongoing security operations but now it's opened. The second entrance to

Sadr City is from Luthr[ph] Square that goes to 55th Square. And this is allocated for the vehicles from like the Ministry of Trade, Amanat Baghdad, Ministry of Oil, [Ministry of] Electricity, et cetera. And also we have some machines that detect the explosives. And also the third entrance is on the 38 Square that goes to the Talbiya Bridge. So we have three entrances in Sadr City and they are open. Of course we do know that there are some traffic jams. And as for the security cordon – the operation, as I've said, is in its first stages. We are still...and the security forces are still conducting operations...and raid and search operations to find wanted individuals and explosives. After the end of the surge operations, of course, there will be other solutions and other options to open further entrances to the city provided that the security barriers should remain until the security situation is fully improved. Thank you.

**REP5:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** No. We'll take only one question.

**REP5:** General Bergner...question to General Bergner. Yes. A few days

ago the Baghdadiyah TV showed a violation or the attack by the...an American soldier on the Koran. And the Muslims in all the world and Iraq also ask about the...what happened to the soldier. Are they doing any investigations regarding the violations? Also, could you give us some clarifications about this?

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

As you recall, every commander in the chain of command from the division commander to the Corps commander to General Petraeus himself expressed our deep concern and apologized for the mis...for the behavior of that soldier. We all looked at it as serious and deeply disturbing. And that's why the chain of command took the actions that they did to swiftly investigate, apologize to the people in the community as well as to the leaders of Iraq. And since that time that individual has been removed from his position. He's been removed from Iraq. He has been severely reprimanded by his leadership. And he is in the United States as the...as whatever actions...other actions might be taken. Shukran.

**REP6:**

Mike Tharp. McClatchy Newspapers. For both generals, please. What specific steps will it take for...to continue these encouraging and positive trend lines that you have described to us today?

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Well, I'll be glad to start. First of all, that's a good question and it's

one that our commanders are consistently reviewing and assessing the steps and the arrangements – the battlefield geometry, the disposition of forces, the operations underway, and so forth – to sustain the progress and sustain the momentum, if you will; continue the pursuit of these extremist groups to preclude them from being able to either re-establish safe havens, re-establish operating bases, or otherwise reassert themselves so that they could...as they attempt to conduct the attacks that they have been...they were conducting. An important part of this has been the growth of the Iraqi security forces and the expanding capability of the Iraqi security forces. And so that continued effort to expand both the size and the capability of the Iraqi security forces is an important component to this. Another one has been the support of the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people have increasingly turned to their security forces and to the coalition forces with an increasing number of tips, an increasing effort to support the rule of law, and shown great courage – to include the Sons of Iraq who are stepping forward and putting themselves in harm's way to help protect their communities and safeguard their neighborhoods. That has all been enabled as well, certainly for the past year, by the offensive operations that have been taken both by coalition forces and, more recently, by the Government of Iraq and Prime Minister Maliki's leadership in directing operations in Basra, in Sadr City, and most

recently in Mosul in Ninawa Province. And so the Government of Iraq's commitment to continue the effort against these extremist groups, to impose the rule of law is also an important ingredient in sustaining the progress that's been achieved. And I'll turn to General Qassim for his views as well. Shukran.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

As General Bergner said that those things were followed up by the Multi-National Forces and the Iraqi government. And listing and receiving volunteers from the citizens or the communities to maintain the security level in Baghdad had a role...a major role. The increase in the number of the Iraqi forces is an important factor. Arming the Iraqi security forces starting from the Army, the national police, the police forces as well also contributed to the achievements. We have now over 16 military divisions and those for sure have the ability to pursue the terrorists and the outlaws and to ensure that they will not go back. At the commanding operations we have documents saying that the terrorists have a limited area to conduct their operations and also the outlaws...that applies also to the outlaws in Iraq. The security situation is adding to the best and now we are in a good stage so that we could invest the victory. And the important thing is that the citizen would be part of the security

plans that will contribute...and he also contributes in the achievements of the security plans.

**REP7:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Salam TV. Shola neighborhood witnessed security operations but I'd like to tell you that 60 Street until...those areas are closed now and you cannot even walk in those areas that lead to the street number 16. So the Alwa[ph] area and the Musla[ph] areas – all those who come from western part of Baghdad, they cannot come across this area. So why don't you open this road? Why don't you put a checkpoint to the place or to the road in Shola neighborhood?

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Well, yes. Well, the media and the civilian is always away and has a little idea about the military plans. It's been like four days ever since the security plan has been started in Karkh...in that area with support, of course, from the Multi-National Forces to restore the stability in Shola area...and Rachma[ph] area of Rahmaniyat Al Shola and I think everyone knows and is informed about the details that happened...about the operations witnessed in Shola and Rahmaniyat. And also you know about the large amount of weapons and explosives that we found in those places and in one of

the mosques as well. And the security forces in most of the cases have to close these roads so that they conduct a search operation to prevent the outlaws and the terrorists from moving from one place to another. And in most cases, they have to do this. But after there is a security improvement, the roads will be opened and the trashes[sic] will be removed. This is just a temporary thing. Yes, we do agree with the citizens in the Shola area that the security forces could cause some disturbance or inconvenience to the citizens. But this is the reality because there are some people who are working to destroy life in Iraq. There are still some people who are working to hinder the democratic process in Iraq. Our role is to restore security and stability in Iraq so that we could establish safety and, hopefully, this is just a temporary thing. And we also ask the people in Shola neighborhood to provide us with tips and...about the wanted individuals. Also to provide us tips with the weapons caches because there are still, according to our intelligence, there are still some weapons caches hidden in houses, in schools, and in several places in Shola area.

**REP8:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question from Radio Sawa. Qassim Atta. Could you give us a percentage for the safe places in Baghdad? I know that...as you've mentioned that there are some places in Baghdad that still witness

some terrorist activities. Have you controlled all the places in Baghdad or not?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Well, let's...now we are...at the Commanding Operation in Baghdad we evaluate that the situation in Al Adhamiyah area is calm and stable due to the cooperation of the citizens in Adhamiyah. The situation in Doura is stable. Amariyah is stable as well. And we took you on a tour, as I remember. The same thing in Adil, Ghazaliyah area. Now...today I was reading the newspapers, the members of the city council in Al-Adil neighborhood, they were asking the displaced families to go back to the neighborhood because everything was established...security was established. So I hope you just give me a name of a neighborhood so that I could give you an update for it. In our evaluation, always...we always follow the citizen and what he has to say about the security situation because he has...he witnesses everything in reality. And in most places in Baghdad...and despite the security challenges, most of the Iraqi officials go to the streets. And thankfully, everything is better and there is a good development. And there is a desire...a good desire from the displaced people from outside Iraq to go back to their country and to go back to their homes. And Prime Minister

Maliki through inaugurating the Serafiyah Bridge said that all displaced families should go back and that, hopefully, we expect that the coming few days will witness a better improvement and a more return for the displaced families. And, hopefully, there will not be a hot zone in Baghdad.

**REP8:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Are you saying that Baghdad is secure 100%?

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

**REP8:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question to General Bergner. How would you evaluate the role of the neighboring countries in securing Iraq? And do you think that the Iranian side is still active? Do you think that there are still Iranian support for the armed groups and special groups here in Iraq?

**MAJ GEN BERGNER:** Yeah. We have been very candid and very forthcoming in talking about what we know about the role that neighbors play relative to Iraq's security. And we have welcomed the commitments that have been made by the neighbors to contribute to improve security – and they've made those commitments to the senior leaders of Iraq. What

we have seen though is we have seen the provision of weapons, equipment, and funding – certainly going to the special groups. And we know that the special groups depend on Iranian Quds Force operatives as a basis for that lethal support. We have also seen al-Qaida in Iraq forces moving foreign terrorist fighters through other countries, in particular Syria, and using Damascus as an important waypoint in the flow of foreign terrorist fighters. And so Iraq's neighbors do have an important role to play in contributing to the security here. And I would point out that the Government of Iraq – the prime minister, the foreign minister, and others – have engaged their neighbors and are working to express their concerns and their interests in those areas and are working on a diplomatic level to gain better cooperation in improving the security situation in Iraq. Shukran.

**REP9:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Aswat Al-Iraq Agency. General Atta, do you have any details about the assassination of the colonel in the MOI that has been assassinated?

**MAJ GEN ATTA:** Yes. Well, the operation and its details is that one of the brothers or Dya[ph] brothers...Colonel Darful[ph] was assassinated by the terrorists. And his brother also was in the vehicle and he was...his

brother was wounded. And we express our sorrow and concern for the family of the victim and we are ongoing our operations to pursue those who committed those crime.

**REP10:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Nina Agency. General Atta. Yes, we know that there is a security improvement in Baghdad. However, there are still some areas like in...as in Amil neighborhood, Jamya neighborhood – those areas still witness some tension. Do you have any plans in Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon to open those areas and eliminate the tension and the violence?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Yes, we do have plans to remove the security barriers in case everything has been established...until the security has been fully improved in those areas. And hopefully, as we have mentioned awhile ago, that the security situation will witness an improvement...and a better improvement in the coming few days taking into account that there will be some challenges or some terrorist activities. Because there are some gangs working here or there and they aim at.... However...and hopefully our plans or future plans will also provide security to the people.

**REP11:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Al Wasat Magazine to Qassim Atta. We have seen that there is a good progress in Rusafa and Karkh and the Iraqi security forces conducted their operations in a good way but we have some questions about confiscating the small-arm weapons and the search operations in the houses. What about the pistols, for example, that a certain person has? Or the in-license[?] of...do you have any system of having badges for those who carry weapons, for instance?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Regarding the weapons and the license, there is a procedure that you should have a license from the Ministry of Interior and I think that there is a directorate at the Ministry of Interior specialized in getting documents and license for those who want to carry weapon. The security forces are authorized to confiscate any kind of weapon. And this is a fact because the security forces are authorized to confiscate any kind of weapon if they felt that they were threatened. And let me give you an example. If there was a checkpoint, for example, in one of the places and this checkpoint was...or received small-arm fire attack in a neighborhood, let's say, and the neighborhood had...contains 1,000 homes. And if each home has

one [unintelligible] pistol – so you can gather the number of the rounds. So this is a threat. So the security forces are authorized to confiscate all the kind of weapons. And they give you a receipt after taking this weapon. They could give it back to you. They could give you compensations or they could ask the person who was carrying the weapons to bring some license from the Ministry of Interior and I think that this is an important topic and everyone should think to relinquish their weapons. And we should think that or we should make Baghdad...because Baghdad was the city of peace. I think it's time to make Baghdad without weapons, so I do agree with you. We all should relinquish carrying weapons and we should head to reconstruction in our places instead of just keeping pistols and AK-47s in our homes. Thank you. We will take two last questions.

**REP11:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question to General Atta. Despite the security improvement in Baghdad, there is some or there are some armed aspects that we witness in the streets of Baghdad. A few days ago one of the vehicles opened fire on a checkpoint for the police and I was there and I saw this myself. And we've seen that the members of the police – two of them died and one of them was wounded. Is there any procedure or cooperation between you and the traffic control or the Traffic Directorate so that we could...because most of those

vehicles that open fire are actually stolen or those who drive in those vehicles are actually stolen.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Of course all those incidents are done...of opening fire are done through government vehicles or even some stolen vehicles. The members of the police, traffic. And you know how the great role those police officers do in the streets through regulating the traffic. We cannot deny this because the traffic policemen used to fight side by side with the rest of the Iraqi security forces and the directorate of the traffic in Iraq also presented several sacrifices and we always praise their work. Yes, the terrorist groups and the outlaws, the gangs for...do make those incidents so that they carry out their attacks. Those things have been followed up by our forces. We have said that we found 30 vehicles and those were stolen for the government and they belong to the government and to the people. Yes, those vehicles are being used to carry out terrorist attacks as car bombs, sometimes they are used in assassination attempts, or even to attack the Iraqi security forces. And we do capture gangs that specialized in assassination operations. We have a development in our security forces: we can respond to an operation like a kidnapping or assassination in a quick ways and we can find a

weapon in a very fast way. So that's why I say there is a development and that's why the terrorist activities are actually decreasing now. And by time...I think even in the stable countries...in any other country in the world, you can witness such kind of kidnapping and operations. But, of course, the percentage is less than we have here. But I have to say that there is a good development about this.

**REP12:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** I have two questions from Al Hura TV. There are some reports saying that some of the exchange stores have been apprehended in Karrada area. And also we have some informations[sic] about moving the volunteers to the police in Sadr City – they will be relocated or deployed to Al Medein area. So what is your comment about this?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Well, I think if those people have been captured, I think it has to do either they have committed a crime or something. We don't detain anyone for no reason. And also for redeploying the police officers from Sadr City to someplace else, we know that and we have said that the policemen and the soldier when he volunteered to serve

Iraq, there was nothing that says that he should only work in a certain area. He volunteered to serve Iraq and also to serve the Iraqis and the pol-...and the country. So if he was working in Al Medein, Anbar neighborhoods or Basra, this is the same thing. And this is the specialty of the Ministry of Interior and I think this is a normal situation. And I think the media should help us in this. Yes, we do say that we should deal with the negative aspects, but if we talk about deploying a soldier from Sadr City to Al Medein area, I don't think that this causes any problem because he's already a volunteer and I think any volunteers or anyone from the former Iraqi Army used to serve in Basra, Sulaimaniya, and any other place. And also, our friends in the United States, they come and serve in Iraq so they don't say why I'm serving in Iraq. So I think this is a really normal thing. And we'll take the last question.

**REP13:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Hafida[ph] Safi[ph], Cultural Agency. I have two questions. First to General Atta. At a time that we praise the security development in Baghdad due to Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon and you've said that there is a cooperation between the people in Sadr City that are providing tips through...of the weapon cache. Doesn't this...or doesn't this force you to expedite your providing the services for the people in Sadr City, especially electricity? And we are now in

summer which is a...witnesses a really hot temperature. And the second question to General Bergner. The long-term agreement between the Iraqi government and the United States recently caused a misunderstanding between the citizens. Could you tell us some of the...some details about this agreement? Do you know any details about the inclusions of this agreement?

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Well, the operations that we do include tips from the citizens. We are not seeking to always...we seek always to serve the people in Sadr City, Al Bayat, Shola. And our major concern is to establish security even if they did not provide security to us and support. It's the job of the government and the security forces to help them whether they provide the tips or not. And...but our job is to provide a good environment so that the services will be provided after that. Yes, Sadr City needs services and they need essential things. And there is a committee was formed and it's headed by one of the ministers and...to provide the essential services to the people in Sadr City due to what they have been through recently. And we always praise all the steps and tips that the citizens provide in Sadr City.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Yeah. And the point that you raise is a good question because, as I mentioned earlier, there has been a great deal of discussion in recent days and there have been very clear misunderstandings about the status of those negotiations that are underway. Yesterday, when the U.S. Embassy spokeswoman, Mirembé Nantongo, spoke, she was very clear in clarifying two of those key points. She clarified first that the agreement currently under negotiation – it's a discussion still, there is no agreement, there are negotiations underway between the United States and Iraq – will explicitly state that the U.S. does not desire and will not seek permanent bases in Iraq. That has been a misunderstanding that was not clear to people. And the second point she emphasized was that the U.S. forces in Iraq are focused on supporting the Iraqi government. They will not be used for offensive operations against any of Iraq's neighbors. And that was another misunderstanding that had been circulated through different sources. The other point that's important to emphasize is one that came from the deputy speaker of the Council of Representatives. The deputy speaker said yesterday in his interview on Al Iraqiya that these discussions were in the early stages and that they are negotiations still, meaning they are still discussions between the two countries about what they will pursue. So there is not an agreement, per se; there is discussion and negotiations still underway. And Dr. al-Dabbagh, the spokesman for the Government

of Iraq, was equally clear in stating that this is still a process that's underway; there are still discussions. And so it is still too early to discuss the actual...an actual agreement until one is achieved through the negotiations. So these points, among others, have been widely misunderstood. And that's why the embassy spokeswoman and others are trying to clarify and correct those misunderstandings. Shukran jaziilan. Shukran, General Qassim. Shukran jaziilan.

**MAJ GEN  
ATTA:**

Thank you very much.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Ma'salama.