

PRESS CONFERENCE:

Major General Mohammed al-Askari, Spokesman, Ministry of Defense

Rear Admiral Patrick Driscoll

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LARRY KAPLOW FROM NEWSWEEK

GINA CHON FROM THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

REP 1-10

***INT = INTERPRETER**

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us this afternoon. I'm pleased to introduce Major Mohammed al-Askari, the spokesman for Ministry of Defense. He's going to, uh, provide us with some information about Mosul and other operations. Then I'll have some brief comments, and we'll take your questions.

**MG AL-
ASKARI:**

(Speaking in Arabic)

INT:

Thank you very much. Welcome everyone. Actually, we first have to talk about the operations in general. And as you know, the actual operations started in 2007 in Operations Fardh al-Qanoon, and you know very well what has been achieved. There has been, there were so many goals, and we targeted several...and we dealt with several hot zones. There were several operations besides Operation Fardh al-Qanoon in Diyala, Ninawa. And also there were the other operations to follow up and pursue the terrorist safe havens. I think we also need to clarify a few things. First, there's a qualitative development in the operations, and as you know, the ability of the Iraqi Security Forces and to conduct the operations with high performance. And this has witnessed an approval from the Iraqi citizens. Also the leadership, the Iraqi Army. And the...there

are...they are led by the Prime Minister Maliki and the security ministers. And we are proud that the leadership is a good one...that is run by all the Iraqi forces. And there's also cooperation between the Iraqi forces and the Multi-Nation Forces. Also, we never had any maneuvering in the past, but the operations that we've seen in Basra and Ninawa, we have seen that we were able to do some maneuvering. We deployed several units to Basra and Ninawa and also we made some air transportations in those recent operations. We always had a shortage in the logistic support, and we relied on the Multi-National Forces. And the recent operations proved that we have the ability to send all the logistic support and to all our units at the right time. Also, the joint operations and the ability to coordinate with the Multi-National Forces and also the special Iraqi forces and also the ground forces in the Iraqi Army and the air force also had good performance in Ninawa. And this was a source of pleasure to the Iraqi, to the Multi-National Forces, which is the outcome of their training. We have achieved something important in the operation, which is the surprise element, element of surprise. We have been preparing for Ninawa for eight months and when everyone surprised by the operations in Basra. And also we made a surprise movement in Ninawa, because most of the people thought that the operation in Ninawa will be delayed. But this isn't, didn't happen. Also, there has been an element of surprise in Operation

Omar al-Rabin. They thought that this is just the propaganda for a new operation, but it wasn't. And as you have seen, we have imposed a curfew with the operation. And most of the terrorists who managed to flee in Ninawa are actually now in other provinces and are being pursued. The...it's worth noting that the operations in Basra that there has been a development. There wasn't a fostering the operations because we had some targets, some locations, and we were able in 2008 to...for the first time target the chief leaders of al-Qaida, and we managed to capture several leaders from those organizations. And now they are in a confused situation and on the run. And they cannot organize their work. That's why we work continuously with the Multi-National Forces to pursue those operations. We will not give them chance to reorganize themselves. Also, the operations developed in the Iraqi Army and police and the national police and the humanitarian side as well and everybody knows how the effort was not on the security level but also on the humanitarian level. We did not detain anyone unless we had evidence. Prime Minister Maliki made sure that we had judges, a large number of judges to resolve the issues of the detainees in Ninawa province. And I think the procedures of the detention was good. And this enhanced the relationship between the Iraqi Security Forces and the citizens there. All the operations are submitted to the legislative authority, and there's not any

detention procedure unless there's a warrant. Until now, we have released 251 detainees in Ninawa. And we...1,030 have been detained, or actually in detention now in Ninawa. There are some reflections for those operations in Basra and Ninawa. For instance, as you have known, there is the first [unintelligible] celebration in, for the [unintelligible] in the past, they used to make it for a short time. But now, on the contrary, all the schools are open in the provinces. And the major bridges were also opened in Mosul, the Hariyah Bridge, and the main roads also are open, because those roads are needed by the people and the citizens. We may have some range, I don't want to talk about the decrease, the level of decrease in the operations. I think the admiral will talk about this. And we have a percentage of 30, 40 to...I think, Admiral will talk more about the operations in Ninawa. In Basra today, we had large operations in Zubair area. The first intervention team was there and detained so far a leader called Satar Jabar. And he's the commander of a battalion, and he was wanted. And the 14th Division are doing the search and coordinating operations in certain areas of Basra. Until now, in the commanding operation in Basra, the detention...we've detained over 600. And those are warranted. We captured a huge artillery machine, one air force, surface-to-air missile, one different kind of weapons, and also explosives were found during the search operation. In Ninawa, the number of the

detained, 1,305, including 300 wanted for the security services. Twenty of them confessed that they have killed over 300 Iraqis in Mosul. The weapons that we found are, or the detained, those have been, we have find 162 IEDs, 189 small arm weapons. I would like to tell you for the first time, we made an Iraqi air flight. It was a pure Iraqi air flight on some targets. And we also brought some forces and units from the Ministry of Interior. And they conducted an operation. And it's a good achievement for the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi police to work together with support from the Iraqi Air Force. Also in Ninawa province and following instructions from Prime Minister Maliki, the leadership there started to make contracts with the people and the young people there so that, contract for three months and take salaries from the government so we could eliminate the unemployment there and we could start the reconstruction in Mosul and the commanding operation in Ninawa. And the Minister of Interior is supervising several of those volunteers centers, and those young people who volunteered will be working and they will be paid for three months. Also in Ninawa, we have found a cache, a large cache in [unintelligible] area. And this cache is suspected that it's the main cache for the terrorist group. This is just a general thing of the operations. And I give space now to Admiral Driscoll so that he can give his remarks.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Well thank you, General. And certainly security operations in Ninawa and elsewhere are making good progress. I'd like to briefly highlight a few additional developments we're seeing around Iraq, and then we'll take your questions. Recent improvements by the Government of Iraq and the growing capability of the Iraqi Security Forces are improving security. Iraqi Security Forces are in the lead in Basra, Mosul, and Sadr City, and the results is a significant decrease in security incidents. Iraqi-wide, we have seen a significant reduction in violence. In the past week, security incidents decreased to levels not seen since March of 2004. These figures reflect a decrease in attacks of some 70% since the surge operations began in June of 2007. There is tough fighting ahead, and significant challenges to overcome, but the Iraqi citizens are rejecting terrorists and criminals, and lending their support to Prime Minister Maliki's initiative to ensure and enforce the rule of law. As criminals and terrorists flee their hideouts we continue to uncover large quantities of weapons in residential neighborhoods and public buildings. Since the beginning of operations in Basra, Iraqi Security Forces have collected close to 270 weapon caches of medium and heavy caliber. These caches included various mortars, rockets, explosives, RPGs, explosively-formed penetrators, rocket launching rails, and rifles, some of which Major General Askari described. Some of these...some of the most lethal weapons were

manufactured in Iran. Local residents who are tired of the violence and criminal activity are increasingly pointing out where these weapons are hidden. Iraqi and coalition forces are also finding sizable weapons caches in other parts of Iraq. Last week, Iraqi police in Mosul discovered a buried cache of nearly 490 rounds of ammunition. And this was buried in a residential area near a road. On Friday, coalition forces discovered two separate stockpiles of weapons in the Adhamiya and West Rashid districts of Baghdad containing approximately 70 Iranian-made mortars and rockets. Criminals continue to disregard civilian safety by hiding explosives and rockets in municipal buildings and residential areas. On Monday, Iraqi's 11th Division commandos discovered a collection of weapons in a mosque. The weapons included hand grenades, landmines, mortars, explosively-formed penetrators, artillery shells, and various cameras, fuses, cables, and electronic detonators. The weapons were found in the Sharufi mosque in the Adhamiya district of Baghdad. On Thursday, the Iraqi 6th Army Division soldiers discovered the body of a murder victim and a smaller collection of RPGs and rifles in another mosque in Baghdad's Kadhimiya district. On Friday, a tip from a local resident led Iraqi Army soldiers to a cache inside the Ali Sadei school in Sadr City containing several explosively-formed penetrators, mortar rounds, grenades, radios, wire, rifles, and other official documents. Also

this week in Sadr City, Major General Qassim Atta announced that the Iraqi Security Forces discovered a weapons cache including rockets and RPGs, grenades, TNT, ammunition and materials for improvised explosive devices located behind the as-Sadrain Hospital in Sadr City. Weapons hidden in mosques, schools and near hospitals is another indicator of the disregard the criminals have for Iraqi citizens. More and more Iraqis are calling in these tips. Day after day, we see local residents leading security forces to weapons storage areas. And Iraqis around the country are embracing the presence of the legitimate Iraqi Security Forces in their neighborhoods. It is resolve of the Iraqi citizens, their government, and the Iraqi Security Forces that will continue to establish the rule of law and foster the growth of a free, new Iraq. Finally, this Memorial Day weekend in the United States, we remember those who have given their lives in the service of their country, and we remember the sacrifices their families have made as a result. I want to state how proud I am to serve with our American soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, and coast guardsmen, along with our civilian colleagues in the State Department. I also want to be, uh express my pride and great honor to serve alongside great Iraqis like Major General al-Askari and the other Iraqi Security Forces that are doing the same for their country. And we look forward to your questions. Thank you. Ma'am...

REP1: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question to Major General al-Askari. All the weapons that you have found are Iranian. I'd like to know, what is the role of the Ministry of Defense in the Iraqi government regarding this clear topic, which is so clear? I mean, and until now we haven't seen any results that you could stop Iran from supplying al-Qaida or any other terrorists with weapons, with Iranian-made weapons. So I hope you can answer...could, could get an answer for this.

MG AL-ASKARI: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: Well, this topic is the responsibility of the Iraqi government. We are an executive side. Those weapons could be smuggled and passed in an illegal way. And the Multi-Nation Forces have information and talked about this several times. At the Ministry of Defense, we do not interfere with the external policy of the Iraqi government. We just detain the wanted personnel and we present to the court. And if we captured different kinds of weapons, regardless of their background, and most of them are coming from outside the country like western, coming from western countries. This topic, of course, we do not interfere in it. And...but we'd like

to also, what we do is give those reports and evidence to the Iraqi government. And I think the government will have procedures and may not talk about it, but I'm sure there will be some procedures by the government, like committees or stuff like that. Actually, what we have, any kind of weapon that we capture, we present it to the Iraqi government. And I think the government has the responsibility for that.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Sir.

REP2:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Question to Major General Al-Askari. NINA Agency. In Mosul operations, I have seen personally the situation there. And I've met some of the people, and they told me that the situation has been changed. And instead of the explosions, that now we...they witness one or two explosions. And this is much better than before. But there are also some bad things, however. Al-Qaida and the other organizations that are still in some suburban areas in Mosul and until now the Iraq security forces did not fight them and did not go to those places. And those areas, or al-Qaida used to carry out operations in central city of Mosul. So when do you think the Iraqi forces will go and conduct operations in those places.

**MG AL-
ASKARI:**

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

Yes, this is true. We start from the center. That is in Mosul. There are some operations in al-Jazira area. And the eastern places of Mosul. As you know, there is a good maneuvering for the Iraqi Security Forces, and I've talked to you about the support that the Iraqi Air Force given. Yes, we have some information about those organizations that take the suburban areas in Mosul as headquarters and safe havens. And, for your information, most of those organizations are not active. And they...they afraid to go to have confrontations with us. And that's why they don't carry out operations. That they found that there is a less operation conducted by our troops, so they would go back again. That's why the continuous operations and don't giving them a chance [unintelligible]. And we have also details about how those people move and how they carry out their plans. Yes, we do have some operations those days in the suburban areas of Mosul. And we also in the future plan to include all the areas.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Sir.

REP3:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Al-Arabiyah Newspaper. Al-Askari. We have talked a while ago about the Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, and you were pleased with this. And this also pleases the Iraqi citizen, because you have controlled fully over the terrorists from al-Qaida and other outlaws. However, the Iraqi citizen demands to stop some of the security services from going to some of the streets because those security services open fire and drive on the wrong way. And this is one aspect. And your...the displaced people are asking you as well to help them get the terrorists from their homes. And Admiral Driscoll, question to you. Actually, we follow up the addresses of President Bush as he talks about not withdrawing the troops from Iraq unless the mission is accomplished. As you are on the front round in the American army, so what is your opinion about the mission? Do you think that the mission has to take weapons from the outlaws? Or do you think the mission is something else? We'd like a clarification about this.

MG AL-ASKARI:

Thank you. Yes, we admit that there are some who make use of the situation, and they don't have some expertise and fire rounds randomly. And this could influence the achievements. Those...some soldiers in our security services, in the police and army, are doing a great job, and they're sacrificing themselves. But

when he or those soldiers make such actions, those are things, those things are not allowed. We talked about this with the Minister of Interior, and there was a delegation from one of the areas, and he talked about such actions. That's why we formed secret committees that follow up the units and then the checkpoints and how they deal and behave with the citizen. And we do not allow for any misbehavior by the soldiers. And also we ask the media to give us some information if there's any abuse or misbehavior by the Iraqi forces. And so, you could notify us about this. We didn't have time to train our soldiers. The Iraqi soldier goes to the streets and fights terrorism. He didn't have enough time training. But through the media, everyone should, you should tell everyone that everyone should respect the law. And even the soldier should respect the law as well. We enforce the law, and hopefully the procedures regarding this topic in particular will be good. We, we have taken also some strict procedures against those who break the law. And the displacement is one of the major issues. And Prime Minister Maliki is always following up with this, because this, as you know, the security situation is, has been improved. And in Talafur, so many people, displaced people, were, went back to their homes. And the government is busy with this topic and is trying to work on it. Those security gains that we have will help in bringing back the displaced people. And I know that what you're saying, that the

government should also help in protecting those who come back to their places. And those are, as you have seen, we have permits and [unintelligible] to clear all the institutes from those who occupy the government buildings.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Your second part of your question involved coalition forces and how long they're gonna be here and then the status of taking weapons off the street. First, as you know, we're in the process of drawing down surge forces. So we're gonna take another two combat brigades off the battlefield here through July. And then, as the plan calls for, a period of consolidation, evaluation for about 45 days. And then in September, General Petraeus will make recommendations for further troop withdrawals based on conditions on the ground. And that's for this year. For next year and future coalition and U.S. participation, it's going to be based on negotiations between the leaders of Iraq and the leaders of the United States in terms of what the arrangement will be. So, that's being negotiated now and will be determined as a result of these negotiations between the two elected governments. Obviously, the coalition force supports Prime Minister Maliki's initiative to take weapons off the streets. If you're gonna have security for all people, you've gotta have the rule of force and the enforcement of that in the hands of the responsible parties, and it's the Iraqi Army

and Iraqi police. So, coalition forces are supporting that initiative and removing illegal weapons and ensuring that the use of force is consolidated in the proper people. Sir.

KAPLOW: Thank you. Larry Kaplow with Newsweek. For Admiral Driscoll. You said that the levels of violence were down, I think, to March 2004 levels. Could you just tell us what the numbers and figures are on which that's based? Is that based on weekly attack averages? Or do you have those figures for us?

RDML DRISCOLL: That's...it's based on a combination of security incidents, if you will. So, it's a compilation of small arms attacks, grenade attacks, mortar attacks, rocket attacks. And then it has several other categories, including, let's say IEDs.

KAPLOW: What was it for, what was it for last week then?

RDML DRISCOLL: The actual number, I don't have the actual number. What, what's important to remember is the...the number is important. But really, it's the trend over time that is really the indicator that we're looking for. And this is just one of the metrics that we track. And over time we have tracked the metric pretty closely, and it's, over time it becomes a very reliable indicator of what the security situation is.

Ma'am...

CHON: Gina Chon, Wall Street Journal. Ambassador Crocker said yesterday that al-Qaida in Iraq was near defeat or close to defeat. And I was wondering if both Admiral and the General could comment on that and what your, both of your assessments are of the fight against al-Qaida. And then General, if you could also comment on the latest updates in terms of other operations in Baghdad outside of Sadr City where some of the criminal elements or elements went to the Mahdi army are still operating or have spread to since the...since Sadr City has quieted down a bit. Thank you.

MG AL-ASKARI: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: I'll talk to you first. Ambassador Crocker was right in his statement. And he was exact. Al-Qaida in Iraq is being defeated. Since mid-2007 and based on the intelligence information and the documents that they sent to their leaders outside Iraq, they say that they cannot carry out the operations and they would like to find another place outside Iraq. And this is due to the security gains and also the development of the Iraqi Security Forces and the intelligence, the Iraqi intelligence also has developed. Because in

some of these cities, the past for some time were safe havens for al-Qaida. But after the, there was political accord and the agreements that we witness in the government and the entities in the Iraqi government and all, as you know, the Iraqis refuse to make their neighborhoods and areas as safe havens. And this is not for the media, because they could find some areas in other countries, but Iraq has a good educational background and cannot accept such corrupted ideology of people who behead Arab people and citizens. Those things are not welcomed among the Iraqis. The bloodshed went on for a long time, and I think, and I'm responsible for I say the success for the Ninawa operation and what happened is due to what the citizen has done in Ninawa and due to his cooperation when he led us to and gave tip to us, the citizens that is, for the caches. The people of Ninawa are those, are the ones who contributed in driving the al-Qaida from Ninawa, just like the people in Anbar did. That's why Ambassador Crocker was right when he said that al-Qaida is being defeated. Yes, there are some still safe havens in Ninawa, but they will be eliminated.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

What I'd say about al-Qaida, first of all, it remains a very lethal threat. It is true that with the operations of the surge that attacked al-Qaida in the Baghdad area as the general said. And then Operation Phantom Phoenix, driving al-Qaida from the southern

belts and then up the Diyala River Valley up to Mosul. They've been put off balance, and they're certainly on the run. They no longer control large swaths of territory or they don't control cities, but they're still out there. And they're still capable of doing these high profile attacks that they've done in the past to try to ignite sectarian violence. But what you're seeing is that in general the Iraqi people have rejected this, you know, failed ideology that brings nothing but misery to them and have, you know, as we've seen, turned against al-Qaida. So I would categorize it, they certainly are off balance and on the run. As General Petraeus has said though, it's too early to pop the champagne bottle and celebrate victory. They are still in certain areas. They are certainly continuing to see the suicide bombers that are attacking innocent Iraqi civilians. And if we let up on them, they will come back. So it's still an ongoing effort. Sir.

REP4: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: Question to Major General al-Askari. I always wonder about the weapons and cache that you found...or find in the operations. It's obvious that like the IEDs are being cleared in its place on site. What about the other kind of weapons? Do you give them to the army? And how do you destroy and get rid of those IEDs?

REP4: Second question is to Admiral Driscoll. In every operation, you probably have a planner, right? And do you have an estimated time for those operations in southern district? I mean, do you have...

**RDML
DRISCOLL:** In Sadr City?

REP4: ...yeah, Sadr City. Thank you.

**MG AL-
ASKARI:** Speaking in Arabic.

INT: Regarding the weapons, of course, we don't deal with them randomly in haphazard way. And I think in Basra and Ninawa and what has happened there, we can say that, you can see that the IEDs are being detonated, and some of them are being taken to the labs so that we can study them and explore them. And most of the small arm weapons, some of them are actually used. We can give them to the units and others are being given to the police stations. As you know, there...we have so many volunteers, and some of the contracts of weapons are actually now in a lagging process, so we can make use of those weapons, the Iraqi Army and national police. The weapons that we found in Basra, for instance, in Ninawa, for instance, we have also found large amount of Ninawa, and I've

talked with the commanding operation in Ninawa, and we will show you hopefully one day soon about everything that we have captured. So, we are working according a good standard, so if we find a weapons that we can make use of it, we, we do.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

To answer your question about planners. You know, I'm a Navy guy working on an Army staff, and I've never seen so many planners in my life. So, yes, we do have a lot of planners. But Sadr City was, you know, an Iraqi-planned and Iraqi-executed operation. So, the planning that, at least the coalition forces did, really just support kind of planning, to support the Iraqi Security Forces. It was really Iraqi Security Forces that did all that planning and execution. Sir.

REP5:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Al Watan TV. General al-Askari, in a previous statement you have said that the operation includes five provinces and not one. And now you have made a good achievement in Ninawa, and you've said that the major terrorists left Ninawa and some of them have been captured. However, what are you doing now? Where province, which province do you think you could go and conduct operations? And the other question for both speakers. Regarding

the Operation Fardh al-Qanoon, and about restricting weapon to the government, is there any new procedures that you would like to announce regarding Operation Fardh al-Qanoon and restricting weapon to the government?

MG AL-ASKARI:

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

The operations in Ninawa, as you know, was not a...it was not a single operation. It was...there has been so many preparations for it and for both the Iraqi Army and police, and with cooperation with the Multi-National Forces. One of the major successes of this operation is the political accord and the cooperation of the people in Ninawa. And exact information that we gathered. There was also work from the units outside Ninawa and from other problems. And I think this, there was a huge effort in Salah ad Din province from the...and also from other divisions in Kirkuk, in Diyala, and Anbar province. This operation was conducted in coincidence with Operation [unintelligible]. That's why there was no chance for the terrorists. And it is and almost a perfect operation. That's why most of those who have been captured are actually a senior leaders, not only Ninawa but in other provinces. And some of them we told you about their names and we haven't told you about the others so that we can make use of the information and get to other leaders.

The other and future work, as you know, as Admiral Driscoll said a while ago, that al-Qaida is still a threat, and they move from one place to another. Now, the remains of al-Qaida and what they still have are Diyala province. And we have plans in Diyala as well. But according to my personal assistant, we need some development for the operations in Diyala, according, just like what happened in Basra and Ninawa so that we can eliminate those remains of the terrorists in Diyala province. And also the operations are conducted in Baghdad as, are connected to those in Diyala.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

In terms of Fardh al-Qanoon and collecting weapons, I think in my statement and Major General Askari, we mentioned lots of cache and weapons storage areas. And we are taking a lot of weapons off the street. And this is in accordance of what the Prime Minister has said. He said that only the state, the government is the one. The police and the army should, the ones that have the weapons in their hands to protect the people and enforce the rule of law.

REP6:

Thanks. I had two questions, one for Admiral Driscoll and one for General Askari. Admiral, in your comments about the decline in numbers, the lowest levels since March 2004, I just want to make sure of what you're saying, that that's the total number of weekly attacks countrywide. Is that the case? And do the, does the civilian

casualty numbers, do those track? Are we looking at the lowest number of civilian casualties? Or where are civilian casualties relative to the same period you're talking about in 2004? And for General Askari, forgive me. I missed the couple of minutes of your comments. But at one point in your comments you talked about insurgents and guerrillas fleeing, who are fleeing from Mosul and going to some other places. Do you have a sense of the total numbers who have fled Mosul? And in which provinces in particular are they mostly going to?

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

The...it is week, tracked by week, so it's a weekly summary. And it is a compilation of the decline since March 2004. It's compilation of all the statistics I mentioned, so it's a weekly summary. And compared to what it was and were equal to the level that was, the lowest level in March 2004. In terms of casualties, civilian casualties, it's tracking a similar profile. We have seen a reduction in casualties, both civilian and military. Here in the last several weeks, it's declined. And it's, it's, it is mirroring the reduction in attacks as well.

**MG AL-
ASKARI:**

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

As Admiral said, those statement were taken from the Multi-

National Forces, day by day, monthly, and those includes attacks by IEDs, indirect fire, car bombs. So those stay, statistics are present for the coalition forces and for us. That's why we make a comparison of things with the past when we have a success and we have a decrease. So this is a good thing. So we compare what happened this month with the 2004. As for the guerrillas and the element that flee from Ninawa, of course, we have information about those organizations that include 2,000, around 2,000 members and, you know, we have detained several people. Most of them went to the deserts in Ramadi and Tikrit in particular, and to utilize the environment and terrain there. And some are in Kirkuk, and even some went to Baghdad. But there is a coordination between the Minister of Interior with the coalition forces and the tribal leaders. And you can see from time to time that we manage to capture two ministers from the Iraqi Islamic state. And like [unintelligible] and those who claim to be ministers in the Islamic State of Iraq. And one of them claimed to be that he was a minister in Diyala, and he was captured. So the terrorist groups always try to hide and make the, take the people as human shields. And this is makes the job more difficult for the army and for the unit, because we have a, that you know, fighting someone who is wearing a civilian uniform. But we, our intelligence is developed, and the coalition forces has a strong confidence with the tips provided them

the people. In the past we used to rely on the coalition forces, but, and now we began to reach some good goals. And I think one of the major leaders, and the senior leaders was captured in Ninawa. And he is at the Multi-Nat, he is now held captive at the Multi-National Forces due to the, because he is a high profile personnel as a terrorist. So that's why we say that this is an intelligence war as far, as long as you have some good intelligence, you can control the war and the fight.

REP7: Asking question in Arabic.

INT: [Unintelligible] TV. Question to Admiral Driscoll and Major General al-Askari. Yesterday, two days ago, there was a joint operation between the Iraqi Army, the national police and the American forces in al-Amil area. And over 300 people were detained. Why they have been detained? And are they all wanted? And the second to Askari. All those detained in al-Qaida, from al-Qaida, we don't hear that they are being prosecuted in public. Will they be prosecuted in public?

**RDML
DRISCOLL:** The detention operation I believe was in southwest Baghdad. It went on between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, and over 513 personnel of interest were initially screened for questioning by the Iraqi national

police. The Iraqi Army detained 128 people. U.S. forces screened 385 people of interest. Of that 385, 344 were released. One detainee was taken to an army combat support hospital because he had some previous medical issues and he needed care. 40 were taken into custody by MND-B and five of them were on the wanted list. They were special groups criminals. And the other ones were detained for further questioning. Thank you.

**MG AL-
ASKARI:**

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

I'd like to make clear that we do not capture anyone unless there is a warrant from the court. And some of those people who haven't been arrested in the past are being arrested now. And we do have a warrant for everyone. There is no...any random detention for anyone. As for your question regarding the why can't we talk about, oh, present the prosecutions in public, as you know, there's an international law that prevents showing the defendant. And Iraqi is an active member in several organizations and societies and agreements. And Iraq signed several agreements, and international law prevents us from showing the results of the investigation and prosecutions because those things are confidential. Some of them are foreigners from outside the country, and it's the responsibility of the government to deal with those people with their countries. The

executive sides capture and detain those people and present them to court. And if there's anything other than that, it's the responsibility of the Iraqi government. And most of those members have been prosecuted, but the, as I've said, everything is confidential. We cannot talk about everything in public due to the agreements and pacts that Iraq has signed.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Sir.

REP8:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Al-Sabah newspaper. Question to Major General al-Askari. In the light of the success of the operations, there should be a coordination for those operations. Do you think that hiring the leadership and assigning leadership is being done in a good way?

**MG AL-
ASKARI:**

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

Well, let me give you further clarifications. The Iraqi constitution gives the Provincial Councils right to...and of course there is a coordination between the governor and the Provincial Council to assign the chief police in the province. And the Minister of Interior, through our coordination and follow up, they have started to have

their say with coordination of the local government. But in the army, we don't follow those standards. The army, as you know, has different standards. The army and the coalition forces work on the borders, and this has to do with the police. We don't follow up those standards because we have changed some leaders in the army in Basra and Ninawa. And we change them according to the, to our work and our standards because the army follows the central government. But when it comes to the police, they could be distributed, and the choosing the chief police could also follow up standards according to the province where the police forces work.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

Okay, we got time for two more questions. Take this gentleman here.

REP9:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Question to General al-Askari. We have seen the recent operations in Mosul like Operation Om Al-Rabiein. Have you controlled fully Ninawa province? Have you faced, the Iraqi forces, have you faced any confrontations by those gangs and al-Qaida? Because we know that they are centered in Mosul. Because Operation, and do you think Operation Om Al-Rabiein achieved its goals? And the other question to Admiral Driscoll. The recent operations of Om Al-

Rabiein and the Multi-National Forces, what kind of support did you give in Operation Om Al-Rabiein? Is it just logistic? Or did you, the nature of the support that you given, that Multi-National Forces gave in Operation Om Al-Rabiein? What is that nature?

MG AL-ASKARI:

Speaking in Arabic.

INT:

Operation Om Al-Rabiein achieved most of the goals and is making a steady progress. There is no specific time to end the operations because you're not facing a regular army, so that we could announce victory over them. Those members could be active at any moment. That's why we deal with them in a good way. But we have to continue the pressure and we also, because it's easy to achieve a goal, but it's not easy to maintain this gains or security goals. And we shouldn't give a chance to the terrorists to reorganize themselves and target the citizens. And that's why there are instructions to the security services to carry on and bring force their units and also to develop their intelligence information. On the other hand, about the organizations, no, we still have several organizations, al-Qaida, just like the Admiral Driscoll said. And those organizations have intelligence as well and they move from time to time, from place to place. And we have to be always ready for any action for those people. No, there isn't, we haven't seen

any resistance. We, our unit didn't find any resistance there. And we have talked about this, and this is for many reasons. Their actions were limited, and they didn't influence our work and the work of the units. That's why we were surprised that and...because this was actually the strong, the last stronghold for al-Qaida. But I've say the cooperation from the citizen, and this is what shocked them, because some of them who tried to make use of the officers of the former Iraqi Army. But the thing is the citizens and what they did to, through providing us tips. And the Iraqi officers, this is what contributed. And this is the picture when...of Iraq when you see that all people are gathering to secure the country, and that's why we get some good results.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

The coalition forces have more and more been providing support to the missions and the operations, both in Basra, Sadr City, and in Mosul. That involves some plan and support. We have transition teams that are embedded with Iraqi Security Forces on the ground that offer technical capabilities and also some leadership and military advice. There's also some helicopter and aircraft support that's been going on. So last question, ma'am, please.

REP10:

Asking question in Arabic.

INT:

Question to General al-Askari. What you've said is a good thing. But I'd like to know, when the Iraqi forces went outside Sadr City, do you think there will be another operation in Sadr City? And what is the role of the border patrols and border units? And are we going to see any Iranian-made weapon, or will there be any flow as well for the Iranian-made weapons?

MG AL-ASKARI:

What's going on in Sadr City now is that everything is going on. Everything is safe. And you can go and see things for yourself. Yesterday, the Ministry of Defense, and I was with him, he met with the representative from Sayeed Muqtada al-Sadr, Sheikh [unintelligible], and other two lawmakers from the Sadr [unintelligible] and they had some complaints about the operations. And they had some demands for the services. We showed our readiness to provide help and we...and the Minister of Defense instructed five engineering battalion and the medical units in Sadr City to provide help and support and also when the people, or the police and the army make some violations, we are dealing with this. And they told us that they are ready to capture all the...help us in capturing the wanted. And we, they, we have been given some notes by them, and I'm comfortable about the operations. And I think they will be over soon, because there is a...everybody knows that there's, you cannot fight the government, and you are inside the

government, whether you are part of the political process or not. So, it's like a suicide, so when you do this, so, so they are convinced now such things are illegal. And they cannot face the government and Multi-National Forces with their capabilities. So far everything is good, and there is a cooperation and we are very optimistic. The recent operations, and during the recent operations, we managed to remove all the obstacles, the security obstacles because we've done that with al-Qaida, with the militias of outlaws, and the Iraqi armed forces made lots of achievements in several aspects. And what about these other question?

REP10: Speaking in Arabic.

MG AL-ASKARI: Speaking in Arabic.

INT: Regarding the borders, Prime Minister Maliki was in Ninawa and in Basra, and we met with the leaders. And we are getting out lots of works. But you have to remember that we have long borders with six countries, and those countries have to also help us. And Prime Minister Maliki is said that he has a great plan, and he has been working on it. And there will be some procedures through the Ministry of Interior with the Ministry of Defense, so that under the supervision of Prime Minister Maliki regarding the borders. So

there, he has a plan, and it's a ready. And it will be implemented soon. And this plan will ensure the safety of the borders and will hopefully stop the flow of infiltrators and weapon, which actually also affects the economy as well.

**RDML
DRISCOLL:**

I'd like to thank Major General al-Askari for joining me today.
And thank you for your participation.