

PRESS CONFERENCE:

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General Nasier Abadi, Vice Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Joint Forces

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REPORTERS:

REPORTERS 1-10

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

**BRIG GEN
PERKINS:**

Well, good afternoon and As-Salāmu `Alaykum. I'll start off by giving a quick characterization of the month of October here in Iraq. And, again, thanks to the strategic partnership we've had with the coalition forces and the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Iraq, the overall situation here with regards to security continues to improve. In fact, the number of security incidents in the week...in the month of October are the lowest since the beginning of 2004. Coalition force casualties continue to remain low as they have throughout the summer. And, as well, the Iraqi Security Force deaths were the lowest since May of 2004. And the civilian casualties throughout Iraq were the lowest since May of 2004. This is a great example of how we are continuing to build upon our strategic relationship between the coalition forces, the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Iraq.

However, there's still many...threats do still exist out there and we, in partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Iraq, are...continue to focus on dismantling the terrorist and criminal networks out there. And we're also ensuring that all members of Iraq's minority community can continue to live in a safe environment.

With this it's my honor to pass it off to General Nasier Abadi, the

vice chief of staff here, who will also be joined by Brigadier General Torrens-Spence and they will focus on discussing the Iraqi Security Forces. General.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I'm hoping that you can benefit from your presence here with us to state some facts about the Iraqi Army. The general assessment of Iraqi situation I refer to in regards to operations and based on the education of effective and ineffective attacks as recorded decreased all along the last three...the last months according to the comparison chart of attack rates. And these...there are reports from the Ministry of Defense and Interior and Health that are consistent with the inspector-general's report. And so they all indicated that the...to...the lowest decrease of violence since 2004. And this is evidence, clearly, ladies and gentlemen, the growth of the capabilities and efficiency of armed forces in Iraq.

The nature of enemy threat has been...started to weaken in a clear way. And the enemy has lost his ability to fight in frontal operations or offensive in big groups. And they trans-...these threats transfer to individual nature in indirect combat and IEDs and sticky bombs has been the greatest threat.

The sustainability of the momentum of the operations is continuing in operations. There were arrests of very significant targets of al-Qaida in Diyala, Mosul, and Baghdad provinces and the commanders...the leaders of armed groups in Baghdad, Basra, Maysan, and Wasit. In addition to that, they gained experience and the growing experience have enabled our forces to disclose and foil many attacks, be it from explosive vests, car bombs, or IEDs.

A committee to fact-finding truth was formed to study the reasons of driving out Christian families. And the conclusions and results were referred to the prime minister's office. At the same time, the Ninawa Operations Command was referred to Brig...the 3rd Brigade in the 1st Division and there were additional units from the National Police and training and arming two battalions to stop these attacks. The close and accurate intelligence and the cooperation of our citizens have also enabled our units to disclose and find and seize many hideouts and caches of weapons and munitions. One example, we have seized the second biggest weapons cache in Kaswa[ph] Watash[ph] District. And we also seized more than 170 IEDs and 320 IEDs in Mada'in area, and two tons of TNT in Ninawa.

The continuous...continued delivery of...or transference of security

responsibilities in a studied methodology have achieved 13 security files and the continued work to deliver and transfer all the security in provinces and submit all internal to the internal...National Police and the removal of all military units to its camps outside the cities.

The commands have also started putting together plans to ensure the next elections in 567 voting centers. We must also refer to that the society's security and individual security is a necessity, and I call on all citizens to take on their big role in maintaining a secure environment through watch and observing and checking their vehicles and their workplaces to stop the effects of sticky bombs.

These were the objectives of our operations during 2008. First, to prepare security for citizens to save their lives and properties to enable them to go about in their social and economic lives. Second, work to return the driven-away families. Six-thousand families were returned in Baghdad in the last two months, including 450 Christian families. Prepare a secure environment for the work of companies and investment in Iraq, because security is the gate for investment. Prepare appropriate security environment for the provincial elections and restrict weapons to the state's control and purge the cities of weaponry through doing inspection and continued inspection operations.

While on the level of equipping the Army, we are working on a three-phased strategy that is based on the necessities of the timeframe and the budget for the Ministry of Defense and the delivery period of equipment and readiness of the Army as follows. Beginning to support units with systems of fire support, aerial and ground support through modern helicopters that will be included according to contracts with their command of Air Force. In addition to formation and support...a light-support battery for mortar artillery in the commands and divisions. There is a development in the infrastructure of the systems of administration and training and infrastructure of aerial bases as Kirkuk Air Base, but this development is not up to the standards we wish for. The focus on the training plan...the annual training plan and preparing the training courses and military courses for different Army divisions and that program, and in return the National Police will focus on internal training programs, opening schools that work on training their commissioned and noncommissioned officers as a base for training in the command of the Army.

The administrative system has the priority and the plans of 2008 as follows. Development the support systems – fuel, food, equipment, transportation, maintenance, and repair – and many important projects have been completed as completing the headquarters

transport that have seven units with big cargo in addition to vehicles of transportation and unit transportation. Development of the system of maintenance and repair that included formation of the maintenance units and the field labs in support of divisions and battalions and the maintenance of light weapons and vehicles and reserve supplies in Taji camp. Completion of facilities of Bayji equipment storage and work is underway to finish the infrastructure for food and fuel storage. And 2009 will witness this development in all administrative systems. There is a comprehensive training that has been executed to stay the work and the efficiency of the administrative officials' systems in support.

There have been delivery of jamming systems, a modern system of symphony for the Engineering Corps and it was connected to the Humvee vehicles for Divisions 1, 2, 5, 6, 9, and 11. Expansion of reconnaissance and air surveillance and with King Air aircraft. and there have been a contract with helicopter to support the aerial support. There are 24 aircraft from Bell 407, 24 aircraft from Eurocopter 635, and 24 support aircraft AT-6B and 36 jet fighters of 516.

The naval force have also secured missions in water paths and poles and had seized, on the 22nd of October, three trucks that...with a big

cargo that have also been carrying docum-...false papers intended to ship illegal products. There also have been seized high-speed boats and four patrol ships.

The minister of defense had presented a detailed report about the capabilities of the Iraqi Army to His Excellency, the prime minister, that was based as a foundation in negotiations between Iraq and the United States.

In conclusion, I would like to seize this occasion to praise the role that you are taking upon yourself and value the sacrifices that you have been presenting to showcase the fact. I wish you all the best for your message and for your home country. Thank you.

**BRIG
TORRENS-
SPENCE:**

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon, As-Salāmu `Alaykum. My name is Brigadier Johnny Torrens-Spence. I'm the deputy commanding general of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq, which is normally known as MNSTC-I. MNSTC-I's role is to support the fielding of units of the Iraqi Security Forces, both military and police, as they enter service and to provide continuing logistic and training support that they need. We also advise Iraqi leaders at all levels and help as required to develop the institutional capacity of the security ministries to

manage and direct the affairs of the increasingly large, complex, and capable forces under their command.

I'd like to reinforce much of what General Nasier Abadi has just said. Until the early part of this year, the priority for the Ministry of Defense and, indeed, for MNSTC-I, was to generate sufficient forces for counterterrorist operations. We were, frankly, in a hurry, and the focus was deliberately on creating and equipping as many infantry combat units as we could in a short space of time. But starting in the spring of 2008, and now with increasing momentum, we are shifting our focus to building the other capabilities that transform that basic infantry-based force into an independent, self-sufficient army that can not only take on the terrorists and win, but also sets the conditions for the transformation of...to a force capable of defending the nation's borders.

The Ministry of Defense's main focus right now, as you heard from General Abadi, is on logistics. And this is coming on pretty well. There are still many gaps—and we're working hard with our Iraqi colleagues to address these. However, much has been achieved. The management of Bayji Ammunition Depot has been completely transferred to the Iraqi Army, as you heard from General Abadi. Out in Bayji, the small-arms repair facility is now operational, and

wheeled, tracked, and generated workshops are coming online soon. The General Transportation Regiment, which provides logistics support from the national bases forward to the divisions, was...became operational this month. A new computer logistic network, which links the depots, the Ministry of Defense and the divisions is now fully functional. And the Ministry of Defense-wide personnel management system is also on track to be launched in the new year.

Looking ahead to 2009, we expect the Ministry of Defense to start to focus its efforts on other capabilities that are needed to enhance the overall effectiveness of the combat divisions. Some examples are communications, surveillance and target acquisition, bomb disposal, and engineers. We fully support these programs and we will do our best to assist our Iraqi friends to bring these important capabilities into service efficiently and smoothly.

The growth of the Air Force and the Navy are a little behind the Army. There's nothing surprising about this; this was what was planned. The first priority, as I have described, rightly went to the Army. But the Air Force and the Navy are still small, but they're now growing extremely fast, focusing on putting in place those enabling capabilities that will underpin the future growth of the

capability.

The Air Force is now conducting about 350 sorties a week and playing an increasingly active counterinsurgency role, flying surveillance and reconnaissance missions in support of the Army, and providing important logistic support. Next year, we expect the first precision air-to-ground capability attack to be fielded with rocket-firing MI-17 helicopters and combat Caravan aircraft fitted with Hellfire missiles. The Iraqi Air Force recently graduated its first initial entry pilots who are now flying, and there's many more of these to follow, obviously.

The Navy is conducting three times as many patrols as it was last year, with increasing amounts of boarding and searching of vessels coming into Iraqi territorial waters in the Northern Arabian Gulf. The Navy has just taken delivery of the first six of 26 Defender Class Fast Patrol Craft and is expecting the delivery of four large patrol ships from Italy in 2009.

As General Abadi has highlighted, there have been similar progress in the training field. The Warfighter Program, where Iraqi Army battalions go back to the training bases for a period of refresher and development training, is starting to really gather momentum. This is

a really good initiative which will pay great dividends in the longer term. We're also very pleased that this week the first Iraqi Sergeants Majors course will start at Taji, where 40 senior, noncommissioned officers from all three services will come together for advanced training in leadership, management, and professional ethics.

Plenty more remains to be done. The Army is still seriously short of middle rank officers and sergeants, and is looking actively at increasing the throughput of officers at the Staff College and more English language training. The logistic system remains fragile, especially the supply of spare parts to the forward locations. Despite the great advances in training during 2009, there are still shortages of key skills such as mechanics and repair personnel, also communications experts and cooks.

But looking to the future, we see the first signs of reconfiguring the armed forces from their current counterinsurgency focus to a more conventional posture – defense of the homeland. We welcome this. The recent announcement by the Government of Iraq of purchases of M1 tanks, C-130 transport aircraft, and armed reconnaissance helicopters marks a significant step down this road, in line with the Ministry of Defense's long-term development plans.

Overall then, you can't fail to be impressed by the progress that the Iraqi armed forces has made over the last year. Under the capable leadership of great officers like General Abadi, they've not only grown in capability, they have also grown in confidence, and we've been proud to support them in this. We in MNSTC-I remain committed to helping the Iraqi armed forces to continue this progress in any way that we can, and to contribute in a partnership that continues to mature and deepen as it evolves. Thank you very much.

BG PERKINS: Sir.

REP1: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Ahmed Farval, Radio Sawa. General Abadi, will Baghdad be the second...next province after Kut to get the transference of responsibility? And there are movements towards the Syrian borders after the Syrian government withdrew its forces from the border area to protect the borders. My question to General Perkins. Was there any agreement with the Iraqi government to do an operation within the Syrian territories? And how did it happen? What is the position of the U.S. government of the Syrian government's decision to stop negotiations about the Iraqi security? Thank you.

BG PERKINS: I have nothing to offer on that point right there.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: In regards to the transference of responsibility, you know last Wednesday was the transference...transfer of responsibility in Wasit Province. The transfer of security responsibility has many steps. We...the Army should be able and the National Police and the police and also the province must be capable to assume the duties fully. From 18 provinces, we have only 5. Now we will start a study, any province that wants the transfer. And the two candidate provinces are Salah ad Din and Kirkuk provinces. And perhaps next week or Thursday, we will start studying these two provinces and we will look at which one has the priority to transfer their security responsibilities.

In regards to the Iraqi forces, there was no movement at all to Iraqi forces in Anbar. The only thing that happened was a replacement of a brigade with another in Diyala because of ... So we just replaced from the last operation.

REP1: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: So you mean the Iraq borders are empty?

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: No. We have two divisions there – the 1st and the 7th – in addition to the National Police. The province, as you have remarked, in the last two months, we had no incident in Anbar Province because of the security situation there and progress and the [unintelligible] Sons of Iraq. What happened was, the province...the transfer of security responsibilities and they were on the path of infiltration of the terrorists and that is...what? 20 to 30 each month. So we had a reorganization of the internal forces, but not a military...just to stop and cut those routes.

BG PERKINS: Sir.

REP2: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: [Unintelligible] from Iraqiya. General, the checkpoints in Baghdad, in reality they are spreading many. But performance of these checkpoints is not up to the standards. There are many soldiers in these checkpoints and they're doing other things, far away from their duties like talking on mobile phones or just leave the checkpoint as if it's just a disabling point for citizens. And this is a performance of forces, and there are many violations that were recorded that sticky bombs and IEDs. To you, is there any

intelligence work on those checkpoints' performance? Thank you.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: In fact, on Friday, I was visiting the command of Karkh operations. And every Friday they have a weekly brief. And as General said and I said that the rate of attacks in Baghdad or in Iraq yesterday or the day before yesterday was a record—like only nine attacks in the whole country. In Baghdad, the improvement is very significant and now we are in a phase to move to remove the concrete barriers and open roads. That's because of the improvement of the security situation in Baghdad. But those checkpoints are...there's some part might misuse their performance. But there is a watch from brigades and commanders watching their soldiers. There might be some violations, but there is work to be guided and penalties can be imposed on everything to improve those performances.

BG PERKINS: Ma'am.

REP3: Thank you. Mary Beth Sheridan from the Washington Post. General, you referred to the improvement in the provinces being able to handle their own...the Iraqi Security Forces handling their own internal security. And what I'm wondering is, in terms of the Iraqi military's ability to defend itself from an external attack, how

many years are you away from reaching that goal? And what are the main things that remain to be done to reach that goal? Thank you.

GEN ABADI: There are three generals here. I don't know whom you are addressing.

REP3: I'm sorry. It was for you.

GEN ABADI: The mission that we received from.... [Continues speaking in Arabic.]

INT: The mission that we received...tasked by the Iraqi Army to counter intelligence and to counter militias and disrupt their routes and training and also deprive them from safe havens because of the attacks on infrastructure of oil and electricity. Also, the Ministry of Defense have also the duty to protect the infrastructure. The last years, this is the mission we had been carrying on. We have no duties or missions to protect the air or the borders of the country. But in case we have this responsibility, there is a brief that...to the minister of defense if he ask us to...task us with that, a report went also to the prime minister, what are the capabilities and the Army's specifics to do those duties?

REP3: [Inaudible] how many years [inaudible]?

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Building an aerial force, building an Army is not easy, but it's still easier than building naval and air force. The naval force, as I said before, that the first ship will come in 2009 and the fourth will arrive in...at the end of 2011. In regards to 200-...Air Force, the first aircraft we will receive in 2011 until 2015. And that depends on the support and the help that the coalition forces can secure to Iraq so we can be able to maintain and defend our airspace and territories. Without that, there will be also agreements with the neighboring countries on the security of Iraq. But it's possible that we will go with those missions without having an air force or naval force because this is a common battle, it's not just an army's duty.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Al Arabiya, Yusfa Hamdani. Of course we all know that Iran and Turkey are bombing in the north. What are the agreements that will be with...dealt with the neighboring countries until we have an army built? Thank you.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: To whom are you addressing this question? This is political; I'm a military man, so I don't think there is another appropriate person to

answer this question.

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Modan Farji from the NINA Agency. General, you spoke about a report about Christian families in Mosul being driven out. The completion of this investigation and the report is ready with the prime minister according to what you've just said. Do you...can you...are you able to disclose that the party that was responsible behind those operations and because there are exchange of accusations about who is doing—some say these are Kurdish parties. And my second question is to Brigadier Johnny. Can you disclose when the British forces will withdraw completely from Iraq? Thank you.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Christian families, as everybody knows, are part of Iraq and they are our families. And they were initiators of the founding of Iraqi state, be it in education, in or...in medicine. All the fine arts, even in the sports. We remember Amar Baba, Shukrat Yusef, and Ankel Simpson. And the Christians are a part...a full part of Iraq.

What happened at al-Qaida – after the strikes and blows that we paid to them – they tried then to lean towards the media so they can

instigate this violence, and some 200 families and maybe 10 or 12 individuals were killed in this last period. But if you remember, on the same day the minister of defense, with a task force, went to Mosul and there he took military decisions and also visited the Christian families and religious leaders. And he...things were quiet as you.... We also, as you've mentioned, we sent a brigade from the Iraqi Army to Mosul and another brigade from the Ministry of Interior and we added also two battalions that—the 9th and 10th battalions—to the 3rd Division. These are all arrangements and steps we took to make more pressure on al-Qaida to also stabilize things and bring security. And hopefully soon the Christian families will be returning to their families and homes.

**BRIG
TORRENS-
SPENCE:**

Thank you very much. As far as the British posture, organization, and roles in Basra in the south is concerned, as you know, that is the subject of negotiations between the Government of Iraq and the Government of the United Kingdom. And I'm a COMMINT officer sitting up here in Baghdad and I'm afraid I'm not able to give you much detail on that.

However, we do have a role up here. I'm a representative of coalition operations here in Baghdad, working in MNSTC-I as about 20 or 30 British officers working in these type of roles in

advisory, training functions up here. And I am pretty confident that both our Iraqi colleagues and, indeed, our American friends are happy with our contribution up here and would like to see that continue. And I think that that is likely to go on.

BG PERKINS: Back there. Sir.

REP6: Daniel Williams from Bloomberg News. I was curious, the ... at the beginning of the conference you stated that the level of incidents or violence was now comparable to May, 2004. And my recollection of May, 2004 is that it was quite a busy month. It was not long aft-...Anbar Province was very dangerous and Muqtada al-Sadr's militia itself was engaged in fighting in several places, including here in Baghdad. So I'm curious. Where are the points now that are most difficult for coalition forces?

BG PERKINS: With regards to clarifying the security incidences, it's the lowest since the beginning of 2004—back in January, when you take a look at total security incidences.

Right now, as you are well aware, there are operations going on up in Ninawa Province. In Mosul area, Iraqi Security Forces are in the lead with the support of the coalition forces. So that is the area

where we have some of our greatest concentration of effort going on right now is in that area, which will be followed up with a significant reconstruction effort on essential services being led by Deputy Prime Minister Asawi and a group of Iraqi ministers. And so this has become a focus for us right now up in that area.

REP6: Just to clarify, in Ninawa, is it regarded Qaida's doing or is this more like the insurgency of the type that existed in Mosul even at that time, in 2004?

BG PERKINS: Al-Qaida continues to be the focus of our efforts up there. Sir.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Doud Asadi, Iraqi Media News Agency. Are there any concerns of difficulties to sign the SOFA between Iraq and Washington?

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I just mentioned, like five minutes ago, that the readiness of the forces is there at the minister of defense and he formed a committee on this in case we were tasked to defend our territories and airspace of Iraq. And this report is...was referred to the prime minister. And this decision is political that can go back to the prime minister. It's not a military decision.

BG PERKINS: Sir. Mm-hmm.

REP8: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Haidi Hassem, Voices of Iraq. My question to General Abadi. You mentioned that the provinces that had security transferred to them, the police will take over the training in ... within the cities. Will that mean the U.S. military will move out of the cities? And what after the transferring of security responsibilities in all provinces? Thank you.

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: You all remember that at the beginning, that a friendly side was responsible for the security. And during the building of Iraqi Army, the transfer started gradually from the coalition forces to the Iraqi Army's forces and whenever the readiness of our Army's improved. The duties that we are tasked with are the duties of the Ministry of Interior, just as the transfer of security responsibilities. Also, there responsibility from the Ministry of Defense into the Ministry of Interior.

In the provinces that have those transferred, the Army will leave the barracks and the positions within the cities and will go out to the camps and start to train and prepare for the...more duties that are

normally tasked like the protection of the territories and airspace.

Regards to the U.S. military camps, this is an agreement between the prime minister and the coalition forces [unintelligible].

REP9: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Greetings again. General, until now, there is no reaction at all from the U.S. side about bombing Al-Bukamal area in Syria, for our defense. My question is, was that defense ministry, Iraqi ministry was aware of this operation? And what is the intelligence information about this location? Did it include terrorists that were intending to come into Iraq? And contrary to what the Syrians are saying that this area was only civilians. So what's the position of the Ministry of Defense?

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: The coalition forces, as you know, came to Iraq with a mandate from the Security Council and it is ... the parties is fighting terrorism beside the Iraqi Army. The prime minister has always been a pioneer in maintaining the relationships between the neighboring countries and the exchange of information to stop the infiltration of terrorists into Iraq.

What happened in ... is that a terrorist group and the Iraqi asked the coalition forces for an answer about what had happened and, until now, we did not have an answer about this incident. At the same time, before...in May, I think, there were many terrorist groups that came through Qaim and they killed about 11 of Ministry of Interior [unintelligible] and they fled with their vehicles into Syrian borders. And we also asked neighborlies[sic]...Syria, an explanation about that and we still did not have any response.

REP9: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Is there any concrete barriers on the bor-...Syrian borders? Is that possible? Is the Ministry of Defense unable to put those bar-...concrete barriers that are put on the Jordanian and Saudi borders?

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: The control of borders is a very difficult task, and I do not think that a state, capabilities like the U.S. and you know their borders with Mexico, with all this technology, it is ... there are still violations.

Building a barrier or concrete barriers, the cost will be enormous amounts of money. We are in the phase of building the Iraqi society. We've ... what we have with budgets that should go to rebuilding oil, the education, the hospitals, wherever you go, the

agriculture, everything. So these monies, these budgets, is ... we cannot put into border protection. Instead, we can put agreements between countries so they can try to stop that and we will try from our part. There is neighborly ... friendly borders. We can build in every five kilometers some points to watch, but we cannot build a line because this is very costly and it takes a long time to build.

REP9: [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

GEN ABADI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: This is very expensive. This is a long border line.

REP10: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: [Unintelligible] from Anada[ph]. My question I would like to ask you, how do you assess the readiness of the Iraqi forces? Are they ready to defend Iraq and the government in specific? Another question, we hear frequently in international and U.S. press that there's ... that the return of death squads and their training and their high qualification of training in Iran. Do you have any information where are they concentrated more? Thank you.

**BRIG
TORRENS-
SPENCE:** I can talk [unintelligible] the capability of the training and development capacity of the Army and, indeed, the Navy and the

Air Force. And I, as I said in my earlier statement, I'm very encouraged by the way that is ... that capability is developing. We have, in large measure, completed the building of the basic force of the Army. And we're now moving to create those additional capabilities which are needed to round it out, if you like—to complement the basic force. We're building logistics. We're building communications, surveillance, bomb disposal, engineers. All those supporting elements which you would find in a regular, conventional armed forces. We're also starting to build the Navy and the Air Force now, though they are a little bit behind because they're more complicated, they're more dependent on equipment, and it takes longer, frankly, to train a pilot than it does to train an infantry officer. But in terms of training and development and the creation, I think it's going pretty well. That's ... on that, I think probably leave it there. You want to talk to the other?

BG PERKINS: With regards to the return of terrorists and special group criminals and other people who threaten the security of Iraq, it is a point that a lot of focus is being brought to bear, both with the Iraqi Security Force efforts as well as coalition efforts. We know that after the successful operations in Maysan, Basra, Sadr City, that numbers of these special group criminals did flee to Iran, received training in Iran. And now we are focusing to make sure that any external

influence into Iraq, regardless of where it comes from, is interdicted, and that any group that wishes harm or wishes to stop the progress in Iraq is dealt with and prevented from doing that. And I think if you take a look at the security figures that I discussed earlier, it speaks well of the effort that is going on—of the Iraqi Security Forces, the coalition.

And a main contributor to that success are the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people have rejected the extremism of some of these groups. They have rejected the brutal nature of these groups. They have rejected ethnosectarian violence and they are taking control of their neighborhoods. They are providing intelligence to the Iraqi government, the coalition forces when these people try to move back into their neighborhoods where they try to instigate violence, when they bring in weapons to the neighborhood.

So, by bringing all of these factors together, this is the reason for the improved security. And it is continual vigilance. There are a number of people out there who are trying to stop progress in Iraq, who are trying to prevent a peaceful transition to democracy and free markets. And that's why the strategic relationship between the coalition forces and the people of Iraq is so critical.

Well, again, I'd like to, on behalf of General Abadi and General Torrens-Spence here, thank you very much for being here today and for taking the time and effort to learn more about what is going on with the Iraqi security forces. Thank you.

GEN ABADI: Shukran jaziilan.