

**PRESS CONFERENCE:**

**Major General Mudhar al-Mawla, Iraq**

**Major General Mark R. Zamzow, Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Communications,  
Multi-National Force – Iraq**

**DATE: November 16, 2008**

**TRANSCRIBED BY:**

**SOS INTERNATIONAL LTD.**

**PARTICIPANTS:**

**Major General Mudhar al-Mawla  
Major General Mark Zamzow**

**REPORTERS:**

**REPORTERS 1-9**

**\*REP1 = REPORTER 1**

**\*INT = INTERPRETER**

**MG AL-  
MAWLA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

In the name of God. Brothers, we would like to welcome you, on behalf of the head of National Reconciliation Committee, to hold this conference to explain the process of transitioning SOI members from the coalition side to the Iraqi government. The transition process for the Sons of Iraq started on the 1st of October. It has been agreed upon with the coalition forces, a number of issues – some of which the administration, the payment of salaries. The process was a success, 100%, thank God.

First payment have been made by the Iraqi government to the Sons of Iraq members. The salaries were the same that were paid by the coalition forces. There have been no problems or issues within the payment process. The Sons of Iraq members were very happy and pleased with the transition process from the coalition authority to the Iraqi government.

Upon the instruction of the prime minister, 20% of Sons of Iraq members were decided to join the Iraqi government forces at the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. The...there have been some data...there have been some polling process by distributing forms by the follow up and conducting of National Reconciliation

Committee. They have been joined...they have provided the Sons of Iraq members these forms. Each individual recorded his name and his educational degree and his career and his wish, whether he wishes to join the Army or the National Police.

Eighty percent...the Iraqi...of these members, the Iraqi government is going to provide them with jobs, each one according to his educational level. As for the individuals who have not...who do not have scientific degrees or maybe they have some certain job they are good at, the coalition forces, under the supervision of General Zamzow.

There are 12 training centers. These centers are vocational training centers. Actually, the first of them have been inaugurated at Haya[ph] Jihad area; 420 individuals have been participated in it – 167 Sahwa members and the rest are from the civilians of...the citizens of the area in order to train them and to obtain a job after finishing the training and obtaining the certificate. The government would divide them on the ministries...the service ministries, each according to his job and the need of the ministry. Some of these jobs is education, training on using the computer, and carpentry, plumbing, welding.

These centers are going to be opened in different areas across Iraq in order to train these youth who have come answering the call. And they have come...they have come at a time the government and the security situation was in a bad need for their support and for their stance. These youth – who have shown the...this courageous stance at their areas and have controlled the street with all force and determination, supporting and helping the security...the Iraqi security forces to secure the area and employ security – they have succeeded. This part...the sacrifices they have offered during this period of time: over than 350 martyrs have fallen. These are considered martyrs as those who have fallen during service of the Iraqi armed forces and the police forces. These courageous men, after accomplishing their message and securing the area and as the security situation is improving under the existence and the presence of the Iraqi Security Forces with coordination and cooperation with the coalition forces, the security situation have improved in Iraq cities here.

The Iraqi government, within the leadership of His Excellency, the prime minister, made a commitment to pay back their efforts and to reward them by offering them jobs according to their wish. Whoever wishes to join the Iraqi Army forces, some of them would wish to join the National Police forces, and among them who

wishes to join the civil work at the offices and the ministries of the Iraqi government. Each one of them according to his educational degree.

These are the Sons of Iraq within the census process. We have found among them some college graduates, and we have found former Iraqi Army officers. And we found among them some of who are capable of doing certain jobs. The Iraqi government wanted to reward them by providing them with jobs and jobs opportunities at the different ministries.

The process is going to be conducted with coordination with the relevant ministries and the conducting and follow-up of National Reconciliation Committee. And Mr. Mohammed Salman, he gave big importance to the coordination with ministries in order to find jobs for these youth within the sooner possible opportunity. And once finding the jobs and joining these elements...the ministries, their work would be finished in the street.

The important point is these individuals, as long as they are holding their arms and conducting their duties on Baghdad streets and other provinces, the government is continuing to pay their salaries until they find the job opportunities and join the ministries and that they

would receive their salaries from the ministries, by then, their salaries from the Sons of Iraq would be stopped.

Now, I would allow the General Zamzow to explain his point of view and the point of view of the coalition forces concerning the transition process of the Sons of Iraq from the coalition forces to the Iraqi government.

**MG ZAMZOW:** As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Good afternoon. On behalf of MNF-I, I also want to thank you for being with us today. And I'm very fortunate to be providing this update with my good friend, General Mawla.

The Sons of Iraq program has been critical to the improved security we are experiencing throughout Iraq. The partnership between the Awakening members, the Sons of Iraq, and the Government of Iraq is fundamental to maintaining the remarkable security gains we have seen now and will see in the future. There is no doubt that security is a requisite condition for progress and this partnership between the Awakening members and the Government of Iraq has been pivotal to the increased quality of life and the heightened levels of security in many neighborhoods throughout Iraq.

The Sahwa Movement or Awakening that started in Anbar and

spread across much of Iraq, was a hallmark event as Iraqi citizens decided to take control of their future. They were tired of the oppressive and criminal tactics of al-Qaida as they preyed on the people. And when the citizens groups organized and stood up to the extremists that threatened their communities, the security situation greatly improved. They stood firm in the face of violence. They stood tough as the situation deteriorated. And they stood together to defend their families, their communities, and their future. We applaud the Sons of Iraq efforts, their courage, and their abilities. And the coalition forces are also grateful for the extreme sacrifices these men have made. These volunteers protected their neighborhoods; they secured key infrastructure and roads, and often located extremists and criminals among the population. We are proud of their courage to stand up against those who would threaten their everyday lives.

We continue to stand by the Government of Iraq as they fulfill their commitment through the transfer and, now, the transition of the Sons of Iraq. Under executive order of the prime minister, the transfer province...or progress for Baghdad Province was conducted on 1 October with 51,135 Sons of Iraq transferred to the Government of Iraq. It was accomplished professionally and effectively. And while the initial monthly salary payments are still

ongoing, as of yesterday, six of the 11 consecutive daily pay sessions have been completed with 35,000 Sons of Iraq having received their wages correctly and on time.

It took leadership, dedication, and perseverance at many levels to make this transfer so successful. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express sincere thanks and appreciation to the sheiks and Awakening member leaders, General Abud and the Baghdad Operations Center, and the Iraqi Army commanders at all levels within Baghdad Province for their joint efforts in facilitating, orchestrating, and managing this historic event.

The transition phase is our next step as all the Baghdad Sons of Iraq will, over time, be placed into employment. And while 20% of the 51,000 Awakening members will transition to the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi police—approximately that number—others will go to jobs in the private sector or into the ministries or into government as employees.

Of course, the coalition will continue to support the Sons of Iraq just as strongly as we did prior to that transition on October 1st. And at the same time, we will continue to assist the Government of Iraq and the Sons of Iraq as they move through the transition period

and into the employment phase in the public or private sectors.

We admire the commitment that Prime Minister Maliki and the Government of Iraq have made to the Awakening members. And with Iraq's citizens all standing tall and proud, the future of the Iraqi nation looks bright. We look forward to future partnership [sic] as we move on with this program. Shukran jaziilan, and we are ready to answer your questions, please.

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

**INT:** Ahmed Jassem, Western News Agency. Sir, you talked about the message provided by the Sons of Iraq...providing security. And we want an assuring message for the men of Iraq who have proved their willingness and their efforts in securing Iraq. They are complaining now that they're fearing to be detained for previous charges in their history. Thank you.

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** This point is of the important issues that have been approved upon between the Iraqi government and the coalition. A memo have been submitted to the prime minister. He give his ... he gave his instructions to stop the legal procedures against al-Sahwa elements

as a paying back for their favors, to honor them. And it is among the points that the Iraqi government is serious in not to persecute the legal procedures concerning those individuals who have previously worked with the criminal or terrorist groups with one condition, that there should be no murder. If one individual claimed that a certain individual who is now a Sons of Iraq member at a certain area, has killed one of his relatives or his sister such...his brother, his father, if a legal order have been issued by the judge of detaining and suing this individual, then the law should follow its course. This is the order of the prime minister to stop the legal procedures unless there was murder. Yes.

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

**INT:** As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Hadil al-Azawi, deputy chief editor. When are you going to move Sahwa elements from the streets after their issue have been transferred?

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** As for the finish of Sahwa mission on the Iraqi street, I've mentioned, within the instruction of the Iraqi government, is to find job opportunities for these men. The process will...their number in Baghdad is very big—51,153 individuals is a big number. But the

other provinces, it is close to this number. This process will take coordination with the relevant ministries in order to receive and contain these individuals. The Ministry of Interior has started, also, the Ministry of Defense; they started receiving the young individuals who would meet the criteria needed to join the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense. Once receiving these elements would be over, their job on the street would...the job of Sahwa elements on the streets would be over. But as the steps you were asking, the violations, they are minor violations.

Now, each military unit is responsible for elements...the Sons of Iraq elements within its sector. The military commander, within his sector, he's going to be responsible for managing and administrating those individuals in addition to administrating the individuals of his unit. The Sahwa individual is going to be treated as a soldier in that unit. Once he makes a violation, he's going to be punished. Once he do courageous work, he's going to be rewarded.

The process is not loose. The D1 decree was very clear about this issue...the D1 decree, number 118, was very clear about this issue. The units...the Sons of Iraq members are going to be connected to the units in all aspects, whether administrative as al-Sahwa individual. As you see now in the street, they have been wearing the

Iraqi Army uniform. The following step with...agree with the Baghdad command director, each checkpoint of Sahwa would now include half Iraqi Army individuals and half Sahwa individuals. By this, the work would be cooperative and the individuals there are going to be conducting their duties just like the Army individual or the police individual. This would give the concept of the Sahwa individual that he's now a military individual.

Yes, it is for you, lady.

**REP3:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Azhal[ph] Gali[ph], Arasa[ph] Jadid[ph] Newspaper. As...do you have a new recruitment among the Sahwa elements or are you finished with this number? Is it settled?

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** There are no opportunities for new recruitment within Sahwa. We are working on joining them to the Iraqi Army in order to finish this system. Now we're working on pulling Sahwa elements from the streets in order for the Iraqi Security Forces would take the authority and this system would be over. This system was found for a certain situation and now there is no recruitment or volunteering

for them, only for Army and police.

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

**INT:** Yunisel[ph] Hamdani[ph], Al Arabiya Newspaper. At the late...recently we have witnessed the return of detonations by the vests and VBIEDs. What is your explanation? Is it related to transitioning Sahwa members?

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** The terrorism war is not in Iraq only. It is all over the world. There are...is always good and evil. Whenever the will of progress in Iraq would move forward, they try...the terrorists would try to hinder this will by conducting certain actions. But, thank God, the eyes of the Iraqi Army and the National Police are tracking them and targeting them. Al-Qessra [ph] detonation, the person responsible for it is detained and two of his assistants are detained—just the second day from conducting this mission.

The National Police, with each day, are growing their capabilities and abilities and skills. This issue, it is a terrorism war, whether in Iraq or Yemen or the rest of the world. We are continuous...and continuing our efforts, and the Iraqi government is paying its efforts

in order to achieve security for the Iraqi people.

It is a phase. There is no indicator that because Sahwa has transferred from the coalition to the Iraqi government there should be some detonations in order to hinder the security operation. But it is a success...the transition process was a success.

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

**INT:** As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Hamed Ahmed, Almalaf Press and News Agency. This is a joint question. How do you evaluate the support councils' establishment? Is it going to take the place of Sahwa? Are Sahwa forces going to be under the authority of these councils?

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Sahwa and support councils. The support councils are a popular movement by tribes and sheiks that are trying to show the Iraqi government their support and the support of the Iraqi people to the government.

When the councils were established in the areas, some of the councils have achieved their duties very well. I'm not referring to the support councils; I'm referring to the councils who have...that

are...have been formed after the war. In each area, a council have been formed from the sheiks and the tribe leaders there. They were the eyes from the citizens in that area in order to help the citizens in meeting their needs from services and certain issues.

The support councils are not related to Sahwa. Sahwa is not under the authority of support...of Sahwa nor the others are under the Sahwa. The Sahwa are armed for men that have come for the support of the security forces. But the support councils came to show their support to the Iraqi people and the Iraqi government with the way they see suitable and to raise the need...to deliver the need of the...their areas to the government in order to have them met.

**MG ZAMZOW:** May I add, please, the Sons of Iraq transition is something we're very, very proud of and the support councils is something different, as the Government of Iraq is working on that. But the transfer has been a great, great success and it just shows how the security aspects are transitioning from the Sons of Iraq and the coalition as security conditions dictate through the Government of Iraq as they keep improving and control the security situation.

**REP6:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Major General al-Mawla, you've mentioned there are stopping the

legal pursuit for Sahwa members. How do you comment on this procedure? It is based upon what? You mentioned it should have the condition that the Sahwa member should not be convicted with a murder and it is a homicide. The second question. The 20 percent...percentage...is it capable to increase?

**MG AL-MAWLA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

Let me answer your second question. The 20% is not...we're not able to increase it. We made a census and 51,000 have...was the number and 20% of them have the right to join the interior and the defense ministries. The rest? The government should find jobs for them. Those who have not scientific degree, those who do not have any certain jobs – General Zamzow is going to explain to you about the centers that are going to be opened and how this great program, once it was submitted to me, I told them it is a very great program. Once it is going to be applied in Iraq, we will witness no unemployment in Iraq.

To stop the legal pursuit, not all Sahwa members are included with the legal pursuit. The majority of them are youth who have just finished college and they are looking for a job opportunity. The majority are youth.

Among them, there's a certain number who have worked with terrorist elements before joining the Sahwa. So we...it is not within our knowledge. But we might hear some report from the area to deliver to the security authorities that this person used to work with terrorist elements and now he's with Sahwa. But there is no clue that he participated in the detonation or homicide or.... It is true that he...maybe he had worked with terrorists before, but he did not participate in an operation or a work or an action before people that people would come and bear witness that we saw him kill someone. This individual, if I had someone submitting a claim against him saying that he killed my brother and I have witnesses and would submit his testimony to the judge, and the judge would issue an order to detain that Sahwa member, by then we have to execute the judicial order. Then the court, if it found the clues to charge that person, he's going to be charged with it. But if it was a false charge and there are not enough evidence that would prove that this individual truly have killed a person, then the court would hold him innocent and he would go back to work.

But the individuals who have charges against from the citizen in the area stating that he worked with certain terrorists, but he did not participate in touchable crime and now he's with Sahwa, when we hear such claims, we have formed a committee to follow up and

implement the national reconciliation to investigate in these claims whether they're true or false. And the committee would have the final order in order to pass it to the court or not. More than this...I cannot give you more explanation. This is what was meant by stopping the legal pursuit against those individuals who have committed a touchable crime.

Yes. Not immune. Not a pardon. The amnesty law was issued in the year 2008 by the Parliament...Iraqi Parliament. But to stop the legal pursuit is a decree with a condition, no murder or homicide should be involved.

**MG ZAMZOW:** If I could expand, the general mentioned aspects of the programs for the transition and there...it's very well structured for having taken the transferred Sons of Iraq and work different options, depending on their backgrounds. So they took great pains to go ahead and document all the transitioned Sons of Iraq, the 51,000 for Baghdad, and what their backgrounds are. And now it's a matter of figuring out the appropriate transition route for their employment.

So part of this, as you know, is approximately 20% to the military, the Iraqi Security Forces. And then beyond that, vocational-technical training in schools that exist already and other programs,

one of which is called the Civil Service Corps, in which it's a jobs program to accomplish ministerial or provincial work through these dispatch centers where unskilled labor could be trained and then dispatched to projects. So these are two of the programs that are being worked. Again, the transfer went wonderfully well. And transition is a part that's going to move into full gear shortly.

**REP7:** My name is Jim Wade, the Voice News. I have a question. I was under the assumption also that the Sons of Iraq would not recruit you if you had been found guilty of killing a coalition force troop. Is that true?

**MG ZAMZOW:** The Sons of Iraq were hired under the...for the U.S. forces. There was an extreme, in-detail background check where all that analysis was done. And individual by individual, they checked in the background, and if they qualified and had good backgrounds then we hired them.

**REP7:** And also, I hear good things that they are being paid steady.

**MG ZAMZOW:** The payment progress is well on track. So for U.S. forces, as the general mentioned, the pay has been constant for each region. And that transfer has happened in Baghdad, and we expect the same

payments will happen elsewhere as well.

**REP7:** Thank you.

**MG ZAMZOW:** Yes, sir.

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

**INT:** U.S. government was the first to take the men of Iraq to join...to recruit them. Who has the decision in the transitioning of Sahwa members? Was it from the U.S. government or the Iraqi government?

**MG ZAMZOW:** Security has evolved over the years here, for sure. With the Sons of Iraq making it a more stable situation, it became apparent to everyone that the transition has to occur in the security structure as well. So for the Sons of Iraq to move to the Government of Iraq as security to augment their forces was a very logical move. And they will continue to shift. And as the country stabilizes further – region by region, just like is happening in Baghdad – those transitions could occur. And other transitions, I would think are on the horizon as well. Shukran jaziilan.

Is there one more question? I think we have time for one more.

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

**INT:** Alyum[ph] Tari[ph]. Some military institutions ... Don't they need some rehabilitation courses in order to join such jobs? The militias have entered the governmental institutions. They need cultural and educational courses before joining such jobs.

**MG AL-MAWLA:** [Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:** Yes, to join Sahwa with the police...National Police and the Iraqi Army, it was not just like that, spontaneously. But the candidates, we need to check their backgrounds. And after obtaining the security approvals for the recruitment of these individuals and joining them to the Army and the police, the ministries of interior and defense prepared a training program. As new volunteers at the Army and police, they would have the same courses that would be given to the civil volunteer. His reward is that he has been...his recruitment have been...has been accepted. But the training program is the same that...of that which is offered to the civil individuals as essential training, weapons training.

After they finish their training phase – which is two months and two months and two months – after finishing the six months of training,

he would have to join special schools that would rehabilitate the Army and the police before joining them to the units. They are not coming from the street as he was Al-Sahwa element. He's not going to join directly, wearing the uniforms of the army and the police and would be...and police or army individual just like that. He needs to be trained by the ministry of interior and defense, and would go through the same training offered to the civil individual who would volunteer to army or police once finishing the training program and proving his skills and abilities that, by then, they would send him to the unit.

**MG ZAMZOW:** If I could make one closing comment and then hand it off to General Mawla, this has been a very historic transition with the Sons of Iraq and the movement from U.S. contracts to the 51,000 here in Baghdad Province. Transfer, again, worked wonderfully. The payment was well, well done and well organized, well documented. The processes are in place and now part two is coming up, the transition. And this is where the full expectation of the Government of Iraq, working these transition programs to get employment for all the Sons of Iraq. It's on track. We're confident it will continue to work. And we look forward to continued partnership with our partners in the field and here at other levels in the Sons of Iraq transition.

**MG AL-  
MAWLA:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

**INT:**

And Sahwa in Baghdad, its transition, the process would start in other provinces. The process is continuous until we would assume the authority in all of the rest of the provinces. It would take census. It would take dividing them into groups. And we are continuous with our work with the common provinces and we would announce the process once we achieve it.

**MG ZAMZOW:**

We thank you very much for your time today, and appreciate your interest in the Sons of Iraq program. Shukran jaziilan.

**MG AL-  
MAWLA:**

Shukran jaziilan. [Continues speaking very briefly in Arabic without translation.]