

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Brigadier General David G. Perkins, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq
Major General Qassim Atta, Spokesman, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon**

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PARTICIPANTS:

**Brigadier General David Perkins
Major General Qassim Atta**

REPORTERS:

**Dominic DeNatali from Fox News
Manuel Dupak from AP News Agency**

REPORTERS 1-12

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: In the name of God, the most merciful. Ladies and gentlemen, As-

Salāmu `Alaykum. Welcome here today in the briefing from BOC and the coalition forces, Multi-National Force. I want to thank David Perkins...General David Perkins for hosting this press conference here today. We're going to focus through this press conference on two dynamics...major dynamics. The first dynamic is the return of the families...the displaced families. And the second dynamic related to the Awakening groups. And as far as BOC, first of all, continuous efforts from the supreme committee that's working on the displaced families and the return of the displaced families in accordance to the ministerial...the prime minister's order that's related to returns of the families to their homes and advocate all the occupied houses, all the committees...the formed committees started working on the 25th of August in 2008. And the committees in Karkh and [inaudible] areas received a lot of applications from many families willing to return back to their homes. These committees are working on checking all those applications from those families that's willing to voluntarily return to their homes and houses. Areas Hayajamiya, Al Azaliya, Amariyah, and Thayuna area, and Palestine Street in Amamiya, [unintelligible] areas witness the return of 76...736 families in the past five days. And under the supervision of our security forces, thank God, we didn't have any incidents...security incidents. We want to assure you that the government is working and committed to work on the file...the case

of displaced families, especially after the victories that the Iraq Security Forces has achieved against the terrorist groups and the outlaws. The number of families that returned to their families in Rusafa sector since the Fardh Al-Qanoon plan and so far until the 1st of September is 2,925 families. And while the families in Karkh area that returned to their homes, they were 7,051 families. Secondly, the Baghdad Province started disbursing the...or distributing the funds and allocations to the damaged houses and the shops that was damaged during the...as a result of the military operations or terrorist incidents. The compensation was about...between 1 million to 105 million Iraqi dinars. More than 733 families were...got their compensation – 225 in Sadr City, 125 in Sadiyah, 17 families in Mahmudiyah, 55 in Yusufiyah, 82 in Sadriya area, 63 families in Karrada area, and 80 families in Al-Amil area, and 53 in Lutifiyah area. And the operations and the efforts of compensations is actually continuous to work on compensating the rest of the families. And especially Baghdad put about 80 employees to...dedicated to this purpose to work on compensating families in Baghdad and other provinces. And operations in the process of compensation is actually continuous. Also...thirdly, the Iraqi government is assuring that we are going and pressing on the Awakening groups, especially after receiving the responsibility starting from October 1st, 2008 and receiving

responsibility of the Awakening groups in Baghdad and other provinces according to a timetable and a schedule that's been put in place that's going to be announced in the upcoming two days and going to be a decree from the prime minister. That's going to include first calling all Awakening group members to come and report to their...to the units in their areas in order to fill applications that is related to the Awakening groups. Second is to complete the process of joining those ones to the Iraq Security Forces. A third also to give compensation or financial compensation to the ones that doesn't fall under the rule of...rules and regulations of the Iraq Security Forces until they're embedded in the ministries or civilian ministries. And also train and qualify the rest of them and teach them on...train them on pro-...vocational training in order to be qualified to be...to join the ministries in civilian sector. Also, the operations and the summary for last week. We have witnessed a lot of families returning to their areas. We killed one terrorist and we arrested 130 wanted. We rescued about five kid-...hostages. We defused and also seized vehicles in Al Safa area. We also found 304...3,400 munitions. And we found 332 different size of weapons and about rockets. And 200 kilograms of C-4 material. And that's what we had as a brief from the Baghdad Operations Center for the 27th of August and until the 7th of September. Now I defer to General David to talk and give his brief for the Multi-National

Force.

BG PERKINS: Thank you, General Qassim. Good afternoon. As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Ramadan Mubarak. May this month and coming year bring peace and prosperity for all Iraqis. This Ramadan we all have much to be grateful for. Iraq is in a very different place than it was just 12 months ago. The number of security incidents during the first week of Ramadan this year is more than 60% lower than the first week of Ramadan last year. Ethnosectarian violence is down from nearly 60 incidents in a week to negligible levels today. And Iraqis refuse to be pitted against each other by senseless violence. While al-Qaida – Iraq and special group criminals continue to be capable of high-profile attacks as we saw yesterday in Tal Afar, Iraqi and coalition forces are aggressively pursuing them and steadily limiting their abilities to operate. Indeed, the trends in low violence have reached a new level of stability around Iraq as General Qassim has just discussed. Iraqi and coalition forces are now focusing more on operations that build on the security environment. We are working on creating opportunities for Iraqis to continue to build the new Iraq. Thousands of Iraqis are returning to their country and homes with the help of the government. The Iraqi Security Forces are protecting more and more cities and ensuring that the violence will not come back. Security for 11 of Iraq's 18

provinces is now under local, provincial control. Reconstruction projects are being launched and executed. And reconciliation is taking place through the governing institutions and political process. A very important step in the reconciliation process has been the recent agreement resolved in which the Government of Iraq will assume official responsibility for the Sons of Iraq as General Qassim stated earlier. And as of October 1st, the Government of Iraq will take over financial compensation for the Sons of Iraq and, in partnership with coalition forces, will accelerate the permanent transition of the Sons of Iraq to the Iraqi Army, police, and civilian jobs. The Sons of Iraq have been key contributors to the turnaround in security that we've seen in this last year and just as they have...and they have sacrificed much for their country. The Government of Iraq and coalition forces are committed to creating the opportunities for these Iraqi patriots to continue building the new Iraq. Also this week, we are greatly encouraged by the peaceful discussions regarding the deployment of security forces in the northern communities of Diyala Province. As different communities have different security requirements, deploying the adequate forces to permanently protect the Iraqi populace is a complex process with many considerations. Coalition forces are partnering with the Government of Iraq and local Iraqi Security Forces operating in Diyala and the Kurdistan provinces to

help establish a precedence for security force deployments around the City of Khanaqin in accordance with the Iraqi constitution. Our partnership is focused on helping to create political processes and governing institutions that represent the interest of all Iraqis. While establishing political process involves many challenge, it is a phase that all great countries go through. And I am encouraged that Iraq now has the security conditions that allow us to discuss these other issues. Iraqis show that they don't believe in the terrorist ideologies that sought to divide them. Iraqi citizens came together because they believed in a new Iraq. We are encouraged that Iraqis continue to talk and work together to build a new Iraq. In fact, just last night, coalition forces, acting on a tip from local Iraqi citizens, discovered a cache containing more 2,500 components. Soldiers from the Bravo Company in the 2nd Battalion, 6th Infantry Regiment with the 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division found the cache after a group of local Iraqi citizens informed them of a suspected cache location that had recently received more munitions. The Iraqi citizens gave the soldiers a notebook with sketches of the munitions and the general location which led them to the site. This cache included 414 blocks of Iranian plastic explosive, 860 copper plates, 500 back plates, 529 retaining rings, and 157 steel bodies. These are the types to use the explosive-formed penetrators which have killed so many innocent Iraqis. The Iraqi citizens make a

significant decision to support their government and security forces when they provided this information that led to the discovery of this cache. It's an honor for the coalition forces to work in partnership with military leaders like Qassim here and to support the Iraqi Security Forces as they increase in their capability to establish security and to help the Government of Iraq build representative political process for all Iraqis. The coalition forces remain committed to protecting the Iraqi people and helping Iraqis build on the hope that has returned to Iraq. Thank you, and now we'd both like to take your questions.

REP1: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Major General, you mentioned that...about the Awakening groups, the ones that's going to fall under the rules and regulations and be within the rules and regulations are going to be included with the co-...Iraq Security Forces. General Perkins, when Iraqi...when you decided transferring the the security cases to the Iraqi government, but is there any things that the...was it...is it any agreement...is there any agreements between the coalition and Iraqi forces in order to...Iraqi government in order to turn over the security case of the Awakening groups?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

There's...as far as your first question, there were so many people trying to distract attention and talk about the...spread rumors about the government and their commitment as far as getting the Awakening groups to join the Iraq Security Forces or the civilian ministries. We say that all the rights are of the...those Awakening groups are preserved. And the...as far as the regulations and the rules that we took that we have to do the...they have meet the regulations, and that means they have to be fit and they have to have a background check and, of course, education. The ones that's going to be within the regulations and the requirements, they are going to be able to join the security forces. More than...a lot of ...Awakening group members are able to join the...in Baghdad joined the security forces and the police. And the Ministry of Interior is working on getting more of them to...of those Awakening group members to actually join the police. The ones that doesn't fall under requirements of the police or the Army, they will be able to join the ministries. We are going to continue to...the 1st of October, that we're going to release their salaries and pay their salaries to all of them, just like the Army and the police. And until we find work or jobs for the rest of them that they couldn't join the police or the Army. The ones that don't have the opportunity to work with the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, or the other civilian ministries, the reconciliation committee are...they put or allocated

around 150 billion Iraqi dinars to qualify them to work with the other ministries.

BG PERKINS: As General Qassim just outlined, we've actually had extensive discussions with the Government of Iraq as to exactly what are the principles and guidelines that we will go through as we transition responsibility, leadership, and the contracts of the Sons of Iraq who are now working with the coalition forces, how we go about doing that and transferring those to the Government of Iraq. Two key pillars that we both have agreed that we need to make sure we maintain and number one is the security situation needs to stay at the same level, if not improve from where we are now. And the second is we cannot break faith with the Sons of Iraq, who we all agree have stood up in a time of great need and been great patriots of Iraq. What we have done is sat down and come up with a timeline, which we have discussed really will begin in October. And we'll start transitioning the Sons of Iraq over. Again, as the general said, a portion of them, about 20% overall, will eventually end up in the Iraq Security Forces. But they must have the correct literacy skills. They must be able to pass physical requirements and things such as that. The other 80% will be off-ramped into a number of programs which we have worked extensively with the Government of Iraq to get up and running. They involve vocational

training programs. They involve literacy programs. They involve apprenticeship programs within the ministries. And we also are partnering with civilian business leaders who would like to partner with the ministries, train these young men, and bring them in to their operation for jobs. So this is a very wide-reaching plan that we have worked in close detail with to provide a number of avenues for them to take because, as we know, each case is individual and we want to make sure we get the right fit for each Son of Iraq person that will be transferred.

REP2: Dominic DeNatali from Fox News. A question for General Atta with regards to displaced families. The numbers that have been returned so far pale in comparison to the real numbers that are actually out there. What exactly is the delay in getting more people back? And how do you...how will you actually accelerate that?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Yes, first of all, the returns of the families. It's a volunteer return, by the way; if anyone wants to return, he's going to see that the Iraq Security Forces are going to prepare all the envir-...you know, the opportunities for them. We have a lot of displaced families in and outside of Iraq. And this number is actually fixed and accurate numbers within the Ministry of Displaced and Displacement. And

also the UN organizations know that, too. Baghdad—there is all sort of displaced issues happened in Baghdad in those areas like in Rusafa and the Karkh area. The displacement process is easier than the return process. And we're, like, free to describe it as like building and demolishing. I mean, the demolishing process is easier than the building process and it takes longer to build than demolish. And the committee in the BOC and also the executive committee and reconciliation committee, we put plans in order to...for all the families return...the displaced families to return in the upcoming four months. And the number of displaced families only in Baghdad around 92,000 fam-...displaced families. And now, we had 12,000 families return back. The average number of returned families on a daily basis in both areas, Karkh and Rusafa area, is about around 100 families a day. Our security forces, after checking the applications and the info and their paperwork, they accompany each family to their own house...old house. This whole process takes time. So, on daily basis, I mean for, like, to return 100 or 200 families are receiving on daily basis. First, the people were worried about or concerned about getting targeted again, and they weren't sure about stability of security in their neighborhoods. But, thank God, right now it's been proven that we haven't had any security incidents. More than 100 family...average of 100 families are getting back to their homes. And we are expecting in the upcoming

few days and probably after Ramadan ends and after the summer vacation and the...ends and after October 1st, we anticipate the numbers getting doubled and all that. And we're thinking about getting all the displaced families in the upcoming four months.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: As-Salāmu `Alaykum. If...I mean, not too far ago, we saw a good thing in Baghdad Airport, the return of displaced families and it was the personal...using the personal airplane...the prime minister's personal airplane. And is it going to happen again? Are we going to see more flights coming from other countries, return families?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you. In fact, I'm sure that everybody has seen that we have organizing planes and flights from Egypt to Baghdad and it's been...we've been using the prime minister's personal airplane. And we have had four flights so far. And, thank God, everyone outside of Iraq is...all the families outside Iraq, they're willing to return...voluntarily return to Iraq. And yesterday, the minister of displaced family...displaced and displacements been to Jordan and other countries and talked. And so many Iraqis has submitted applications in order to return back. And as you know, we have limited transportation means and it's the prime minister's personal airplane

is being used to return all the Iraqi families to Iraq. So, you can imagine.... So we're going to work on getting them back.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General Qassim, people are still reluctant about getting back to the hot areas. Those families are not willing to get back to those areas. I mean, when, for instance, if a person is...if a house is occupied by a family and the family of the owner of the house wants to come back again, how is that going to work? What's the process? The other thing is those Awakening groups. Are they going to stay on the roads, on the streets as far as, like, checkpoints? And my other question is to General Perkins. General Perkins, is the American forces...is there any intentions to withdraw the American forces from the Iraqi cities, not from Iraq, but from Iraqi cities?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: The first question you are talking about is American...is Awakening groups are going to stay on the streets as far as checkpoints after October 1st. The ones that's going to join the Iraqi Security Forces and be part of the Iraqi Security Forces are going to be under the command of the Iraqi Security Forces and get their directions from the Iraqi Security Forces. Weapons are only going to be handled by Iraqi Security Forces after October 1st. The ones that doesn't fall

under the requirements or regulations of Iraqi Security Forces are going to be paid and...until they are joined...until they join the ministries. Or...and we're going to continue pay salaries to the rest of them, the ones that needs to be trained and requalified and be assigned to other ministries or civilian jobs. We want to assure all the Awakening group members from Sons of Iraq, they're going to get all their rights and from their salaries and morally and financially. And they are part of the whole situation. They've been targeted so many times. They've sacrificed a lot. And everyone from Awakening group members in Adhamiyah, Doura area, they were targeted, they were threatened. And that's why we...as prime minister is taking care of them and committed to taking care of them. And the ones that fall under the rules and regulations of the Iraqi Security Forces, they can join the police or the Army. And the weapons are going to stay in...within the Iraqi Security Forces only. We are not trying to build armies in...within the Iraqi Security Forces. We want to build a model of Iraqi...unified Iraqi Army and Iraqi police. The weapon has to be within the hands of the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi government. As far as the return of the families, we have studied all the cases that we have now. And there are...allocations has been allocated to be given to the families that can't find homes or houses that has no place to live. About 300,000 Iraqi dinars for 6 months. About 1 million...a total of 1,800,000

Iraqi dinars that's going to be given to a family that doesn't own apartment or a house. And Iraqi Security Forces can take them to where they want to go. And their rights are reserved, too. And also, the prime minister said that the return of the families, the displaced families is not only the responsibility of the Iraqi Security Forces, but it's also the responsibility of all the Iraqi people. The religious imams, all of the tribe leaders, the tribe sheiks, and also political parties, politicians in the Parliament, all of them; they need to work together, one hand in order to be able to return all the families...displaced families and, hopefully, Insha'Allah, we have all the forces in order to help.

BG PERKINS: General Petraeus is in the process right now of making a recommendation to the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman as to what the force structure should look like in the future. That will be discussed with the president and the president will make the decision as far as what the American force structure looks here. At the same time, we are in discussions with the Government of Iraq to determine what is the disposition of the forces that remain here. And so once a couple of those key decisions are made, it then becomes clearer as to what do we do with the forces that remain here. And again, all of these decisions or recommendations are based on a number of assumptions that are based upon conditions

on the ground. And, of course, as...if conditions change, some of those assumptions would change. And, therefore, we always keep in the forefront of our mind that we want to make sure that, at any given point in time, both with regards to numbers and disposition, that we are doing what is best based on the conditions on the ground at that point in time.

REP5: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I have two questions. One question to General Perkins and one to General Atta. General Atta, you said that...you talked about all the victories and achievements by Fardh Al-Qanoon plan and the BOC. But four days ago or five days ago, if I want to be specific in Adhamiyah area, there were clashes between the Iraqi Security Forces or engagements between security forces and...Iraqi Security Forces and al-Qaida. And we heard in Adhamiyah there were return of al-Qaida members to that area. If you have any information about that, if you can clarify, please. Also, General Perkins, you talked about Iraqi government. You know...recently they had a security operation in Mosul and it was very successful. But a few days ago we heard that the coalition or Multi-National Forces doing a military operation in Mosul. So what's the authenticity of that?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Thank you, Hareth, as far as the improvement of security forces that we witnessed in the past four or five months in particular and the return of normalcy...to normalcy in areas in Baghdad and Iraq. This is something that has been clear to everybody and to the media. Of course, there are some remains of al-Qaida terrorist groups in Adhamiyah...work in Adhamiyah or Doura or Sadr City or any area in Baghdad or Iraq. Those groups are trying to affect the military operations that we're doing...security operations that we're doing to try to target people that actually challenged everything. And, of course, you know the Iraqi people has been essential to the return to normalcy that we've witnessed there. And, of course, to...the Iraqi people now are able to go out and walk around at night in the streets, especially right now in Ramadan. And a few minutes ago General Perkins has given a accurate number is that he's talked about Ramadan. And the first week in Ramadan and about 60% drop down in violence. And this is a huge number. Our forces are going to continue the...trying to eliminate all the...those al-Qaida groups and networks. And al-Qaida now trying to find safe havens and...but I have to assure you that there are no safe havens in...for those al-Qaida or outlaws or criminal groups. Our Iraqi Security Forces now are working better, they're more capable, they're better trained, and the numbers are more and has increased. So, this is what contributed to the stability of security.

BG PERKINS: With regards to Mosul, as you said, there were previous military operations there that were successful. But, as you know, recently we've seen increased al-Qaida activity up in that area. That continues to be a concern when we have terrorist activity anywhere in Iraq. So, the coalition forces continue to partner with the Iraqi Security Forces. So what you'll find in Mosul now, and will continue in the future until we can secure and hold that, is that you'll have coalition and Iraqi Security Forces partnered together, continue to conduct operations in Mosul to, as the general said, deny them safe havens, take away areas where they have freedom of maneuver and, again, secure the Iraqi population so the rule of law becomes the rule of the day there. So we will continue to partner with Iraqi Security Forces; not only in Mosul, but throughout Iraq to maintain security throughout the country.

REP6: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General Qassim, recently we have seen a lot of assassinations with silencers. We have heard of...from about 17...we...17 dead bodies were found killed or assassinated. My question is Iraqi...the security forces, has they taken any actions in regards to this thing? Have we arrested the gangs that's been doing these assassinations?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you, Mahmoud. We always ask the media to be accurate when they publish any information. There is....please. When you get your information, please get it from the official authorized site. And...but if you're talking about anonymous sources or from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, we do have authorized personnel in the Ministry of Defense. That's the spokesman of the Ministry of Defense. Also, the same thing in the Ministry of Interior; we have the spokesman of the Ministry of Interior. Also, in the Ministry of Health and the Ministry...and the Fardh Al-Qanoon plan. I mean, you're talking about 17 assassinations daily basis. I refuse that and I deny that completely. I don't think...yes, we did have assassinations, but it didn't reach this number. We arrested also gangs that had pistols, silencer pistols and...in Mohammed al-Qassim Bridge...on Mohammed al-Qassim Bridge. We have opened investigations and...rapidly and we arrested the rest of the gang and they were specialized in killing citizens...Iraqi citizens using pistols with silencers. We want...we always focus on—even the negative sides, we...if there are any negative things we always talk about it openly. We don't fear anything because we have...we always try to give the right information, correct information, accurate information. So, I want you to always make sure...when you get any information, make sure that you are giving the right, accurate

information. And Ministry of Health, they have their own spokesman. And every time, before I talk about or publish any information, I call the Ministry of Health, the Ops Room in the Ministry of Health, and get the casualties and the numbers and get...in order to be able to get the accurate number. Even when that incident happened in Mansour area, I know that some of the media agencies tried to get some breaking news. And...but they have to be based on accurate information. Are you trying to get...? This is... when you don't get the right, accurate information, this is going to reflect negatively on your agency...on your news agency. And I don't want to mention names, but there are TV channels or news agencies, they talk about or give huge numbers. And I mean, even if the issue is simple, they try to exaggerate and give humongous numbers and figures. And we do have ministries and we have spokesmen...authorized spokesmen here. And they...I just say and urge you to get accurate information in the future.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major general, there are promises from the Fardh al-Qanoon command to the Iraqi people that they are going to lift a lot of obstacles in front of the Iraqi people as far as reduce the security procedures on the streets. Also, like you mentioned, it's going to...in one of your press conferences you said that they're going to

lift the curfew at night also. My question to General Perkins, the security...Iraq...the American security agreement, as it's been mentioned by a lot of politicians, it's been halted right now, stopped. And General Petraeus said that the delegation going to get returned back to Baghdad. Is the...have the negotiations started yet or not?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, before the beginning of the Fardh al-Qanoon plan or the beginning of Fardh al-Qanoon plan, a lot of people were asking us to have checkpoints in areas and increase the number of checkpoints. So mitigating or reducing the number of checkpoints, this is a good thing. And the number of checkpoints from day one of Fardh al-Qanoon plan; it was 415 checkpoints in both Rusafa and Karkh area. And now, after a year and six months of the start of Fardh al-Qanoon plan, we reduced the number of checkpoints to 215 checkpoints in both Fardh al-...in both Rusafa and Karkh. And that means we are improving, security is improving. Yes, we are going to gradually reduce the number of checkpoints whenever we get good results and good security and good improvement in security. As far as the curfew is, of course it's up to the conditions and the improvement of conditions. And whenever the security forces feel that security...that the terrorist groups and outlaws and

criminals are not going to get back again. And this is all up to the security improvement. Now, Iraqi people are free to stay up late in Baghdad. And we...in fact, we permitted the Iraqi people to, in certain areas, to stay up to 1:00 a.m. or 2:00 a.m. in the morning and...because of Ramadan. And I think they try to practice their, you know, their rituals. And also, I don't think...I don't know about Iraqiya or Sharqiya Channel has organized some contests between Iraqi people, too, on Al A'emma Bridge I believe. And I think this is a peaceful try. Al A'emma Bridge now is a peaceful bridge; it is a good connection between Adhamiyah and Kadhimiya area, and to have a good thing in Ramadan, good tradition...contest between them. And this is something...a good thing to see happening. And hopefully soon we're going to make a decision to lift that curfew.

BG PERKINS: With regards to the strategic agreement, the negotiations are continuing and ongoing. And so the U.S. State Department negotiators are, in fact, working with the Government of Iraq through a series of details to ensure that the sovereignty requirements of both Iraq and the United States are met. And once the agreement has been signed, it will be completely open and transparent to all as to what the content of that is.

REP8: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General Qassim Atta. Just to follow up on what you said about Adhamiyah and Kadhimiya, I want to ask, because I'm one of the residents in Kadhimiya. When are we going to open the bridge...Al A'emma Bridge? When is it going to be open?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you very much, Mr. Safi. From the technical side, the Al A'emma Bridge has been completed and finished. And we...the municipality office in Adhamiyah finished all the technical issues in order to reopen this bridge. All the security preparation has...is completed, too. And I think we're going soon to celebrate the reopening of this bridge, Al A'emma Bridge. That's going to be a good, civilized monument of the continu-...the continuity of love and friendship between Iraqi people and.... Like we said, we're going to also...just like we've done with...we celebrated the Al Serafiya Bridge. We're going to do the same with Al A'emma Bridge.

REP9: Manuel Dupak from AP News Agency. I have a question, one question for General Atta about the Iraq Security Forces. Could you just tell us how many police members you have right now in the Iraqi Security Forces? And what's the final goal you'd like to reach in the coming years? And just a question for the Major General

Perkins about...you were talking about the al-Qaida threat. What's your assessment of this threat right now? And do you still notice the presence of foreign fighters among them? Thanks a lot.

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you very much. The number of police force that we have...you're talking...we have a lot of types. We have the 1st Division from the national police. We have the 2nd Division of the national police. We have four military divisions. We have the 6th Division, 9th Division, and the 11th Division and the 17th Division. And we also have the command of police in Baghdad. The local police in Karkh...or Rusafa and Karkh. We have traffic police. We have patrol police. We have the civil defense. They all work together in one...under the umbrella of the...and the support of the Minister of Defense and Minister of Interior. And they all work together to implement the Fardh Al-Qanoon plan. And the police force and our Iraqi Army has done in the past one and a half year a lot of work and hopefully we're going to join more people from the poli-...from the Awakening groups are going to add more numbers to the police force, to the national police or to the local police.

BG PERKINS: With regards to al-Qaida, their capabilities have been significantly reduced, even from a year ago. The operations of both the coalition

forces and Iraqi Security Forces have taken away a lot of their freedom of maneuver, have taken away a lot of the places they operate from, have taken away their sanctuaries, have interdicted their financial activities. And because of that and because of the internal pressure due to the number of counterterrorism operations in Iraq, it is much more difficult for external factors to make their way into Iraq now, both foreign fighters and foreign financial assets. Which...and you can see the result of that is now al-Qaida has to generate more of this internally to Iraq. The sophistication of the attacks has gone down dramatically. And, thankfully, so have the casualty numbers. You also are seeing this being manifested; the fact that you're now seeing the female suicide bombers because, again, they are having to turn internal to Iraq. They have to go after some of the most vulnerable parts of the population for people to conduct these acts. So, while they're capabilities are dramatically reduced, their resources dramatically reduced, they are still intent on creating violence and random death and destruction to innocent Iraqis, to turn Iraqi against Iraqi. And again, thankfully, Iraqis have rejected this philosophy, this bankrupt philosophy of al-Qaida. They have not turned against each other, in fact, have come together to continue to put the pressure on al-Qaida.

REP10:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I have two questions. The first to Major General Qassim. General David Petraeus had mentioned in his statements that the American forces can leave in...next July. You're a field commander. How are you going to comment on this statement? Is it possible that Iraqi Security Forces can't fill the gap after the American forces leave? And my second question is to General Perkins. What's the Amer-...what's...to what...to which extent the Iranian influence? And what's the level of the Iranian influence. General Petraeus has mentioned that this has been reduced. But do you really think that or agree with that?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: As you know that there is a schedule between the Iraqi...or a timetable agreed upon between the Iraqi government and the American forces here, first. And the second, you see that there is a great improvement in the capabilities, performance of the Iraqi Security Forces, police, Army. Eleven provinces now out of 18 provinces has been...they received security responsibility from the Multi-National Force. And we have only a few more provinces left. So the Iraqi Security Forces is very close to completion and we are very close to being completely built and equipped and trained. And if there are any needs to be...to get any logistic support or anything else, we always get it from the coalition. But, as you know, like in

Sadr City and all those commemorations like...or Iraqi religious events, all the security was provided by Iraqi Security Forces and it's all Iraqi plans. So, Iraqi Security Forces is very close to be completed. And hopefully we only have a few things left. As you remember, if everybody remembers, we started...when we started in Baghdad, we started with one brigade. But right now we have more than...over than 17 divisions and ..in addition to the Iraqi...Ministry of Interior's forces, the police force. And our...we're much better. And I think we're very close to completion. And we are working towards sufficiency. And there's a timetable we are...between the Iraqi Security Forces and the American forces.

BG PERKINS: Well, with regards to the malign influence of any external neighbor of Iraq, the Iraqi population across the board, wholesale...in a wholesale manner reject that kind of influence. The cache that I talked about here that was discovered last evening that had Iranian plastic explosives, it had Iranian signature manufactured shape charges, which has caused so much death and destruction in Iraq. That is the kind of influence that Iraqis across the board reject and consider extremely unstable for this country. As a senior Iraqi leader has said, they welcome the tourists, the religious tourists from Iran that come to Iraq. They...Iraq welcomes the fair trade across the borders, welcome economic investment. What the Iraqis

do not want are the kinds of things I just discussed here this morning – explosion...explosive devices, trained terrorists. That is what they do not welcome here in Iraq. So, I think the Iraqi prime minister, all the Iraqi leadership, and the average Iraqi person, they have made it very clear that they want a normal, peaceful, bilateral relationship with Iran, but they reject outright the kind of influence and the kind of material that I discussed here this morning coming across the border.

REP11: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: David...General David Perkins. After Anbar, what's the next province that's going to get their security forces...security case are going to be turned over to the Iraqi Security Forces? Also, the turning over of other provinces, the security case in other provinces, when is it going to be? Is it going to be this year or next year? Major General Qassim Atta also. You talked about the completion of the...or the readiness of the Iraqi Security Forces. When is that going to happen? And when is it going to be...the Iraqi Security Forces are going to get or receive completely the security case in all provinces?

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We said that we have a timetable agreed upon between the Iraqi

Security Forces and the Iraqi...and coalition forces. Yesterday, Division 17, Iraqi Army Division 17, they received in Mahmudiyah sector security case up there...responsibility. And there was a lot of media coverage. And we are receiving...every day we are receiving security responsibility from the Multi-National Force. I think this year or the beginning of next year we will be in an advanced phase and we will be very close to receive the responsibility of security from the Multi-National Force according, again, to the timetable that's been prepared and put together...agreed upon together by the sec-...Multi-National Force and Iraqi Security Forces.

**MAJ GEN
PERKINS:**

Well, as you said, the handover of provincial Iraqi control of Anbar to the Iraqi government, I think, is a great step forward. Even a year ago at this time, I think few people would have anticipated based on the high level of violence – one of the most violent provinces in Iraq – that this would have happened as it did this year. So, that's a very good news story. With that province, as with all of the others previously and what will happen in the future, is the provincial leaders sit down with the Government of Iraq leaders here in Baghdad and they go through, really an assessment of on the ground as to what is going on with the terrorists in that area. What is the capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces and the government to control that? And once all of the conditions have been met, then a

decision is made to transfer security from the coalition forces to the Government of Iraq. So, it truly is based on assessments on the ground at that time. So as the general said, the intent, obviously is the remaining provinces, the remaining seven, the intent is to transfer all those once conditions are met, province by province. Each case is unique. Each case has unique problems to deal with. Each case has unique capabilities both within the leadership and the security forces that are there. So, we will move forward on it province by province, making sure that before it is handed over that all the conditions are met so that...what we want is to have a successful handover.

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Last question.

REP12: Major General Atta, can you tell me how many members of the Awakening groups have been taken into the security forces so far? And secondly, you mentioned that only members of the security forces will be allowed to have weapons, I believe you said, after October 1st. Is that correct? And if...will other Awakening members who are not taken into the security forces be asked to turn over their weapons? And what will happen if they do not turn over their weapons? Thank you.

MG ATTA: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Yes, shukran. Thank you very much. The number of Awakening groups that's joined the Iraqi Security Forces recently, that's been going...that were hired, there were 13,000 that were hired in the Iraqi Ministry of Interior, about 13,000. Yes, after the October 1st we are going to receive the responsibility as the Iraqi government of the Awakening groups. And we...the weapons are going to be only held by the Iraqi Security Forces. After joining or adding those numbers from the Awakening groups to the Iraqi Security Forces, after that we are going to have...hold a conference, or we're going to talk about specific details about the decree that's going to be issued by the prime minister. We're going to have discussions and having...in the presence of the reconciliation committee representative and also the BOC as well and also we are going to have commanders, the Awakening groups' leaders also to explain and clarify the training and requalification process and all that. Thank you very much. And hopefully we'll meet with you again in other press conferences. Thank you very much, General David Perkins, for hosting us in this press conference. And thank you very much for attending. As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

BG PERKINS: Shukran.

