

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 1-8

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: In the name of God, most merciful. Distinguished audience, As-Salāmu `Alaykum. I want to welcome you here today with a briefing from the BOC and the MNF-I briefing as well and I want to thank General Perkins on hosting this press conference here today. The brief or the summary is going to start...is going to be between

7th of September to the 27th of September, 2008.

First of all, because the feast and the Eid is very close...the end of Ramadan is very close, the chief-in-command office and the media committee from the Fardh Al-Qanoon plan present their congratulations to our Iraqi people and we wish all the...that this Eid is going to be a peaceful Eid to all Iraqis. And in this occasion we, the BOC, had put the current recommendations. First, to prohibit the stopping...or parking of vehicles in all public roads and people...owners...vehicle owners can use...or utilize the parking lots to park their vehicles.

B) to prevent or prohibit the entrance of vehicles and motorcycles to parks and recreation parks and, like, in Zawra Recreation Park or Abu Nuwas or Al Jadriya[ph] Lake...or pond. And we are expecting, Insha'Allah, to reopen Al Adhamiyah Beach and it's going to be a recreation park after the Eid...or during the Eid and after the opening of the recreation parks and...are secure in those recreation parks with the coordination of the people in Baghdad Amanat.

Number three is to call the numbers that's specified by the BOC to receive all the complaints and the information...TIPS lines from the

people. And the numbers are...phone numbers are 079-00-508-7468, 079-00-558-3651, and they work 24/7.

And secondly, the return of the families continues to different areas and different sectors. So the number...the total number of displaced families that returned to their families since day 1 of September and so far...the 23rd of September, 2008, about 171,079 in Karkh and about 600 in the Rusafa area. And we stress that the government is committed and the BOC is committed to close this case, the displacement case, and especially after the good situation in the security situation that's been reflected on...throughout Baghdad.

Thirdly, the beginning of the school year because of the...that the current improvement in security, about more than 6,000,000 students, they went back to school this year...they started going to school this year. And last year, the number was about 6,000,000 students and 100.... The number of schools that received students, about 18,630. This...that was last year. But this year is 17,000 schools. The security forces took all the procedures...security procedures in order to provide all the...the right atmosphere for all our students in all provinces and we wish them all the best in this year.

Fourthly, the terrorist groups attempted to have spikes in violence and attacks...violence attacks...violent attacks in different areas through attacks of IEDs or assassinations targeting different people in our society by using stick-on bombs or using...or through assassinations by using silencers...weapons. These operations or these attacks try to affect...or disrupt the operations done by the BOC and security operations done by the government, or try to affect the morale of the people. And it's a desperate way to prove that they're still there. And the Iraqi...the BOC, the Baghdad Operation Command, tried to take some measures in order to stop those pockets or those small pockets. First to...they...those measures is first to redeploy forces. And also put the checkpoints and the patrols and to check in all vehicles and such vehicles and also to target all the wanted targeted...targets. And also put our intel forces and deploy them and also put our national intelligence employees and staff in different areas in order to gather information. And also try to get all...utilize satellite and aerial photos in order to target our targets. And also to cooperate with the people. And from here we ask all the officials in the government and the people and also to follow our recommendations...security recommendation and to actually search their vehicles before getting into their vehicles and not to abandon their vehicles in different areas.

And if I can show you, like, this is a model of or this slide shows you that the stick-on bombs. And what the terrorist groups has been trying to do in the past two weeks is to use this way, considering this is a simple way in trying to target certain figures or prominent figures or officials or media personnel in order to assassinate them and kill them. So that's why I ask all the people to actually search their cars that they're using on a daily basis, try to search it by getting their PSDs to do it or to do it personally.

To summarize our...the total operations that we've done throughout the 23 days that we have done, we have seen about...witnessed 2,613 families...displaced families returned to their homes in Karkh and Rusafa areas and Al Jamilah, Al Adil, Al Havalah[ph], Al Wazaliya[ph], Amariyah, Al Doura, Al Adhamiyah, and Zayouna area. The number of families are...actually returned families are increasing every day. And we expect after the Eid or hopefully the beginning of the school season will...this number is going to double. And we see...we have...currently we have requests from different families from outside Iraq actually in Jordan and Syria and Cairo. They represented or...submitted requests to the Ministry of Displacement to return...voluntarily return to Iraq. And the ministry had put all the preparations in order to facilitate their return.

Also, we killed 2 terrorists and arrested about 394 wanted terrorists and arrested 135 suspected terrorists. Rescued 6 hostages. We defused 4 vehicles and 64 IEDs...defused 64 IEDs. Also, we seized about 150 vehicles with no proper papers and documents. And also we seized about 600 and...7,800 munitions, different heavy and light munitions and 768...65 different weapons. And I defer now to my colleague, MNF-I spokesman, General Perkins, to give you the MNF-I brief.

BG PERKINS: Thank you.

MG QASSIM: Thank you.

BG PERKINS: As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Welcome here this afternoon. As you all know, here in Multi-National Force – Iraq, we have a new commander. Recently General Odierno took over for General Petraeus and we're all very lucky to have his leadership. This is his third tour here to Iraq. He knows Iraq very well. He knows the Iraqi people and has a deep and abiding respect and love for the Iraqi people. His focus is going to be to continue the very productive partnership that the coalition has had with the Iraqi people. A relationship and partnership which, if you even took a look at a year

ago during Ramadan which has historically been a period where attacks have increased, overall in the country of Iraq there's a 60% reduction in security incidents and attack from last year's Ramadan. So again, a very evident benefit of the partnership that we've enjoyed here even over the last year.

Al-Qaida and the special group criminals continue to try to thwart that progress. They try to stop the rule of law. They try to stop peaceful coexistence of the people of Iraq. However, the partnership that the coalition forces in conjunction with the people of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces have produced significant gains.

Earlier this month the provincial Iraqi control of Al Anbar Province, which historically was one of the most volatile provinces, again, only a year ago, was now handed over to the Iraqi people so they have responsibility for the command and control of Al Anbar Province. And the good news is, in the first month, there has been no increase in attacks. So truly a very visible benefit of what a productive partnership and relationship can produce.

The Sons of Iraq has been another area where we have partnered with the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi people to bring about a dramatic reduction in security incidences. And because of the

increase in security, we are able now to work with the Government of Iraq and transfer the Sons of Iraq over to Iraqi control. And beginning 1 October, basically all of the Sons of Iraq here in Baghdad will go under Iraqi control. They'll be transitioned either into the Iraqi Security Force, into job training programs, or other apprenticeship programs. So again, a very...another visible example of what a true partnership can produce. We partnered with the Sons of Iraq during very tough times, during very volatile times. We are now partnering with the Government of Iraq and the Sons of Iraq to take advantage of the increase in security situations.

We're also going to partner more in the future on developing government capacity with the Government of Iraq. Just last week, Deputy Prime Minister Asawi along with representatives from Deputy Prime Minister Asawi's office and the coalition hosted a conference here in Baghdad of southern governors with over 7...with over 10 governors present, 18 ministers or ministerial representatives, and sat together with coalition forces, Government of Iraq officials, governors, and ministerial officials to address a wide range of problems that need to be solved together in conjunction with all the assets of both the coalition and the Government of Iraq can bring to these challenges.

Economic opportunity is another area that we will continue the partnership with the Iraqi people on. The United States recently has invested almost \$10 million out at the Baghdad International Airport to develop the economic base for hotel, office space so that it provides a base for further economic development, for further foreign investment to come in so that all Iraqis can benefit from an increasing economic development here in Baghdad and throughout the country.

Stability has been key not only for economic development but also for the rule of law and the progress of democracy. In August we completed a very successful voter registration period where almost three million new Iraqis registered to vote with almost no security incidences. This again furthers the democratic process and increases the confidence that the people of Iraq know that, truly, they are in control of their own destiny. Securing the borders continues to be another area where partnership is key. A couple of weeks ago, Iraqi Security Forces in conjunction with the coalition interdicted a very large munitions cache in the Salman Pak area, where almost 2,500 munitions, explosive devices, and other instruments of terror were interdicted. And had they not been interdicted, they would have continued the cycle of violence and death here in Iraq. So again, another great example of what happens when the coalition partners

with the Iraqi people and Iraqi Security Forces to continue to bring peace.

And as you look throughout Iraq, there are multiple examples of what this partnership brings as far as great results. And if you look specifically here in Baghdad, as General Qassim said, thousands of Iraqi families have relocated peacefully here to Baghdad. And again, if you look just at our current holy month here of Ramadan, attacks are down 82% here in Baghdad. So we have thousands of families who can enjoy this holy month here in Baghdad who were not able to last year, with 82% less chance of being a victim of a terrorist attack. Again, a huge benefit to this partnership that we all enjoy.

So as we look across Iraq it is clear that the results of partnership are evident and, therefore, as the results are evident that the partnership is beneficial, the necessity of the partnership is also evident that that must continue for all that want a new and prosperous Iraq. And so with that, General Qassim and I are ready to take your questions.

MG QASSIM: Shukran jaziiilan.

INT: Thank you very much.

REP1: As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

MG QASSIM: Alaykum As-Salām.

REP1: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I have a question to General Qassim and another question to General Perkins. As far as the spikes in violence that we had, what is the main reason behind...what's the military reason behind these spikes in violence?

And my question to General Perkins, as far as the security agreement and if we don't sign the...if you don't sign the...this agreement doesn't get signed between the Iraqi side and the American side, is the American forces going to leave those areas they're controlling or they're currently controlling? Right now the security situation and....

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I don't agree with you. You're saying the security situation is deteriorating and this is...it's not what you're describing. Right now, currently, the security situation is much better than what we had last year. And I think the general has given you an accurate

percentage, 82% reduction in level of violence and attacks in...between this Ramadan and Ramadan last year. And I think this is an improvement. If you put in mind and try to calculate the number of IEDs, car bombs, and suicide vests and all that and all those attacks, I mean it's a huge reduction. And the fight is still going on and we still have to counter terrorism and to...and there are pockets still here and there. And of course those pockets...terrorist pockets are trying to work and try to prove themselves. And, of course, what's left from those elements, they try to find safe havens in order to perpetrate their attacks. But I think most of the people has noticed. Last week we tried to focus on the searching operations and this is part of our procedures and measures that we're taking in order to stress on...to disrupt those elements and those pockets, those.... We know about those people and I gave you the number of those...the numbers of those people that we arrested so far. And that gives you...this is evident that we are trying and we are working in order to arrest those people. But of course the security forces are working much better right now. The security force...the situation is much better. And our capabilities are increasing and developing every day continuously. And that doesn't mean the security situation is deteriorating, but terrorist war and fight is still continuous.

MAJ GEN PERKINS:

With regards to the strategic agreement, our embassy here in Baghdad has a leaf in those negotiations. It is very clear that the Government of Iraq along with the United States both understand how important that agreement is so that the very beneficial partnership I just discussed continues on. And both sides are also very cognizant to make sure that the sovereignty of both Iraq and the United States are fully taken into account. And once the agreement is completely signed and both sides agree to the details of it, it will be fully open and transparent.

REP2:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

My question is to both generals. Major General Qassim Atta, we want to ask.... Three weeks ago American forces arrested our colleague, a photographer in Reuters News Agency in Mahmudiyah area. And the arrest operation in...I mean it...we requested and we talked about it in Al Hurra Channel. We want to see, we want to know the fate and what happened to this photographer and where is he at? And we have talked...we ask and we request through this press conference to clarify the reasons behind the...his detention and see what's...where's he at and....

MG QASSIM:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

The media was called...I mean by the prime minister or invited to

attend the Iftar Banquet and that's in evidence that the prime minister and the government is taking care of or caring about the media. And when somebody is detained, regardless if there's a warrant...arrest warrant, it means...it's regardless of the reasons why he was arrested. I don't know if he's wanted for any reason. If he is innocent, he will be released. But if he is...if there are reasons why he's arrested, maybe we can find out later. I try to work with the media and our brothers from news agencies. I know they're targeted. Everyone is targeted. The media personnel are targeted, the doctors, engineers – everyone is targeted. But we are cooperative with the media people.

BG PERKINS: Anybody that is deemed to be a security risk for any number of reasons can be detained by the coalition. We have a very specific process that those detainees are put through, in fact, to determine the nature of the risk and to confirm or deny that. They're all gone...they all go through the same process, they're all treated the same. And upon completion of that a determination is made as to whether, in fact, they are a true security risk and then it is handled appropriately after that. So these detainees, like all others, are going through that process now and an evaluation, in fact, to determine the nature of the security risk. And you can be assured that it is an equitable process and that all are treated in the same way and go

through the same process.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General, you talked briefly about your preparations for Eid or the Feast after Ramadan. Once the...if you're...as far as the curfew, are you going to increase the hours or reduce the hours of curfew? My other question is about the displaced...displacement case, when is it going to end? When is it going to come to an end? And what's your preparation as far as preparing the right environment for the return of Iraqis from Syria and when is it going to start?

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: There are four questions actually, not two questions. You said there were only two questions. Thank you very much, Mustafa. First of all, the displacement issue and displaced families, we have talked that the prime minister is actually tracking this issue and the BOC is tracking the issue and, fortunately, in the past 23 days, we've seen...witnessed about 2,000 families, over than 2,000 families return back to their homes. And we have been through a field tour to Al Adil sector with the minister of displaced and displacement and, thank God, everybody is...those families now are comfortable with the current security situation and their cooperation also from the security forces. And also the higher or supreme committee,

they're trying to actually facilitate the return of those families. And the reconciliation committee, the minister of displacement also are being cooperative and they're working very hard. Hopefully we'll put plans together in order to close this case by the end of this year. And there are a lot of facilities and we...in order to facilitate the return of families from Syria. And I think we have allocated funds and allocations to...for this purpose. And I think there's a delegation from the Ministry of Displacement and displaced people to.... And also there are representatives from the Baghdad Operation Command to go to Syria and meet with some families. And plans are in place, good cooperation also. But it takes some time. It takes some time to actually pay compensations to those families as well. But we are planning on ending this case by the...in the upcoming three months.

We have put procedures in place. We have taken actions in order...in regards to the feast, the Eid after Ramadan. And you'll see our forces deployed everywhere, especially around parks and recreation parks. And the option of whether actually to reduce or increase the number of hours of curfew, this is up to our forces and the coalition forces also to see whenever we feel it's secure and it's safe to lift up this curfew, then we will decide this is going...to lift the curfew. But I want to assure everybody that things are

improving. Security is improving. And, God willing, we are going to maybe lift it in everywhere in Baghdad.

REP4: As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

MG QASSIM: Alaykum As-Salām.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: I have two questions; one to you and one to General Perkins. General...Major General Qassim, there are information that there... about...the assassination cells entered Iraq. And do you have any information about their whereabouts and where they're at? What they're doing?

As far as General Perkins question, the...you have mentioned or the coalition mentioned that those groups are...belong to the special groups. How do you know that?

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you very much. The intel information tells us that actually the intentions of those special groups or special cells to perpetrate some terrorist activities here in a different approach and different ways. And I've mentioned that before...previously, that the BOC

and the intelligence departments here, they put plans together in order to follow up this issue. And daily we arrest people or elements affiliated with or associated with assassinations to Iraqi citizens by using stick-on bombs or silencers. And we are working and we are ready. But some of the media try to exaggerate these news and I have to assure you that our security forces has put their plans together and they work with this thing with professionalism. And yesterday, for instance, a terrorist group actually kidnapped or abducted a citizen in...who lives in Hai Ur, in Ur neighborhood in about...around 5:00 p.m. And after one hour the security forces surrounded the area and were able to rescue this hostage and we were able to arrest about four kidnappers and...four of those kidnappers. And now investigations are going to investigate and to see the reasons behind this incident. And that tells you that Iraqi Security Forces are capable of resolving such incidents. And they have the initiative...they're taking the initiative right now and now the initiative is within the hands of the Iraqi Security Forces. And they're ready to deal with any changes in the situations, even if those special groups are coming back to try to terrorize people or even the leftovers of those elements...of terrorist al-Qaida elements, we are ready to deal with them.

**MAJ GEN
PERKINS:**

With regards to the special groups, actually we don't focus on any

one particular terrorist or criminal element out there; we are focused on anybody who tries to prevent the rule of law, tries to prevent peaceful life here in Iraq. We've...so as the coalition partners with the Iraqi Security Forces, we are focused on al-Qaida, special groups criminals, regular criminals. Anyone who is trying to excite violence, or trying to use illegal means or terrorist means to further their cause, to turn Iraqi against Iraqi, and actually just prevent the peaceful coexistence of Iraqis, the process of the rule of law, and the continuation of democracy, they are the focus of both the coalition and the Iraqi Security Forces and they have actually proved quite useful, this partnership, in going after all of those elements. And that's why I think you've seen such a dramatic decrease, this 82% decrease. This is across the board of all types of attack out there, regardless of who they're from.

REP5: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Major General Qassim, there's...there are no doubts as far as VBIEDs and the ways of militias as far as assassinating people and car bombs, for instance. It's very hard to be controlled, even by the security forces. And this is something we know. But there are some military analysts here that...they say that al-Qaida in Mosul and not being able to control Mosul and security in Mosul, that actually opened the way...the door wide open to those militias to actually

come back to Baghdad and try to be more active in Baghdad. Is there any initiatives, to actually...or intents to start a big operation in Mosul, a military operation?

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you very much. A few days ago, minister...MOD minister announced that there are going to be...there are operations now in...that's occurring right now in Ninawa Province. And, yes, there are security procedures...future security procedures or measures that's going to be taken by Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior in order to eradicate or eliminate those elements, what's leftover...left from those elements in Ninawa Province. Of course those...the terrorist groups, they try to move from province to another province in order to prove themselves or to stop security. In Baghdad we have taken measures...security measures in order to make sure stability of security. Maybe some of those military analysts you're talking about and maybe that's just a personal opinion of their side, they try to.... Of course the deployment of security forces and the raids and those sudden attacks and targets, and of course, dealing or depending on intelligence and intel information and cooperating with people, I think those all are factors that contributes to the elimination of those terrorist groups. Of course, those terrorist groups, they try to assassinate people or

put stick-on bombs and that's their terrorist ways and that's what they use. Thank you.

REP6: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General Qassim, I have two questions if it's possible. The first question is to...just to follow up on the...my colleague's question. Terrorist groups in Mosul, they are there and they're well known to everybody. Like, for instance, I went to Mosul a few days ago and I saw the terrorist groups there and I saw that they control the streets in Mosul. Why don't we put a security...secret security plan in order to eradicate or eliminate those groups? And also, why don't we put a plan for all the terrorist groups throughout Iraq, to get rid of them?

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Thank you very much for your questions. Now that we have operations in Maysan, Basra, Kut, Diyala, Salah ad Din, Anbar, thank God, our security forces now are implementing operations to pursue those outlaws and criminal groups in order to prevail the rule of law. And, of course, Ninawa Province is a special case. And they have their special Ninawa Operations Command. And they've been working since...for three months now and they working and they're qualified and there are...there's good cooperation between the

people and the forces there. Sometimes those, you know, the terrorist groups, I doubt it that they're.... I don't think you have accurate information as far as the terrorist groups controlling the streets in Mosul. We have a division up there in Ninawa. We have specialized groups and specialized forces...special forces up there in Mosul and from the MOI and qualified forces. We can't just say...or I agree with you; we can't just announce our future security plans for certain areas. And our security forces, now they have in their...they're having this irregular fight, this counterterrorism fight, and that takes a lot of factors and a lot of things to...for this fight to actually succeed. And one of them...those factors is actually intel information and the intel work and we have special forces that actually specialized in counterterrorism fights. And there used to be, like, al-Qaida safe havens and sanctuaries. And that's been targeted so many times and I think now they're degraded and....

But, of course, our plans to restore security, not only in Mosul but in...throughout Iraq. And there are some certain areas where terrorist groups started to come back again and it just.... But looking at the overall security case here, we have noticed they have dropped down in violence and increase in security. And I think that, of course, because of the cooperation, that's why we got such productive results.

REP7: [Speaks briefly in Arabic.]

INT: My question is to General Perkins.

REP7: The U.S. forces attacked seven Iraqi people in the village of Al Dour near Tikrit last Friday. U.S. released the statement saying that they were targeting al-Qaida terrorists. But neighborhoods and the local Iraqi official said that the...all members of the family were civilians and they have no connection to terrorists. The question is have the U.S. forces investigated this incident and whether the victims are really terrorists?

MAJ GEN PERKINS: It is obviously regrettable when innocent civilians are killed or...and injured in any operations. In that particular operation, two known and verified al-Qaida terrorists were killed in that operation. And, again, it is evident how al-Qaida needlessly puts innocent women and children at risk by hiding among them, by using them as human shields and, therefore, using them to shield what they are doing. So again, we go to extreme lengths to make sure there is minimum collateral damage. We go to extreme lengths to make sure we have good intelligence, the operations are focused. And in this case it did result in two known al-Qaida terrorists being killed. And again, just another example of how the tragic consequences of their violent

nature puts other Iraqis needlessly at risk.

REP8: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: My question to General Perkins. The chief of police in Dhi Qar announced yesterday that there are special groups started as far...in 10...a group of 10 people coming back from Iran and after getting trained on modern IEDs, how to use IEDs and silencers and even car bombs. So what's...do you have any information? As coalition forces, do they have any information as far as that?

BG PERKINS: Well, we know for a fact that after operations were completed throughout Iraq – to include Basra, Maysan – that many special group leaders as well as special group members went to Iran. They received training from Al Quds forces on ways to conduct terrorism. And we are partnering with the Iraqi Security Forces, the Government of Iraq, local governments, with the police forces in this case to ensure that those special groups do not come back to conduct violent acts here in Iraq. And if they do come back, that they are, in fact, interdicted. And in this case here, it is a good story that Iraqi Security Forces were, in fact, able to interdict those who were intent on creating violent and terrorist acts here. And as the prime minister said, Iraq is looking for a peaceful coexistence with its neighbor, Iran. It welcomes its tourism. It welcomes its pilgrims.

It welcomes its economic trade. But it does not welcome violence and the means for violence. And so we will continue to be vigilant with both the Iraqi people and the security forces to prevent that type of activity from coming across the border.

MG QASSIM: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: In the end of this press conference, I want to thank you all and, God willing, we'll meet again in other press conferences. Thank you very much and As-Salāmu `Alaykum. Thank you very much.

MAJ GEN PERKINS: Thank you.