

PRESS CONFERENCE

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PARTICIPANTS:

MG MIKE FERRITER, MG QASSIM ATTA, and DR. CHALABI

REPORTERS 1-8 (REP 1-8)

JIM WADE, *THE VOICE NEWS*

GINA CHON, *WALL STREET JOURNAL*

LOURDES GARCIA-NAVARRO, *NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO*

TIM COX, *REUTERS NEWS*

(PH) = PHONETIC

INT = INTERPRETER

MG FERRITER: As-Salamu 'Alaykum, everyone. Thank you for coming. I'm Major General Mike Ferriter, the deputy commanding general for operations of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq. And on behalf of Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin, the commanding general of the Multi-National Corps-Iraq and General Odierno, the commanding general, Multi-[National] Force-Iraq, I'm happy to join you here today. We in the 18th Airborne Corps arrived as Multi-National Corps Iraq a year ago from our home base in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and assumed the command of the military operations here in Iraq. We have seen remarkable accomplishments in the growth of the Iraqi security force resulting in improvements in the quality of life and the security for the Iraqi people. And as we focus on supporting the future Iraqi security operations, I'd like to note the tremendous progress that the Coalition and the people of Iraq have made together. One example of that progress is our partnership to transfer the Sons of Iraq to Iraqi control and to transition these men into meaningful jobs. This afternoon, I want to provide you an update on the Sons of Iraq transfer and transition and the tasks that remain to be done. Let me start you out with a brief history. In the summer of 2006, a group of Concerned Local Citizens in western Anbar Province stood up to terrorists in their communities, members of al Qaida in Iraq who willingly killed innocent men, women and children in order to promote a bankrupt ideology. Iraqis who were tired of the violence began a grassroots movement, more commonly known as Sahwa, The Awakening. These Concerned Local

Citizens organized neighborhood watches to counter al Qaida in Iraq and to take back their communities. Over time, the movement spread to other parts of the country and its members partnered with Coalition Forces in their common struggle against terrorists. As we at MNC-I arrived in February, 2008, the name was changed from Concerned Local Citizens to Sons of Iraq. In all, nearly 100,000 men across the nation joined with the Sons of Iraq. Without question, the Sons of Iraq played a vital role in reducing violence across the country and helped to restore a sense of normalcy for the Iraqi people. Operating in their own towns and villages, the Sons of Iraq found weapons caches, located improvised explosive devices, identified criminals, and kept al Qaida out. By manning checkpoints and patrolling streets, the Sons of Iraq partnered with Coalition and the Iraqi Security Forces to augment the security structure. This thickened force, in turn, afforded the Iraqi Security Force the time it needed to continue its successful development. The Sons of Iraq took previously ungoverned territory and secured it for the Iraqi people. They helped to win the trust of the populace, they prevented al Qaida from blending in with the local populace, and they did it all at great personal sacrifice, losing more than five hundred of their brothers in the struggle this last year alone.

Throughout this period, the Sons of Iraq have worked for and were paid by the Coalition. But in the summer of 2008, this past summer, security

conditions had improved significantly, both due to the contributions of the Sons of Iraq and the growth and experience and the capabilities of the Iraqi Security Force. In this atmosphere, we began to work with the Iraqi government to develop a plan to transfer the Sons of Iraq and -- to Iraqi control. Late that summer, we met with the Prime Minister, and he approved a plan to mobilize the Iraqi government's resources for the transfer. This transfer began last fall in Baghdad and it continues in eight provinces where the Sons of Iraq live and work. By April of 2009, in just a few short months, all the Sons of Iraq will be under the responsibility of the Government of Iraq, which has promised to transition each volunteer to new employment.

Transferring the Sons of Iraq to Iraqi control fits perfectly with the security agreement recently adopted by the Iraqi government and the United States. It's also the right thing to do. It returns an important piece of sovereignty to the Iraqi people, ensuring that Iraqi men, securing Iraqi streets, are in the service of the Iraqi government. But this is about more than security too, this is about more than a transfer of payments to the government. This is nothing less than reconciliation between the Iraqi citizens. A population that once considered separate, has been given hope and a stake in the future of Iraq. This transfer is truly the leading edge of reconciliation in a nation that saw so much discord and distrust under its old regime. The work of reconciliation has not been easy, and there have

been many who doubted that these parties could ever work through these differences. That's why, in every province and at every step of the process we have gathered together members of each group to discuss the way forward. The government encouraged the Sons of Iraq to come forward and to ask tough questions, some of them very tough questions. And I've seen some of you in many of those meetings, and it's good to see you again. But this is how trust is being built and great progress is being achieved. Through its actions, the government is showing its iron-clad commitment to the Sons of Iraq, and in Baghdad, 51,000 Sons of Iraq, more than half of the national total, are now under Iraqi control and have received paychecks from their new bosses for each of the past three months. This is a great achievement, due in part to the outstanding leadership of General Abbud, the head of Iraqi army's Baghdad Operation Command, and Major General Jeff Hammond, the commander of Multi-National Division-Baghdad, who partnered to oversee the process in the capital city. Our success has spread to Diyala Province this month and continues in the southern provinces next. By February, the plan calls for more than 71,000 Sons of Iraq across the nation to be to the payrolls of the Iraqi government.

These successes could not have happened without the committed and capable leadership of the Coalition partners -- of our partners, most notably the Government of Iraq and its implementation and Follow-Up

Committee for National Reconciliation under the leadership of Mr. Muhammed Salman. A process like this can only succeed after dialogue, partnership and rehearsals by all parties. The Iraqi government's commitment shines through in ways it carried out those tasks. It does not mean that our work is at an end; the next step is the process of transition to meaningful peacetime livelihoods, and Dr. Chalabi here will be in charge and we'll discuss that as well.

We have invested in the future of Iraq and the government is offering them an opportunity to play an important part in the role in the destiny of the country. Twenty percent of the Sons of Iraq will enter the Iraqi Security Forces, chiefly the Iraqi police. Thursday, 894 former Sons of Iraq graduated from Baghdad's training academy and joined the Iraq -- the ranks of Iraq's police force. The majority of the Sons of Iraq will be offered training and will work in a variety of civil sector and private sector fields. The Coalition and the Iraqi government are partnering to offer broad opportunities to these men, based on their skills and education. Finally, I have to say that this reconciliation and securing of the future for the Sons of Iraq, brave men who stood up for Iraq during a difficult time and in a challenging time in its history, takes place against a much greater backdrop of hope and prosperity. At the end of the month, Iraqis will go to the polls to make their choices in provincial elections. The country's security gains continue and a security agreement is being implemented,

and the Government of Iraq continues to demonstrate its determination to bring the Iraqi people together. Across the country I have seen firsthand the evidence of these and many other successes. What I've seen makes me confident and optimistic that together with key leaders of the Government of Iraq, their security forces, we will achieve many more successes in the months ahead. Shukran, and I'd be happy to answer your questions following the statements by my comrades here.

DR. CHALABI: As Salamu 'Alaykum, (Speaks in Arabic).

INT: Zuhair Abdul Rahman Chalabi, Financial Administrative Director for Follow-Up and Implementing Committee for National Reconciliation on behalf of Implementing National Reconciliation Committee, I'd like to express my appreciation for your attendance and presence with us here. It's -- I'm glad to meet you with General Ferriter and Major General Qassim Atta so we can discuss these Sahwa transition file to an Iraqi administration. This is another example about the joint -- the joint work with the Iraqi citizens to build Iraq on this base -- Iraqi Prime Minister have issued a decree to transfer the contracts of Sahwa elements that was under the control of Coalition for assist to the Iraqi government on the 1st of August, 2008, over than 51,000 Sahwa elements files have been -- within Baghdad's province have been transferred to the Iraqi government within the supervision -- they are under the supervision of the Iraqi

Security Forces. Thank God this task have been achieved successfully with the extraordinary efforts of -- from the -- Mr. Chairman of Implementing and Follow-Up -- of Reconciliation Committee. Also General Abbud, also Disarmament Committee and Major General Ahmed Peremola (ph), also leaders of Baghdad and other provinces. Also I'd like to thank again the Coalition Forces General Ferriter and his team; they used to work with us, step-by-step to work on achieving this mission. Thus, I'd like to seize the opportunity to express our thanks and gratitude to our -- to those who have participated in this national mission and the transmission -- and the transition process for Sahwa elements on the remaining provinces is going to be conducted within the same process of -- in Baghdad based on time schedule -- a timetable that has been agreed upon. And now we're dealing with the second phase, which is within our field of expertise, which is to end the file of contractors with those who are working with the Ministry of Interior and Defense according to the Item No. 6 of the Divan Decree 118; Insha'Allah, within three months, the transitioning process is going to be finished and the file will be closed.

Now, we are classif- -- dividing the contractors according to their experts and fields of expertise in order to start the connections with the relevant parties about hiring them, also to meet the, the allocation of 20 percent of hiring. I'd like to make it clear as we are working now, we're working -- we're exerting lots of effort in order to end this subject. We have agreed

upon with Ministry of Reconstruction, Rehabilitation to have programs for Sahwa members. This project is within the great projects for the national reconciliation that was declared by the Prime Minister, Nouri al Maliki. I'd like to re-thank those who have participated in succeeding this project and the General Ferriter. Now you may start your questions, thank you. Any questions? Yes.

REP1: Yeah, my name is Jim Wade, the Voice News, in Los Angeles, California. Major General Ferriter, it's obvious; this war's over, we won. I've been embedded with the Navy Seabees up in Rabati; I've covered the MIT (ph) teams, I've covered NPT (ph) teams, down south out of Kopkash (ph) to Takil (ph), to al Nasir -- where the kids, when they see the Americans walk through, they chant USA, USA, USA -- down to al Sueada (ph) north where their showing of affection for Americans, sir, is to blow us kisses. I just came from Kanikan (ph), which for those who don't know, watching this production, it sits on the border with Iran. I stepped out of my Stryker vehicle a few days ago, and I looked off to my left, and it was a sight that just, for a young kid from Redondo Beach, California, I see campaign workers posting campaign signs on a wall. In Iraq this is happening today, sir. Now, we want to talk about the Sons of Iraq. I've covered the Sons of Iraq just east of here, out of FOB Hammer, the release of two guys into the Sons of Iraq program. One wants to be a pipe fitter; another one hasn't decided yet. But the decision that they both made was to join the country

of Iraq. Now, sir, isn't this an unqualified success? Question number one, what do you attribute to that success?

MG FERRITER: And question number two?

REP1: And question number 2 -- Well, sir, first another statement: I've been embedded, like I say, off and on for four months. For -- Going on eight in three different stints here. Some day, sir, they're going to write a book about this war, and on the front I feel that the words "Attack, Attack, Attack" will be on the cover of that book, and them words are attributed to the now-famous Major General Hammond. Sir, all these successes that I've named, 47 new schools built in Baghdad last year alone. What are attributed to these tremendous successes that I've mentioned?

MG FERRITER: Okay, Jim -- Jim, that is that right?

REP1: Yeah.

MG FERRITER: Well, Jim from Los Angeles, thank you for your question, and also for your statement. The -- You know, the idea of "Is this a success and why?" the answer rests -- is evident right here in front of us, the fact that we're having a press conference in Baghdad, Iraq, with a U.S. general and his partners side-by-side indicates exactly what you've seen around the

country. And everywhere you go is that shoulder-to-shoulder, the Iraqi Security Force, the U.S. and other Coalition Force members who have been a part of this, have worked to, to drive any insurgents, to drive al Qaida, and to secure the Iraqi people. And so the progress to date tells us us that we're, we're in the right direction here. It tells us that we've disrupted these networks, and that the networks have a difficult time in stitching together operations against the people of Iraq or against the Coalition Forces. At the same time, we can see that high-profile attacks can be built and can still be catastrophic, and so the security of the people remains job one. And the -- You talked to the idea of schools, which is exactly, you know, the perfect "what is the next step." And as the people come together, and as they mend old wounds and they develop their civilian capacity, their education for their youth, that's where the hope and the future of the country's going to come from, and that's going to be hard to do as well. But you can tell that everybody's leaning against it right now, leaning into it right now, and working towards it. And I'll defer any other answer to the doctor.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: As for the explanations offered by the brother, it was not unclear about the successes he was talking. I believe the security was very important for Iraqi people and those people, Sons of Iraq, have offered very good

achievements and setting security and cooperating with security forces whether Coalition or Iraqi forces, towards their efforts from helping and supporting the forces on the Iraqi land whether Coalition or Iraqi forces in achieving security and in order to change those individuals from unemployed individuals to employed, and the Iraqi government embracing those, we consider it as a success and we are working in order to find job opportunities so they would not join -- so they would join the governmental institutions and to work with all Iraqis in order to set security. This is what we think as a success in the time being. Sir, Major General, do you have something to add?

MG ATTA: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: At first, I wish you all success with your book with the title you want to name it, "Attack, Attack, Attack." And God's will, you would write the facts that you witnessed on the ground in the field through your coverage. I believe that history is something sacred within the person writing it, yes, indeed, the security forces might face difficulties here and there, but within the result, the big success that we achieve with the national unity and the new experiment in Iraq, it is a very big success. Any success cannot be achieved within this short time with -- without the occurrence of certain problems. I believe Sons of Iraq issue is within the fruitful and very big successes that have been achieved by the national government

and it is the result of the national reconciliation. Thank you very much.
Another question? Yes.

REP2: Gina Chon, Wall Street Journal. I was wondering with the fall in oil prices and how that's affected budget planning here, if that's going to have any effect on salary distributions for the SOI as this transition occurs. And then also with -- concerns with the transition, many of them being former insurgents and possibly having criminal activity in the past, have any actually been rejected, and especially in joining the ISF as the vetting process goes forward? I know a lot of the biometric and other information that the Coalition Forces have received, that were supposed to be transferred to the GOI, and if any of have been found to possibly not be suitable? Thank you.

MG FERRITER: The -- I'll take the last part first on it. As we look towards the acceptance of some 20 percent of the Sons of Iraq to be accepted into Iraqi Security Forces, they'll go through the same vetting process, Gina, that any other young man in the country will go through, and they have to meet the capabilities and the threshold of reading and writing and education, and also they have to meet that threshold for, you know, for their ability -- their -- the things they've done in the past. So in some cases, some, some have been found to not be reliable, and should not be a policeman and should not be a soldier, but that doesn't mean that they should not be

brought back into the country and reconciled and brought back into as a useful member of the Iraqi society, so...

REP2: Do you have statistics on how many have not been accepted ... for the ISF?

MG FERRITER: A lot of -- let me -- Let me answer it this way, if I could. The, the process for selection to go to the Iraqi police we've worked with begins at the ground level. And so first of all, the local sheik and the local chief of police, they maybe tell someone, "You're just not -- You're not suited to be a policeman." And so from there on out up, there's a variety of that. So I don't think stats are nearly as important as the spirit of how it's being carried out, which is that you know, we've moved 3,000 through the vetting process to date. The other part is the DDR Committee, Dr. Chalabi could describe to you, has placed the money for the Sons of Iraq aside from the year 2009, and I'll defer that question to him, but the fluctuating oil price shouldn't -- will not affect the money that's already been placed aside for these young men. Sir?

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: As for the economical crisis and the drop down of oil prices, and how much does it affect the salaries of the contractors, as for the salaries of

Sons of Iraq in general, let's only -- the people in general, the people of Iraq in general, not only al Sahwa elements, the minister, the Prime Minister insisted that the salaries issue should not be touched; he referred -- he preferred to pressure other budgets and to leave the salaries so that the Iraqi people would not have their salaries changed without raise, without a drop. Just to keep them the way they are. As for the contractors with the friendly forces, their files are transitioned to the Iraqi governments. We're working on setting the budget and the allocation and getting approval from the ministries in order to get the salaries for all the Sons of Iraq elements. We have no problem with their salaries at this time being. If the Major General would like to comment on this?

MG ATTA: (Speaks In Arabic.)

INT: Yes, I have simple remark. The volunteering terms now, they are very -- people are very familiar with them on individual as for volunteering for the Ministry of Defense that are certain terms for the physical fitness and psychological health. Also the criminal record, these are the terms for registering. It's applied on the Sons of Iraq who those are going to be joining the security forces that they should meet those terms, those conditions in order to have their files transitioned. And that's at the Baghdad Operation Command we have prepared the forms and the -- we are checking and still making the selection. We're checking the age, the

scientific -- the education level and the -- in order to see who meets our conditions and terms. Thank you.

REP3: (Asks question in Arabic.)

INT: My question, Major General Ferriter, it's about the key problem, the key enemy is not here at the Iraqi government, also the U.S. and your country, the basic problem is unemployment created the circumstances for those individuals so they would return -- turn to other sides to make their living. Now, we're working on this problem by paying them salaries even though it is not their field of expertise to carry the weapon and to stand in the streets, because they're hungry and they need the money, they are doing it. They are pharmacists, they are engineers, individually. I know in one house there are eight individuals with high education degrees. They have computer science, wanted to volunteer, wanted to register for Ministry of Defense and he was not accepted.

Please, sir, we need you to look at this problem. There are other people, there is a chance for them to go to other sides, but you did not help them. You're not -- if they go there, you're not going to achieve security.

I have another question to Doctor Zuhair. How do you have mechanism to classify, to divide those people? Some people would like to join the army

due the high salaries; others would prefer to work within their field of expertise. What are the mechanisms that you would like to work upon, that this one would like to work with the military and this one would like to work with the civil sector? Thank you, sir.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: Major General, would you like to answer any of these questions? I think a question was directed to you.

MG FERRITER: Sure. The -- I mentioned in my statement, that towards the latter part of my statement, that this was the leading edge of the reconciliation within the country. And there are unemployed and under-employed throughout the nation. And there are people who are highly educated and capable and driven toward success, and the conditions have not yet been there for, for them to return to a field that they once comfortably worked or to create those options and opportunities for their family and employment where they've -- where they've received training and education. We believe that 2009 is that year when these things will happen. And that's the year when they -- from the local level and within the provinces, economic opportunity presents itself, the re-establishment of these hospitals and re-establishment of schools and re-establishment of businesses are the things that can now occur because the security allows any investment to hold it

and not to be lost. And at the macro level, I think you all know that as well. There's -- There's more and more investment coming to Iraq that will also assist in these. And so this is -- this is a period of, you know, we selected the term "transfer" because we need to move the responsibility, rightly, underneath the Government of Iraq and then transition, because this is, this is the leading edge for some, you know, 1.8, two million under-employed, unemployed that the Government of Iraq is working towards, so -- and each one, when you go to a house and find that, then the message is that they're going to be the ones that make the difference; they're going to be the ones that bring back the government, bring back the economy, bring back small business. And it is going to be a test. But I think that they're up to it and they'll find their way. I'll turn that to you.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: I'd like to answer you about the mechanism as administer of -- administrative point of view. The unemployment, the mechanism we have distributed, Operation Command is working on this. It's distributing terms -- forms to Sons of Iraq, individuals, the form has information, one of -- it includes the education level within other questions of the individual used to work in the past, and you will see the questions and the forms. According to the answers, when we receive those forms, we're going to classify the Sons of Iraq with the higher degrees of educational level.

Those with high degrees, those who -- with high school degrees, those who can write and read, who cannot -- who are illiterate, we -- for those with high degrees, we're going to transfer them to work according to their field of expertise. Baghdad Operation Command is within certain mechanisms and terms is going to take them to the security systems so they can work there. As for -- There is an agreement with the Ministry of Labor and social efforts also there is an agreement with the friendly side, our partners, that should have training courses for those who cannot read and write so we can -- so we can work according to laws of Iraqi government. This subject, they are going to be distributed according to their field of expertise; you know, some of them are retired, so you know each case has a certain situation. ?That's why we're dealing with this subject administratively as it is politically is over, but now it is within the hands of the Iraqi government. As we are working within the goal of joining them to the situation of the Iraqi government. Thank you. Yes, sir.

REP4: As Salamu 'Alaykum, (Asks question in Arabic.)

INT: (Inaudible) News Agency. My question is to the Major General Qassim Atta. Major General, as we are aware, many of those Sahwa elements used to work in armed groups against the government with different names -- under different names. Sir, you -- with in the conditions as to

examine their records? After having that examination, did you find some individuals who are involved within terrorist acts against the government?

Thank you.

MG ATTA:

As for the major files for the Sons of Iraq, it is under auditing and within the auditing is to examine and test the criminal record. Yes, some of them was involved in terrorist activities; some of them are wanted by the Iraqi judicial system. That's why we need to say that the judicial system is separate totally and some of them are -- Prime Minister has certain reconstructions about those who make it crimes -- committed crimes against the Iraqi people, they need to -- those who have not committed those crimes, and their hands were not stained with the blood of the Iraqi innocents, that's why we need to separate, we need to constantly audit these files. Also, we are cooperating with the Multi-National Forces to choose an individual to volunteer, and it should be within his wish to join the security facility; also it would be detected and his criminal record would be tested. The 51,000 individuals now are within the Iraqi government's responsibility; their salaries have been received for three months. It is a big success to be registered or recorded for the Iraqi government. So it is a very complicated topic; it is not easy or simple, but we have crossed all the complexities and proved as government and security forces that we need to surround this vital project and give it the attention it deserves in order to achieve the national reconciliation. The

Prime Minister himself is following up this issue, this subject, and he wants to separate those who have stained their hands with the bloods of the innocents and those who have not.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: I would like to comment about the major general. Those who are detected to have criminal records are going to work at the civil institutions; if not, they have judicial decree -- Yeah, maybe he has a certain indicator, security indicator, but there should not be a charge against him, a lawsuit against him, that he's under -- there is a decree to arrest him. This case, his name is going to be erased from the security forces' files and would be transferred to the civil sector. Only those who -- those who have charges against them.

REP5: Hi. Lourdes Garcia-Navarro, National Public Radio. You mentioned that there's 3,000 only who have been vetted out of a 100,000 Sons of Iraq. How -- This is to Major General Ferriter. How happy are you with that progress? And obviously to Qassim Atta, how long do you think this process will take in order to get these people into civilian jobs or into the security forces? Because this is just the first step, paying them. That you're paying them is just what the Americans were doing, except now

you're doing it; but the ultimate idea was for them to be incorporated into Iraq's security forces. And 3,000 people, frankly, isn't that much so far.

MG FERRITER: Lourdes, I don't have the exact number in front of me, but there is a pipeline of vetting that occurs from, as I mentioned earlier, from the local -- through the provincial police department, the director of police, up into the MOI. And packets are moving through there. And so we're, we're confident that 20,000, that the Prime Minister -- approximately 20,000—20 percent—that the Prime Minister promised, are going to become Iraqi policemen. And as is the case in the miraculous build of an army over the last 14 months in this country and the size and growth and capability and capacity of the Iraqi army, that the same things occur in -- with the police. So that takes time. The -- And I think we're going at a rate and a pace that the, that creates the belief within the individuals, you know, one of the questions asked about the background of the individuals, and there was great concern when we began this, that as soon as the names came forward, people would be disappearing and get killed and all of that, which has not occurred. And so the measured progress and steps is the way to, that I think the government's doing it correctly. And then, to insure that the training, vo-tech and skills across the country, stand back up and provide to improve their work skills and their ability as individuals, that's going on as well, too, right now. And so it's -- it's not only 3,000, it is 3,000. And it is moving forward. And so the -- When you consider the

fact that the Sons of Iraq stood their post for 27 months, and some of you have been here for 27 months, but not all of you have been here for 27 months. They dutifully protected their post. And they maintained their belief since October. And so there's a commitment there that I think is phenomenal. And again, the signs are that it's going in the right direction and that -- and we're building it. And I'll defer to you.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: The number, I think 3,000 is not an accurate number. The first phase to Baghdad Operation Command, we are working on choosing the individuals who are wishing to join in the security forces. The first phase was to transfer their whole files of the Sons of Iraq from Multi-National Forces into the Iraqi government. We have accomplished this, and all the files are within our responsibility. We have over than five thousand -- 51,000. And our -- The second phase is to select and separate between those who wish to join in the security forces and those who wishes to join other institutions. Now we're working about the numbers; if we reach 20 percent of the allocation, total number, then we would transfer the 80 percent to the civil sector. Now, we are still at the beginning of the second phase, which is the separation. Thank you very much.

From the side, do you have a question? Please, tell me to whom you're addressing your question --

REP6: (Inaudible—overlapping dialogue) ... from the Washington -- General, I thought you made an interesting point there on the last answer about how they stood their ground for 27 months. And I think it's interesting when you do go to parts of Salahadin and Anbar, and you do see a certain loyalty, I think, of some of these men to individuals, certain sheiks, certain leaders, certain people in those villages. I've been struck in some of this reporting over the past couple of weeks how much, I think Baghdad is one thing when it comes to Sons of Iraq, where you have the full brunt of the government here. I think the country side is a different story. And I'm just wondering as a professional soldier, when you look out at the landscape, what kind of risk you see in warlordism growing among some of the remnants of Sahwa as we go forward, in the event that some -- all of them are not incorporated into government institutions or in the event that certain individuals are able to exercise more control than you guys might have liked over these men that are still armed?

MG FERRITER: I think, General Atta, I'll answer the first part of his question and then seek your help as well. The -- You know, I think this is -- I don't see a problem with warlordism. And the fact is that often the progress of the program is passed word of mouth or text or in a newspaper headline. And so if

you're -- if you're the -- if you're in Salahadin, you're the March/April group. And so since October, you've heard it's coming and you've seen reports that transfers occurring and you see not a lot. And so as we've come around the country, with Diyala next, and then Babil/Wasit, and then Anbar, and then on Monday we're going to Kirkuk, and Wednesday we're heading up with the IFCNR Committee to Mosul. And then finally Salahadin, what you cite. So I think often what you hear on the ground is very true, and it's important that -- it's a very big and complex problem set to communicate down to the last U.S. captain or Iraqi force captain who's going to talk to somebody on the street corner and tell him here's ground truth. That's why we're doing this conference today in many reasons. And then as we get there, in each case we've allowed this problem to be worked with the sheiks or the local leaders and the contract holders with the IFCNR Committee and with the brigade commanders and battalion commanders of the Iraqi Army and the Operations Command commander, and they will -- and they talk through all the particulars of this, and I've seen some of you at these meetings, and in the end, they've -- they find out that this is an opportunity for their young men to rejoin the country, and they've taken it. And to date, we have seen success in organizing and establishing a system to ensure there's payment, and it's on time, and it's reliable. And all those things that could knowledge wrong, a heck of a lot of leadership's gone into it, a heck of a lot of commitment on the part of the Iraqi Security Forces, who are also involved in a fight in some places,

and they've taken up the responsibility, the added responsibility, for a group of men that they got to organize and insure they get fed and insure that the money gets there and all that.

So what you see and identify, makes sense that you're seeing that, because we saw it in Baghdad, and then we saw it in Diyala, and then we saw it in Babil. And each step of the way, we followed a process that's leading us to success. And I'll defer the rest to General Atta or to Dr. Chalabi.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: As for the loyalty, that's -- those individual have certain loyalty to certain sheiks or figures at the community. Now, when Sahwa started, there was chaos. Now we're working on administrating this chaos and gradually transforming it into a governmental administration. Thus, as you are aware, the loyalty is to who pays. It is for sure their loyalty is going to be to the Iraqi government as the Iraqi government is the father and the homeland now. This is... when the Iraqi government agreed on joining Iraqi -- Sons of Iraq and transferred their file from the Coalition Forces to the administration of Iraqi government, this was the basic principal, principal that they would receive their salaries from their home, from their government. For sure, their loyalty is going to be for their country and

their government. These are steps and phases. It is named as a "chaos administration" or "chaos control."

REP7: This is a question for General Ferriter. My name is Zach (inaudible). I'm with The Editorial Project. And I served in al Anbar in 2004 with the Marine Corps, and going back there, it's been amazing to see the progress there. But Rule 1, Section 1 of the Counterinsurgency Manual is the U.S. military really can't do this alone. And there's been a lot of focus on the 20 percent that's transitioning to the police or the security forces, and it's pretty obvious that there's a very robust effort there. But in terms of the other -- in terms of the other 80 percent, is there a -- as robust an effort on the part of MNF-I or U.S. advisors or others to advise that process in terms of the vocational training, the educational training, the economics? And can you sort of talk a little bit about -- about that?

MG FERRITER: I'll talk about it and then I'll hand over to Dr. Chalabi if you don't mind.

REP7: Thank you.

MG FERRITER: First of all, thanks for serving your country in your first capacity, and thanks for continuing to serve in, in the capacity of someone that's looking after getting the word out on what's going on. The -- The opportunity to move these young men towards the ministries and retain the transfer, you

know, if he has a paycheck and he's at work and he's suited to work in a ministry, then it's -- it's not hard to move him underneath a ministry, allow him to, to work towards civil capacity or wherever the ministry is making a difference. And so that is the initial step. The U.S. Embassy is responsible, and there are lots projects through USAID, lots of projects through local governance programs, and lots of projects that normally don't fall into General Ferriter's portfolio of operations that I was of benefit to see in our joint campaign plan discussion this past week. The most important thing is to connect those activities and not miss the opportunity that presents itself. And to connect the opportunity for jobs, employment, and a better way of life to every Iraqi who is -- who fits. And the Sons of Iraq are part of that problem set. And so we're a guiding hand, and in this security agreement environment now, past the first, we're going to help as much as the Government of Iraq wants us to help. We're great partners with them; we've gone through and are continuing through with the transfer part. And we'll assist Dr. Chalabi with -- a lot of the things we can do is just in simple information passing and then moving up and down our chains of command in parallel with theirs. And then our U.S. government's effort to assist really on the civil capacity, employment, and reconstruction side that's -- that's bigger than the military, is there too. So I think the connecting of the dots is what we have to watch after. Dr. Chalabi.

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: I would like to comment about monitoring -- monitors. The process is not separation of forces or complicated process. It is -- We have implementing and follow-up committee headed up by Hamid Salman (ph). It is a committee that supervises the process of transitioning this file from the friendly side to the Iraqi government. We are following up. I'm working as finance official and administrative official. Our job is to coordinate this file with all its details and then delivering it to the Iraqi government so that the involved ministries would be able to take the number within its -- within the Iraqi government institutions. Those are our sons, they're Iraqis. We do not need monitor -- monitors. We do the monitoring process; it is our duty. They are our sons. That's why we call them Sons of Iraq. So this is my comment about the -- I have preservation about the question about monitors.

REP8: Thanks. Tim Cox from Reuters. And I guess any of you could suggest an answer to this question, but do you have a timeframe in mind for when you're going to be able to wind up this program? Because it seems like it's going to be quite a long-term commitment. I mean, do you have targets set for when you're going to have 20 percent of these guys fully integrated and the rest doing some other kind of job? And you know, how realistic is it that you'll be able to do this very soon?

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: Yes. We have a time. We have a limited time. We've said at the beginning of -- I've talked about the start of the conference that we have three months to finish this file with all its details. The leadership, Baghdad Leadership Command, would take its allocated 20 percent, and the 80 percent we're going to transfer the others within three months and (inaudible) this file would be end -- finished. This is not the first time we're doing our work of this kind. We have accomplished other missions and we're done within very limit -- short time. We are following up with the -- our friendly side who are following up very well and also the National Reconciliation and Implementing and Follow-Up Committee. We all are working just like bees' hive. We are all taking our time and our efforts in order to end this file. We're not going to work on this topic for months and exceed and consume lots of effort and time. This is within the task of the implementing and monitoring -- follow-up, the national reconciliation task. Yes.

REP8: So that's three months that have them all, to have the 20 percent integrated into the security forces. But what about the rest? I mean, you're not saying that in three months that the entire Sons -- that, you know, there'll be no more problem, they'll be all wound up?

DR. CHALABI: (Speaks in Arabic.)

INT: I've talked about -- I've talked about the file in total, both the 20 and the 80 percent, the whole file in total would be finished from three months from now, starting from now, not from starting the work. Three months from now, we're going to finish this topic. All Sons of Iraq in Baghdad and all across the provinces. It is not a hard thing for us. Okay.

MG FERRITER: Our time is up. I don't have a closing statement other than to say "Thank you" for coming today and thanks for what you do every day in covering the great men and women of the Coalition Force and also the great men and women of the Iraqi Security Forces and the people of Iraq and the progress that we see there. And I will allow Dr. Chalabi or Major Atta Qassim to make final remarks.

[END OF RECORDING]