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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION
MULTI NATIONAL DIVISION NORTH
CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE SPEICHER, APO AE 09393

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

APVG-CG

14 August 2007

MEMORANDUM THRU Commander, MNC-I, Camp Victory, APO AE 09302

FOR Commander, MNF-I, Camp Victory, APO AE 09302

SUBJECT: MND-N Assessment

1. The attached enclosure contains a detailed description of the current status of security in the Multi National Division North area of responsibility. It addresses the enemy situation, status of security forces and governance. Some of these elements are easily measurable, others are not as easy to measure. That is to say, you must be on the ground working with these forces and government officials day-in and day-out to measure progress and to chart the way ahead.

2. The 25th Infantry Division Headquarters, Task Force Lightning, has had responsibility for the provinces north of Baghdad for almost one year. During this time the Iraqi Security Forces have slowly improved, and governmental processes have improved in all provinces but Diyala. However, recent operations in Diyala have improved the security situation there. These improvements in security forces and governance at the local level are encouraging, but the significant lack of confidence by these local entities in the central government and its ministries is alarming. This lack of confidence is well-founded. Despite efforts by MND-N to obtain additional support from the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defense, etc., for provisional security forces and governmental functions, the support remains disjointed. Promises are not kept, and a general lack of urgency is present. The reasons for these problems vary. Regardless of the reasons, these problems must be solved if the Coalition security strategy is to move forward and have a chance to succeed.

3. It is difficult to predict the future status of the security situation in MND-N over the next 24 months, but it appears that the situation will continue to improve slowly. The number of combat battalions and enabling forces currently assigned to MND-N is the minimum required to accomplish the current mission and sustain the current number of bases. It is realistic to begin a reduction of force and change of mission for MND-N forces as early as 2008 if available combat brigades are reduced. This reduction in MND-N would necessitate a change of mission to training and oversight at each headquarters, combined with a special operations capability to target enemy cells. This realignment, which would include closing bases, would take at least two years. This transition must occur in a methodical manner, giving the Iraqis small areas of

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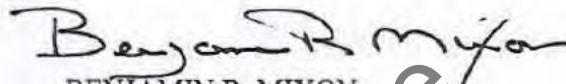
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responsibility within larger areas of operations. Iraqi Forces in MND-N have demonstrated numerous times that they can do more on their own without Coalition Forces present, when necessary. It is time for Coalition Forces to start reducing visible presence and giving Iraqis more responsibility.

4. Point of contact for this memorandum is the Secretary of the General Staff, (b)(3), (b)(6)
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Encl


BENJAMIN R. MIXON
Major General, USA
Commanding

Approved for Release

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Multi-National Division – North (MND-N) Commander's Assessment

August 2007

(U) Executive Summary

(S//REL) Despite noticeable and tangible tactical and operational successes in the recent weeks, particularly since Arrowhead Ripper, the overall security and governance situation in northern Iraq remains tenuous and under-developed. Too many innocent Iraqis are still targets of attack and intimidation from terrorists, criminals, and rival ethno-sectarian armed groups. Attacks by enemy elements, while down in relation to a couple of months ago, are still nearly double of what they were a year ago. While many Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) organizations are making progress, in general there are still too many instances of weak leadership, ineffective sustainment systems, high AWOL rates, and lack of higher headquarters support. In terms of governance, despite some encouraging recent developments in parts of my AOR, general provincial and local levels remain weak. They have considerable issues with effectively representing their constituents or providing them with reliable basic services such as security, water, electricity, medical care, or sanitation services.

(S//REL) While overall conditions in MND-N are still challenging and problematic, localized progress on multiple fronts suggests that broader improvement is possible if effective strategies and operational approaches are employed. Population security has improved in select urban areas such as Tal Afar, Mosul, Kirkuk, and most recently even in Baqubah. Provincial governments, though struggling, have improved their ability to conduct business, execute budgets, and in some areas provide more basic services. This is especially true of Ninewa province where the prospects of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC) could potentially transform the political landscape in Iraq, especially if coupled with provincial elections. It is my assessment that provincial elections in Ninewa would be widely supported by all ethnicities and sects, the results of which should produce a Sunni-led coalition provincial government. The prospect of meaningful Sunni political inclusion/participation is something our enemy fears, for good reason. Think of the viable alternative this would provide to the mainstream Sunni community. We want them to choose wisely, to reject the al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)-led insurgency and enter the political process. Although, by itself, PIC in Ninewa won't solve all the far reaching problems in northern Iraq, it is still something worth pursuing because of the potentially positive influence meaningful political participation could have on the mainstream Sunni community throughout the region. PIC offers the possibility of transforming the strategic landscape more than any battle or CF operation could because the positive developments in reconciliation in Ninewa could spread to Kirkuk or Salah ad Din and subsequently throughout the "Sunni Triangle." Indeed, among the most promising developments in my AOR over the past few months have been overtures and actions towards reconciliation among the Sunni and Shia tribes. These efforts have materially affected the security environment as well. Terrorist elements such as AQI do not enjoy the same freedom of movement they did even two months ago.

(S//REL) Although disrupted, the multi-faceted enemy, which consists of Sunni extremists (AQI is the most prominent), Former Regime Elements (FRE), Shia militants (Jasyh al Mahdi – JAM – is most prominent), criminals, and corrupt government officials has not been defeated. Defeating these enemies will take time and must include removing environmental threat enablers. The most significant enabler is the weak central government (GoI) that lacks unity and is perceived by the Sunni, Kurdish, and Turcoman populations as conducting operations along sectarian and personal agendas. Other important enablers include: unemployment, tribal conflict, a disenfranchised Sunni population, sectarian fault lines, and unwarranted influence from [1.4b], [1.4d] and [1.4b]. The enemies within MND-N are prosecuting a political fight among military and criminal lines in order to dominate and control key cities. The Northern Baghdad belt, which consists of southern Diyala and southern Salah ad Din (SaD) provinces, is the most violent area within MND-N. Only in the wake of Arrowhead Ripper has MND-N experienced a reduction in overall attacks and IEDs during my tenure. There are clear, encouraging trends. For the first time since October 2006 there are numerous indicators that the enemy has been significantly disrupted: a reduction in monthly attacks, the migration of enemy presence and activities toward less secure rural areas, an increase in local Iraqis cooperating with CF and ISF, the death and capture of numerous key insurgent leaders, and selected provincial essential services beginning to emerge (PDS food system, banking, and local market economies). The enemy will now seek to use time to his advantage. If not pursued and defeated, he will move to rural areas and conduct attacks where there is little to no ISF security.

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(U) Dahuk, Irbil, and As Sulaymaniyah Assessment

(S//REL) Within MND-N the Sunni led insurgency has not been able to take root within the area controlled by the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). The limited threat coupled with strong local governments and effective security forces enables the people within this region to enjoy a relatively peaceful and secure environment. On 30 May 2007, the KRG assumed security responsibility for Dahuk, Irbil, and As Sulaymaniyah provinces. The largest threat to peace in these provinces continues to be spectacular attacks conducted by AQI or Ansar al Sunna (AAS) primarily using VBIEDs. A successful SVBIED attack in Irbil on 9 May 2007 killed 14 Iraqis and wounded nearly 100 people. Another SVBIED incident in Makmur on 13 May 2007 killed 41 people and injured 104. The success of these incidents emboldens the insurgents to continue this method of attack. Since these events, the local security forces have improved their security posture and vigilance. Despite this resolve, the region will remain vulnerable to spectacular attacks as Sunni insurgents, especially AQI, attempt to draw the Kurdish population into an ethno-sectarian conflict that will create chaos and prevent the success of the Government of Iraq.

(U) Ninewa Assessment

(S//REL) Ninewa remains an important province to the Sunni insurgency. It is the largest province within MND-N, shares a 180 mile border with Syria, and its provincial capital, Mosul, is the third largest city in Iraq. These characteristics make the region a critical support zone for the insurgency. AQI continues to conduct attacks to disrupt the security, governance, and economic progress of the provincial government. Since late May 2007, successful CF and ISF operations have killed or captured several key leaders within Mosul. The loss of numerous key insurgent leaders has instilled fear and mistrust throughout the remaining insurgent organizations and has significantly disrupted their ability to conduct coordinated and complex attacks. The disruption of the enemy's leadership and the improved capabilities of the 2nd IA Division, the 3rd IA Division and the IP will prevent AQI from making Mosul or Tal Afar insurgent strongholds in the future, thus allowing the provincial government to continue to progress in its efforts to provide essential services to its people. Despite improvement of the ISF, the enemy will continue to conduct attacks to establish control along the lines of communication that lead from the Rabiya Point of Entry (POE) to Mosul and south to Baghdad. This line of communication enables the insurgents to smuggle foreign terrorists, weapons, and money from Syria into Iraq. AQI is also increasing its presence near Baij to facilitate smuggling along another line of communication from Syria.

(S//REL) The 2nd IA Division has shown a strong ability to effectively plan, coordinate, and execute independent/unilateral combat operations in their AO on short notice. Coordination is carried out effectively with CF and IP units. 2IA units perform with a level of aggressiveness and confidence usually found in more seasoned military units. They routinely conduct independent, unilateral operations throughout their battlespace. Strong leadership from the 2IA Commander, BG Moutaa, sets the tone for subordinate commanders and staff.

(S//REL) The 3rd Iraqi Army Division continues to make great strides in their overall operational effectiveness to fight as a unit. The division staff has improved its ability to implement control measures in their operations to enhance the abilities of the subordinate units to better understand their duties and responsibilities on the battlefield. The division staff needs to focus its efforts on target development.

(S//REL) When resourced properly, 3rd Brigade, 2nd Region DBE, which has been unsupported by MOI, has the potential to be an effective unit able to plan and execute its assigned mission. However, the unwillingness and sheer incompetence of some of the unit's leadership to uphold the rule of law prevents the brigade from becoming a highly effective, self-sustained unit.

(S//REL) Ninewa's Iraqi Police Services most apparent strength is the presence of leadership, which openly works with CF, and it has made significant reforms in the organization's processes and procedures. Their increased presence in the communities is having a positive effect developing the relationship with the local populace.

(S//REL) Overall, the Ninewa provincial government is capable of governing the province and providing basic services to its population. Ninewa successfully executed its 2006 budget and has a project list for executing the 2007 budget. With the detention of the Provincial Council Chairman for corruption, budget execution has been delayed. We assess that the Council will regroup and continue budget execution within the month. The hours of available electricity continues to improve. The Provincial Government continues to

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expand its influence and control beyond Mosul, working governmental support to other communities such as Tal Afar, Al Qayyarah, and Rabbia. Thus, improvements in the security environment, coupled with emerging efficacy within civil and military institutions in Ninewa, have created the opportunity for more Iraqi control of this key province – and for the first time, the possibility of a Sunni-led coalition provincial government where Sunni, Shia, Kurds, and Turcoman, among other minorities, share power and jointly work to implement solutions. It is possible that developments in Ninewa could provide the catalyst for meaningful and lasting reconciliation throughout Iraq.

(U) Kirkuk Assessment

(S//REL) The security situation in Kirkuk remains tenuous. AQI, AAS, and Jaysh al Islami (JAI) continue to conduct attacks to disrupt the security, governance, and economic progress of the provincial government. The majority of these attacks are directed at the perceived Kurdish-dominated government and security apparatus. In addition, the attacks are meant to intimidate the populace, and inculcate fear primarily in the Kurdish and Turcoman populace, in order to force them from their homes and businesses. Prior to January 2007, multi-VBIED attacks occurred within Kirkuk city approximately every three to four weeks. Although insurgents still use multi-VBIEDs to create spectacular events within Kirkuk, improved security has denied the enemy the ability to conduct these attacks with regularity. In order to deter a successful economy and the people's growing confidence in the government, the enemy also conducts attacks against the oil and power infrastructure. Acts of intimidation and coercion against the workers trying to maintain and repair the infrastructure are also common. Currently, the KRG is using political means to improve the Kurdish position when the referendum on Kirkuk's final status finally occurs. Although the leadership within the KRG has indicated they are willing to extend the 31 December 2007 deadline established in Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution, the GoI has not made substantial progress towards achieving the referendum's prerequisite events (i.e. normalization and a census). Although there is legal action that can occur to extend the deadline of Article 140, if the GoI does not demonstrate action to resolve the issue, political tension within Kirkuk will increase, initially resulting in demonstrations and protests but eventually leading to violence. The enemy will attempt to exploit the increased political tension to incite ethno-sectarian violence.

(S//REL) The 2/4 IA Brigade is now able to effectively plan, execute and sustain operations independent of CF support. The staff continues to display reliability and willingness to conduct missions to standard. Subordinate battalions are effective at planning and executing platoon through battalion level operations, and they can sustain themselves for up to 48 hours in combat operations with some units capable of 72 hours of operations. The province looks forward to the activation of the 12 IA Division. This should occur by February 2008. Activating this unit in the next 4-6 months would significantly enhance the security environment in Kirkuk Province at a time when Article 140 negotiations will be coming to a head. People will see the GoI's commitment to future security in Kirkuk province.

(S//REL) The Kirkuk IP maintains daily law and order inside the city. This month will see the validation of five Kirkuk police stations indicating that the Kirkuk IP are growing into more of a professional force every day.

(S//REL) Overall, the Kirkuk provincial government is capable of governing the province and providing basic services to its population. Kirkuk successfully executed its 2006 budget and is executing its 2007 budget in accordance with GoI directives. The 2007 budget is currently 45% committed. The provincial government is actively improving the basic services offered to the people. The government has a well-regulated and systematic process for gathering, validating, and prioritizing requirements and then executing solutions to the requirements. There has been an increased emphasis on services beyond Kirkuk city in an effort to extend the reach of the government and basic services to the people of the province. The government conducts business and agriculture training to increase economic opportunities.

(U) Salah ad Din Assessment

(S//REL) Salah ad Din, a predominantly Sunni province, is experiencing an increase of AQI presence and activity as a result of successful CF and ISF operations within Anbar, Baghdad, and Diyala Provinces. In the Bayji area, AQI, FRE, and criminals continue to conduct interdiction, intimidation, and illicit activities to influence the flow of oil and electricity throughout Northern Iraq. Attacks will continue to target Joint Security Stations (JSSs) and check points, and will include IEDs along MSR Tampa to disrupt the legal flow of oil, thus

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denying fuel to the Iraqi people while simultaneously preventing profit for the GoI. Within the Samarra region, AQI is increasing its presence and attempting to intimidate and coerce the IA and IP in order gain freedom of movement throughout the region and to prevent the GoI from successfully executing reconstruction efforts to improve the city of Samarra. In the Balad area, AQI continues to attempt to incite sectarian violence through IDF attacks on the Shia population in the city of Balad and on the Saiyd Mohammed Shrine. AQI has increased their presence in the Golden Hills area southwest of the city following the bombing of the Golden Dome minarets in June in order to pressure the Shia in southern Salah ad Din.

(S//REL) Although the 6/2 National Police (NP) Brigade has shown marked improvement in recent weeks, in large measure due to the personal leadership of Major General Rashid, and his decision to replace corrupt leaders within 6/2 NP, this force is not the long term solution. The plan of replacing 6/2 with the Al-Askariyan BDE and a new locally hired IP force, once trained and ready, has my support.

(S//REL) The 4/4 IA Brigade faces significant challenges in performing its assigned mission of providing security along MSR Tampa. The unit is still forming, and all of its subordinate battalions remain at ORA L4. Subordinate battalions are limited in their ability to provide security at only a few checkpoints and at their multiple FOBs. Without the assistance of CF providing fuel, limited repair parts, and medical support and supplies, the brigade would be ineffective altogether. An encouraging development was the recent move by the IGFC to replace the BDE CDR, a leader who poisoned the unit with corrupt and abusive leadership.

(S//REL) The 1/4 IA Brigade continues to plan, execute, and sustain operations at an Iraqi standard with minimal CF support (EOD, AWT, and ISR). Challenges in planning operations include focusing the BDE on developing intelligence driven operations along with synchronized BDE staff planning mostly due to 63% officer manning and no depth in leadership among key positions. The BDE HQ's soldiers are loyal to their unit and the BDE Commander. Overall the BDE HQ's leadership that is on-hand is competent but the BDE G2 continues to struggle to provide valid intelligence to drive operations.

(S//REL) Salah ad Din's IPs remain the most divided along sectarian lines. Pockets of effectiveness have developed where the IP leadership is effective and provides supports. In other areas, IPs of different sects receive little support.

(S//REL) Overall, the Salah ad Din provincial government is marginally capable of governing the province and providing basic services to its population. The provincial leadership executes its responsibilities but is focused largely on its base of Tikrit, Al Alam, and Baiji/Sharquat. The government leadership has been active in publicly demonstrating concern for the areas of Tuz, Samarra, and Balad as crisis events occur, but fails to take action to improve these areas over the long term. The government executed its 2006 budget and is executing its 2007 budget in accordance with GoI directives. The 2007 budget is currently 40% committed. The provincial government is focused on improving services almost solely in the Tikrit area. The province requires GoI ministerial assistance to expand and improve services for all of its population. The local community level leadership has begun to take a more active role in advocating for governmental services and involvement in their areas, particularly in Balad, Ad Dujayl, and Samarra. And in turn, the provincial leadership and DGs have recently improved their outreach to and interaction with these local governments. With continued mentoring from the PRT, Salah ad Din leaders will be capable of governing the province.

(U) Diyala Assessment

(S//REL) Operation Arrowhead Ripper, which commenced on 19 June 2007, has defeated AQI in Baqubah, the provincial capital of Diyala. Still, there are remnants there that CF and ISF will have to contend with and only by staying on the offensive will we prevent the reemergence of AQI in this key city. Previously, AQI had established a strong presence in Western Baqubah. AQI ran a courthouse, a jail, three torture houses, five aid stations, three food storage areas, and several training facilities in the city. Prior to Operation Arrowhead Ripper, some AQI were able to flee Baqubah. It is assessed the majority of those fighters moved north to the Diyala River Valley. Recent reseeded of IEDs and some AQI propaganda indicate that a small amount of AQI was able to blend in with the populace and remain in the city. Insurgents' intelligence operations against CF and ISF are intended to help set the conditions to disrupt the provincial government's efforts to provide essential services and a secure environment to the citizens of Diyala. However, if CF/ISF demonstrate the ability to hold Baqubah, enemy forces will redirect their efforts to the surrounding cities and rural areas.

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(S//REL) The security situation in Diyala Province is exacerbated by Shia militants, primarily Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) and its rogue or splinter groups. Like AQI, JAM wants to control the population centers along the key lines of communication that allow them freedom of movement from their center of gravity in Thawra (Sadr) City along the Khan Bani Saad to Baqubah corridor and eventually to the ^{1.4b, 1.4c} ~~border~~. Both Sunni and Shia insurgents exploit the porous border by smuggling weapons and fighters across the ^{1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4c} ~~border~~, focused at the ^{1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d} ~~border crossing point~~ and ^{1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4c} ~~border crossing point~~. Several reports indicate both JAM and the Badr Corps receive training, logistical support, and funding ^{1.4a, 1.4b, 1.4d} ~~from the border crossing point~~.

(S//REL) The 5th IA Division remains focused on Operation Arrowhead Ripper as the main effort in the Diyala Province, and this unit has proved to be effective when fighting along side of CF. It continues to conduct operations throughout the AOR of Diyala Province with secondary efforts focused on insurgent hot spots to include: the Diyala River Valley, Muqdadiah, Khan Bani Saad, Khalis, and Khanaan. 5th IA also conducts limited checkpoint operations in eastern Diyala Province to assist Border Enforcement personnel in securing the vast Iran-Iraq border.

(S//REL) 1/3 Brigade of the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE) is operationally effective in planning and executing missions. However, the lack of resources causes limited operations along the Iraq-Iran border, and this is directly related to MOI logistical weaknesses. This has not improved over the past nine months, although most of the unit's leaders are former Peshmerga and their willingness to fight is high.

(S//REL) Diyala's Iraqi Police Services is benefiting from the increased presence of CF and the kinetic operations focused on the defeat of AQI and ISI. The IP have responded positively and are standing up to fill the requirements of their communities. Constant CF pressure to stay the course is forcing some of the IP leadership into unknown and uncomfortable roles, but the overall effect is positive.

(S//REL) Overall, the Diyala provincial government is not consistently capable of governing the province or providing basic services to its population, but is showing some improvements over recent months. The government has developed a plan to execute its 2006 budget, but has yet to contract any of the projects. As a sign of progress, the provincial leadership is planning for execution of their 2007 budget while continuing its current contracting efforts for the 2006 budget, of which approximately 30% is currently committed. The government is not providing basic services throughout the province. Portions of the province do receive basic services as a result of the efforts of local governments such as in the Khanequin and Khalis areas. In the wake of Operation Arrowhead Ripper, the government has stepped up its effort to govern and provide basic services, but this process will take time. Several ministerial leaders must be replaced in order to set the conditions for the government to become fully capable. Governor Ra'ad recently demonstrated he has the will to do just that. With coalition support, the government will continue to make progress. Key to further progress will be the assistance of the GoI Ministries which must provide training and support to the province in order to ensure success. To close on an encouraging note, the tribal leaders in Diyala now appear ready to be part of the solution and have publicly pledged to reject violence and AQI. The challenge will be finding a meaningful and productive way to incorporate the Sheiks as the government works on building strong and effective institutions that serve all citizens of the province.

(U) Conclusion

(S//REL) The confluence of recent effective CF/ISF operations that have significantly damaged the AQI network, increasing ISF capability, and encouraging signs in reconciliation at the local and provincial level, suggest that a real strategic opening may be occurring in MND-North. Recommend we seize this opportunity and test the hypothesis that "as the mainstream Sunni community enjoys more meaningful participation in the political process, the support for the insurgency will wane" by going PIC in Ninewa and re-positioning forces in Iraq. If our theory is valid, we should see positive cascading effects that enable us to begin to transition to "train/advise" in the near-term (next 12 months) -- all portending to significant reductions in CF BCT commitment over the next two years.

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