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MNFI Senior Leader Forum

081115

AN: Iranian President Ahmadinejad
EOF: Escalation of Force
HM: Brigadier Hamish McNinch (UK), Energy Fusion Cell
DB: RADM Dave Buss, MNFI CJ5
DP: BG Dave Perkins, MNFI CJ9
DQ: BG David Quantock, TF 1.4a
ES: Emma Sky, POLAD
FH: LTG Frank Helmick, MNSTCISB: Female Suicide Bomber
GS: MG Guy Swan, MNFI CJ3
LA: LTG Lloyd Austin, MNFI
MGK: Maj Gen Kelley, MNF-W
MGH: MG Hammond, MND-B
ML: BG Mary A. Legere, MNFI CJ2
MZ: Maj Gen Mark Zamzow, MNFI DCJ9
O4: General Odierno, MNFI
RF: Ambassador Robert Ford, USMI Political
RG: b 3 b 6 MNFI SJA
SG: Brigadier Simon Gould, MNFI DCJ3
PMM: PM Maliki

I recorded this conference in four recordings, broken up by the three breaks. I did not introduce every recording.

O4: This is a different form for this conference than what we've done in the past, the old commander's conferences. This is a civilian-military forum. Our views are different based on where you sit. This is open ended, and I encourage you to speak up because I am seeking a discussion. Ambassador?

RC: Thank you. We'll discuss many issues. We are moving into transition in the next week, and this week will be crucial for Iraqi approval. Assuming they do approve the SOFA, it will then become an implementation issue. After lunch, we'll discuss the strategic risk to the operation. On many issues, it is division commanders who are on the fault lines, like Arab-Kurd, shifts in Sunni communities in Anbar, and the federal government shift. We'll discuss this in the JCP review. We are seeking to answer whether this is this a nascent modern state, or a return to one-party rule, which contains its own risks.

O4: The US has its own transitions. First, there is the transition of administrations. Second, there is the Pentagon's shift to Afghanistan. In a Thursday night Tank session (SVTS), we had CENTCOM, Iraq, and Afghanistan and the JCS in a long discussion about base setting and setting the conditions for the future.

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There is a timing issue. How do we balance all that? In Iraq, we have three years. In Afghanistan, they think they have a year, maybe two to make a difference. We'll start [this morning] with the JCPAT. They really helped up. Now, Michelle Flournoy, who was on the JCPAT, is in charge of the Pentagon transition. This is an important forum. I want to move away from reports from the field. I think the SOFA will be signed. *The CJ5, RADM Buss, then gave the first presentation.*

Joint Campaign Plan Assessment Team Overview

First Recording

12:00 DB: The JCPAT visited in October. First, I want to review the JCP. It seeks a steady state, not an 'end state.' It is based on a Lead, Partner, Overwatch concept. The foundation of the JCP was more emphasis on security. Over the last 12 months, there has been an acceleration in security that we could not have imagined. In the summer of 2008, there were rapid improvements, from local to more generalized security. We knew the change of command was coming up as well as the SOFA. We did a JCP revision in early September, or a JCP Update. We updated the objectives and the LOO interdependencies. Most of the JCPAT had recent and extensive experience in Iraq. They recommended adjustments, identified obstacles, and identified strategic decision points. (b)(6) had a very significant impression of Sadr City. The JCPAT validated our major themes, which included sustainable security, GoI capacity and legitimacy, and full sovereignty. The plan is moving from failed to fragile to stable. The conditions are not the same everywhere. There are multiple transitions going on. . . .

29:00 O4: . . . for someone who was 612 out of 840, and I'm not one to say, but I know FH can relate. [laughter] . . . a theme that has come up several times is objectives. From a national perspective, they remain maximalist. I don't want minimalist objectives, but I do want realistic objectives . . . we keep talking about incidents [as in incidents of violence], but that is not the central issue. The root causes are political and economic, and we have to get after those. Let's think through that. I keep hearing that we're losing our leverage [troop drawdown]. I disagree with that. We'll have different leverage. Success has bred a much different problem. DB: . . .

Maj Gen Kelly [MNFV]: Do we know what they [Iraqi leaders] want?

RF: There is no unified Iraqi vision. In 2005, we hoped the constitution would address it, but it was only an opening salvo. . . O4: the Executive Council does not have a unified vision. I wish they would address the constitution [its proposed revisions]. The provinces are worried about the Central Government. I do think this is a natural evolution of events. I agree we have to help them get there. DB: Priorities.

O4: The Joint Staff J5 is looking at clusters of problems, at Iraq and Afghanistan, 1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d That is work to be done. The point was "be realistic." The JCP will be iterative. We must, for resources sake, consolidate and eliminate overlap. There are emerging points of leverage. JCP Ends, Ways, and Means. O4: That is an important slide. Strategic partnership is the desired endstate. Democracy is a 10- to 15-year goal, not two to three years. MG Hertling [MNDN]: On the COIN transition, there will always be bubbles of insurgency. O4: I agree, but it is a question of who will do the fighting [us or Iraqis]. Hertling: 1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

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RC: I would emphasize what kind of government and what kind of insurgency? Hertline: It goes back to the root causes of distrust throughout the society. JCP Strategy. O4: [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d

[REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d Risk: Goals inability to address drives of instability. Our goal is to publish, by mid-Decmeber. We're adding Rule of Law as a fifth LOO. LA: I would raise a technical point. I think this is a subset of COIN. O4: Were moving toward the shift to stability operations.

Nature of the Threat: the Issues in 2009

Second Recording

ML: The Goals going into Iraq include a Unified, Democratic and Federal Iraq, stable with developing economy, committed to participatory government, denied a safe haven for terrorists, free of malignant influences, integrated into region and into the international community, supported by competent security force, and supported by full-functioning political and government structure. We don't consider these in play. The problem is that we are arbitrating political conflicts between groups, and those political conflicts will not end. The terrorist and malign influences, communal and factional struggles, lack of institutional capacity, and regional concerns are too entrenched to be completely rooted out.

Iraq Today: Security continues to improve, but that's not irreversible. I think we all believe this. We must get to the root cause of violence. I know we don't like statistics, but 2006 vs. today is significant. In Mosul and Ninewah, AQI has metastasized into the community. The Sunnis are like my brothers: disorganized, dangerous, and they need a lot of guidance. [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d Most Iraqis are done with violence and want political solutions. When the Shia gover accepts Sunni provinces and both accept the Kurds, then this country will be a point where it can meet the potential of its human capital. Issues for 2009 include SOFA, The elections and the aftermath, Shia and Sunni reconciliation, detainee release, Kurds and Gol: Art 140, [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d, SOFA. The trend lines are good, but clock is ticking. UN goes on break on 15 December, so there is no chance of a new UNSCR after 15 Dec. . [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d

[REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d

Elections and Transitions. Provincial elections are on track for 31 Jan 09, despite some efforts made to have them sooner or delay. Many independents will have trouble competing against large, established parties, and we have to help temper their expectations. In the south, Dawa and ISCI are the battle of the heavy weights. We are concerned about electoral violence in the south. There is limited threat reporting, but concern is unhealthy tactics by competing factions. We hope to show them they can vote the bum out. They don't have to kill them. [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d The Dawa-ISCI conflict is unhealthy and escalating. It is very important, and both have violent options. The challenge is graceful transitions. Winners and losers don't normally co-exist well. Sadrism Reconciliation with Gol. PMM has pursued this. I'm not sure if ML can make all its objectives work, including integrating Sadrists, isolating violent Sadrism elements, and separate and weaken Sadrists. We would want some red lines on what goes on in this. Sunni Reconciliation. Detainee Releases: The Math. Of 12,000, 20% are Shia and 80% are Sunni. We want to be out of the detainee business by December 2009. We divide security threats into four classes: 1) Low Threat, 2) Security Threat, 3) Dangerous

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Radical, and 4) Enduring Security Threat. These criteria are provided by USG. The challenge is how detainees were picked up, evidence built up. The Humanity. Big challenge in the detainee release is getting the conviction in an Iraqi court for the real bad guys. We have very bad guys, but turning intelligence into evidence is hard. We've seen their prisons serve as recruiting tools. We can't see the first 4K as Shia. No sectarian bias. The risk of bad people who've done bad things. Kurds: Gol and Disputed Border Areas. 38:30. Article 140 is stalled, with tensions increasing. Kurds want a great deal. Kurds believe they made a good faith deal in Article 140. Now they fear that the Gol is undermining it. There has been a shift, and the risk of confrontation is great. 1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

O4: I disagree on your first goal.

1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

Strategic Risks to the Joint Campaign

Ambassador Krajesky: Arab/Kurd Tensions.

There is no bigger fault line. There is no trust and no shared vision, and the personal animosities between Kurd and Arab leaders are huge. I disagree with ML. I think Kurds see every Sunni as a Ba'athist and every Shia as an Iranian. The KRG fears a resurgence of Saddam, of an Arab nationalist state. They don't know why we are creating an Arab army (in training the ISF). We must support UNAMI's efforts on the DIBs. UNAMI has delayed submitting its reports until after the provincial elections. As RC said in August, we must push these parties together to talk. We must establish mechanisms for consultations, federal vs. central, revenue sharing, it is positive that when they butt up against each other, that they keep talking. On the recent paper by the International Crisis Group on hydrocarbons, security force integration would help. In my mind, Khanaqin was this close to blowing up. LA, MG Barbero, and MG Hertling being there on the ground was crucial. Kirkuk is a political issue. It is not about oil or about being a 'historical icon,' like Jerusalem. Article 23 idea is to push the problem down the road with interim arrangements. (b)(5)

(b)(5)

ES: On the 22 July and the Khanaqin incident, these were wake up calls to the Kurds and they impressed Arabs that PMM appeared to play the role of an Arab nationalist leader. It all upset the Kurds. It reflects Maliki's increasing power. Two weeks ago, at a dinner of Sunnis, for four hours, they know they

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must combine with Kurds against the Shia to balance . . . Iraq is reverting to its traditional culture. The other piece is elites seeking democratic norms.

MG Hertling: I am concerned about the fault lines, of Sunnis whispering in Maliki's ear. This is like an irreconcilable marriage. The Kurds have a Palestinian complex. They fear the past, the present, and the future. I feel caught between the dog and the fire hydrant on all Kurd-Arab issues. Going to the KRG, it is amazing to see all the construction going on there.

LA: Did we address this (Arab-Kurd faultlines) in the JCP? O4: We need more in the JCP on the drivers of instability . . . We have huge issues in Mosul, with rhetoric from the Kurds in IA expressing disloyalty, the ISF and peshmerga in Mosul . . . short-term elections in Ninewa are critical. What is going on? What are the dynamics? We have to figure what we're going to do here.

RC: I think this helps sharpen the focus on Mosul. Another point. Discussion in Baghdad by these five committees, the hydrocarbons committee already brought the KRG statement, which is helpful, about the 500,000 . . . This is a dysfunctional marriage. If they won't stay together for the sake of the kids, maybe they will for the sake of the money. A recent team study determined that without the 17% of the budget it gets from Baghdad, the KRG would dry up and blow away. The 17% does counteract centrifugal forces. Finally, one element of the Sept-October engagement with Barzani was he must engage Baghdad, not defend against it. Their follow through may determine the outcome.

Hertling: The five committees meet in Baghdad in Baghdad. No one ever comes to the KRG, and they expect Gol attention. The 17% budget is a point of contention. They feel shortchanged. There is also a feeling of constant threats from the Gol, as in Khanaqin. I thought the peshmerga would kick their ass. I see Gol pressure on the KRG, which does not help. As Emma Sky said, they're tired of talking to us.

RC: The other good news is the first tripartite talks of the Gol, the US, and Turkey. There is potential for more Gol-KRG interactions. O4: Are there any other thoughts?

RF: 1) Elections in Mosul, 2) the ISF and the peshmerga are exceptionally important. We need to understand ___ and training does not create loyalty, and why they stress their two divisions. FH: They are reluctant to bring the peshmerga forces down here. There are questions on training, pay, and where they can be deployed. O4: I wonder if we should host a Gol-KRG summit, where we referee. We keep pushing this away.

Hertling: the KRG wants us to step in. They see UNAMI marginalizing them.

1.4b, 1.4d

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1.4b, 1.4d

Reconciliation Update

RF: Two points on PM Maliki. 1) He fears a Sunni coup. 2) The Shia PM feels every job he gives to a Sunni is one he should have given to a Shia. I think PMM has found the Sol interesting, but he wants to control it, and replace it with his own program. As we look forward to 2009, I think PMM is committed. There is a will to do it, but it always requires pushing and gets push back. Anbar has 38 election lists for a population of 700K. 1.4b, 1.4d

Ferriter?: In October '06, the Awakening began and swept across central Iraq. We paid Sheiks in 2007 \$300 each for the Sol. We did biometrics.

1:14. MG Hammond. This was our first chance to get all these groups—Gol, Sol, the ISF, tribes—to work together on a common goal. The attitudes have shifted. Things have transitioned. The idea of a bridging strategy has worked so far, but how long can we keep overseeing it. It works because central . .

Hertling: Had the first session with . . . met with 400. Their #1 issue was the arrest of (b)(6) I am seeking his release. The tone in the room was a lack of trust. They fear offering names because the Gol

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will issue warrants. We think Diyala in the elections will go 65% for the Sunnis. There is great potential for violence.²

LA: I think this is about leadership, and that you are on track.

Hammond: We decided early on, IFCNR decided the pay goes down, with nothing to pensioners and _____. I went to see Rubaie and asked is it really worth \$50 a month to put all this at risk? Later that day, they changed their mind. I agree, it has taken a huge amount of human capital.

Ferriter: Often, you have to reject their rejection.

FH: Everytime I engage the Mol, Bolani, he knows it takes the whole Gol.

LA: It is a glacier, and we all have to push.

O4: We might, with contracts [we execute in I-BIZ and such], require Sol hiring.

FH: Can you discuss your polling?

Oates: It is not just employment, it is the type of employment that is important. There was an amazing distribution of desired jobs across the age groups. For those under 25, they wanted to go into the Army. For those from 25 to 35, they wanted to go into the police so they could stay in their communities. For those over 35, they wanted their old jobs back.

O4:

RC: LA is absolutely right. The key is transition to non-security employment. Bassima tried, but she's been sidelined. Is anyone else in IFCNR trying to do it? Ferriter: _____ is, but he's too slow.

O4: We can't tolerate them going at their own pace.

SOFA Discussion

RG: Ambassador Satterfield would be here but he is engaged in closing the deal on the SOFA.³ The SOFA is nearing completion. It is full of details on taxes, licenses, detention, combat, and a political process. Time is of the essence. An UNSCR is not a good escape hatch. POTUS said UNSCR is okay. PM said UNSCR is like the SOFA.

O4: We've really just started. We'll have to provide guidance, but implement it in the spirit of the SOFA. The self-defense RoE does not change. The calculation of collateral damage could become more restrictive. The key will be local relationships and arrangements with ISF and Iraqi judge.

Oats: What is the SOFA impact on the PIC.

O4: Technically, they all PIC on 1 Jan, but Iraqis want to continue PIC MOUs as useful security reviews, and we will. In about 30 days, we'll have another session with military commanders to discuss implementation of each article, then the corps will have to operationalize it.

RG: A small incident can become a big issue. Article 12 says that jurisdiction is for on-base and on-duty activities. I agree. If this passes, it will be challenged every day.

² On Sunday, 16 November, O4 expressed surprise at Hertling's estimate of 60% or more of Diyala going for Sunnis, or being Sunni.

³ The weekend of 15-16 November 2008 was critical. There were high-level meetings among top Iraqi officials on Saturday night to discuss the SOFA, which I believe ISCI boycotted. On Sunday, the Council of Ministers voted overwhelmingly 27 -1 to endorse the SOFA, but that was with 10 ISCI members absent. Don't quote those numbers. Need to read some articles from 17 and 18 Nov for correct information on the distribution and reasons correct.

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O4: I agree, and it will be challenged every day by some who have evil intentions and some have honest intentions.

O4: On detainees, we will transition detainees over the entire year. New ones will go into the Iraqi system. The Gol is afraid we'll release them all. We also have to work through HVIs. Some who they want released and we don't. The key is the spirit of the SOFA.

RC: I'll make one comment. All the efforts of the SOFA agreement and approval, yesterday, the PM told me he is prepared to strongly support the SOFA. He is meeting with bloc leaders today. Ironically, the strongest challenge may come from the Sunnis, even though they need it the most. Any contacts you have with Sunni leaders, this is the time to stress, this is the time to purchase three years of stability.

O4: The Sunnis think an UNSCR rollover is better. They don't understand it won't be the same and the new administration may not give all that this one has. By the way, the SOFA can be renewed, but we're not talking about that. On Sunnis, I mean the IIP . . .

Maj Gen Kelley: Many Sunni sheiks favored the SOFA. O4: Problem with the IIP is the IIP VP's veto power.

The mantra for the SOFA is that things will be done "by, with & through" Iraqi partners. For us, that means that the intent is to do things at the lowest appropriate level. It will include sea and air.

O4: We need this coordinated with CENTCOM.

On ROE, this will replace 1003V RoE with its modifications. It is be one clean document. We can still engage declared hostile forces, plus those engaged in hostilities.

Detainee Handling.

BG Quantock briefed the planned disposition. We expect to hit the 1st red in July. The probability of convicting really bad guys is very low.

Maj Gen Kelley: Sir, I want to say we've had excellent support from TF 1.4a. What we're seeing more of now is warrants at the point of release. I think that is a good thing. We are getting into the red now. Nine and ten months ago I thought this was catastrophically awful, but instead things are so different. I was wrong in my expectations.

Provincial Elections and the Transfer of Power

DP: 2009 is going to be the year of elections, beginning with provincial elections on 31 January. There are seven different elections planned. Our concern is 1) grow capacity, and 2) ensure free and fair elections. We want them to be credible and to be accepted.

43:00. IHEC's responsibilities and how it is pursuing those.

46:00. We are the neutral observer. We provide presence.

O4: This is different from 2005. We will again provide security, but we will also report irregularities. They will investigate acts based on our reporting. They want us a bit more visible to provide a sense of security to those who fear intimidation. This is important. I hope Iraqi security forces will help.

RF: In 2005, we took many complaints to the IHEC, and they did nothing, saying that they're not investigators. The question is will police investigate, and what then?

49:00. Oates: Who is in charge of security? O4: We've addressed the Mol/MoD confusion. DP: the Mol is the security representative for the elections.

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The ballots will not have names, just numbers for each candidate, so voters will have to know the number of the candidate for whom they want to vote.

RF: IHEC is not a strong organization.

57:00. RC: As DP noted, it is not in our mission statement to try to pick winners and losers, but it is in our interest that new entities [get their chance?]. We must manage expectations. If they don't win, they need to know that does not mean return to violence. So we must 1) manage expectations, and 2) improve their capacity to compete. For a long time, I thought our appropriate role was more behind the scenes. In fact, visible presence is important to public confidence and keeping them honest. We are seeking international observers. It will require special effort.

1:02:10. ML: We are working across the force to put out a weekly trends update.

Kelley: Sir, like you, I once thought we'd not leave the bases on election day. It has since come to my attention that we're the only ones they trust. The day after is critical, and they'll look to me to say it was free, fair, and what it means. Observers won't have their trust. Too many observers would require too much protection from us, which then makes it look like we're running the elections.

RC: Battle space owners could tell us how many observers where could help.

The PRT Transition Path

Phyllis Powers: We are building capacity, not buildings. Transitions mean there could be a footprint reduction. The Najaf model—in a FOB, within a FOB—works. If there is a policy change, we were told in June to put together a close-out plan. We felt we needed sustainability.

1:12:00 Freedom of movement is critical. Helicopter diplomacy is not good enough. Transition through the maturity model. We are focused on building sustainable Iraqi capacity.

1:14:00. O4: Looking over the SOFA for three years, I see PRTs being here through 2011. This is supporting versus supported. Right now, I think the PRTs are supporting the BCTs, but that will reverse over time. Think through it. In Ramadi and elsewhere, they're supporting PRTs. I need ya'll to think through this as we move forward, as we move from a security to a governance-led operation.

1:18:00. RC: Maintain capability to help Iraqis build capacity. That doesn't mean another civilian surge. It will be tough to hang on to what we've got. My challenge is to make the case to the new administration on why this is important. PRTs are important for the three-year SOFA. PP: Other challenge is the Afghan surge, which is requesting 200 civilians for next year.

1:20:00. Oats. We may need to change the game, rather than keep playing football with a smaller team. MND9SE) In Reconstruction, with C9/CMOC, NGOs, we're adapting. Also, the foreign investment piece is important.

O4: The NGO piece is important.

RC: On Team Borlag [agricultural development], it is important. I don't know how long we have them. Must think how we keep that capacity. They've made progress, but if they go away, we lose the advantage gained.

Hertling: Hundreds of ag professionals want to join Team Borlog in the states.

O4: I talked to the chancellor of Texas A & M, and they do have hundreds ready and wanting to help.

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Closing

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GS: Yes, sir.

O4: Great inputs today. Very valuable. As I said, two pieces, the JCP, also the MNFI portion coming out. We'll get that out. We owe, most pressing thing, is SOFA implementation. We'll start working that harder.

RC: Thanks to all. I've benefitted from the changed format. To have the opportunity to get your input in a way we haven't done before is very valuable.

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