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UNITED STATES ARMY
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

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INTERVIEW OF
MAJ. GENERAL BENJAMIN R. MIXON
COMMANDING GENERAL MND-N

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18 JUNE 2007

HEADQUARTERS MULTINATIONAL DIVISION - NORTH
NEAR TIKRIT

(This transcript was produced from
tapes provided by the Center of Military
History.)

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(b)(6): This is (b)(6)
Historian at the U.S. Army Center of Military
History. I am about to interview Maj.
General Benjamin R. Mixon on 18 June 2007.
General Mixon is Commanding General of
Multinational Division - North and the 25th
Division. It is at Camp Speicher near
Tikrit, Iraq.

Sir, your Division initially
operated under V Corps, MNC-I, Lieutenant
General Chiarelli (Phonetic), and MNF-I's
General Casey's command guidance, roughly
described as the bridging or transition
strategy.

In December of '06, III Corps and
Lt. General Odierno's change of authority or
transfer of authority, and in February
General Petraeus came over and took over
Multinational Force Iraq.

Can you please describe from your
perspective as the Multinational Division -

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1 North Commanding General the general
2 differences or any general differences in
3 operational philosophies, differences in
4 approach to COIN and any guidance
5 differential that you saw?

6 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well,
7 obviously, the change when General Petraeus
8 came in was principally focused on securing
9 the population in Baghdad. But MND-North is
10 different than the fight in Baghdad, not only
11 from the perspective of the size of the
12 battle space but the diversity of the various
13 provinces that I am responsible for.

14 Diyala, Saladin, Ninevah, Kirkuk
15 and the three northern KRG provinces are all
16 very different. They are ethnically mixed.
17 A large majority of my provinces are
18 dominated by the Sunni population, although
19 there are a significant number of Kurds in
20 the northern areas. But even amongst that,
21 they could be Arab Sunni or Shia, or they
22 could be Kurd Sunni or Shia or they could be

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1 Turkmen Sunni or Shia, not to mention some of
2 the other smaller groups.

3 So as we saw that guidance come
4 in, the principal difference that it drove
5 for MND-North was it underwrote a tactic that
6 we had already started, which was to
7 establish combat outposts in selected areas
8 that we felt were decisive for us to control.

9 I do not have the force or the
10 capability to secure the population in MND-
11 North without enhancing the Iraqi security
12 forces, that being the army and the police.

13 So in that context, the strategy
14 for me remained the same. I still place a
15 lot of energy and a lot of emphasis on
16 continuing to improve the Iraqi Army and the
17 Iraqi police. It is the only way that we can
18 ultimately achieve our goals here in Iraq,
19 which is to have the Iraqi security forces to
20 be capable of securing their population,
21 different than Baghdad because of the numbers
22 of brigades and the importance of the

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1 capital.

2 So not a dramatic change in the
3 strategy from our perspective, but some
4 incremental changes that underwrote what we
5 had already started in the December-January
6 time frame, which was to establish combat
7 outposts.

8 So as we look at that, we are
9 continuing on with that strategy today, but I
10 would say that we are not moving as quickly
11 as we had discussed under General Casey's
12 command and under General Corelli's command
13 of turning responsibility over to the Iraqis
14 in MND-North.

15 (b)(6): Or transitioning to
16 Iraqi control?

17 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: That's
18 correct. As you know, three of the four
19 Iraqi divisions that are in my battle space.

20 The two divisions in Ninevah Province,
21 namely 2nd and 3rd Division, Iraqi Army, and
22 the 4th Division which covers Kirkuk and

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1 Saladin Province are under Iraqi Ground Force
2 Command, IGFC.

3 The 5th Iraqi Division, which is
4 in Diyala, we have had to delay that division
5 because of some manning and training issues
6 and the security in Diyala.

7 Having said that, I really had
8 envisioned the potential for transitioning
9 Ninevah Province the latter part of this
10 year, meaning '07, over to Iraqi command and
11 control, what we call provincial Iraqi
12 control, and ultimately changing our
13 footprint in there to more of a training and
14 assistance mode.

15 [REDACTED] (b)(6) : Just in Ninevah?

16 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Just in
17 Ninevah, as a start. We are still looking at
18 that. I still think there is potential for
19 that in early '08, but we will have to assess
20 the security situation for that.

21 [REDACTED] b 6 : All right, sir.

22 Would you say there is any change

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1 of emphasis on the transition? You mentioned
2 that Casey and Chiarelli wanted to move it
3 along, and General Odierno and General
4 Petraeus will do it condition based. Is that
5 correct?

6 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: It is
7 condition based, but I think it is important
8 for the historic record and as historians
9 take a look at this. It is obvious now to me
10 as a ground force commander that the initial
11 strategy was flawed.

12 We began the strategy with an
13 effort to immediately and as quickly as
14 possible build the Iraqi Army and the police
15 force without adequate coalition forces'
16 presence to establish initial security. That
17 is obvious, and that is the reason that we
18 have had to take a step back, if you will,
19 well over three years into this campaign to
20 establish security in Baghdad specifically
21 and in other elements.

22 As you know, I have been given

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1 additional forces in Diyala Province to
2 establish security in that very important
3 province there. So that needs to be
4 analyzed. That needs to be studied for
5 future reference.

6 (b)(6) I am going to jump
7 around a little bit. Do you think you have
8 sufficient force to accomplish the goal or
9 the key task of establishing security for the
10 Iraqi population in MND-North?

11 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: I'll have to
12 break that out by province. I believe I have
13 a sufficient force in Ninevah, Kirkuk and
14 Saladin Province to continue the primary
15 focus of working with the Iraqi security
16 forces and improving the Iraqi security
17 forces and police, enough coalition forces to
18 maintain what I call tactical parity.

19 That is if we can continue along those
20 lines to improve the governance, which is a
21 very important mission that we partner with
22 our provisional reconstruction teams, if we

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1 can continue to do CERP (Phonetic) projects,
2 improving the area, while we continue to work
3 with the Iraqi security forces and make them
4 better.

5 I do not have enough force to
6 simply secure the population. I have to use
7 all means available, which includes at the
8 present time trying to get the tribes to work
9 with us more closer than they have in the
10 past.

11 Now let's go to Diyala Province.

12 In Diyala Province at the present time, I
13 have enough force to improve the security
14 situation in Baqubah. We have begun those
15 operations, and Op tempo will pick up there
16 over the next 30 days, but I do not have
17 enough force at the present time to complete
18 that security mission, which includes the
19 Diyala River Valley and other key areas
20 within Diyala, and I will address that with
21 General Odierno once we finish the Baqubah
22 operation.

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1 (b)(6) Is there any thought
2 to -- in Diyala and Baqubah in particular --
3 to try to replicate the JSSes, the Joint
4 Security Stations and the COPs that were
5 established in Baghdad?

6 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: We have done
7 that. We started doing that months ago. We
8 did not have the numbers of forces to
9 establish the numbers, but we have three
10 combat outposts currently established in
11 eastern Baqubah.

12 We intend to do the same thing in
13 western Baqubah, and the Iraqi security
14 forces, the 5th Division and the police --
15 that is the principal element that I am
16 working with now to ensure that they can
17 accomplish that with small numbers of
18 coalition forces co-located with them, so
19 that they can secure Baqubah.

20 If I can accomplish that task,
21 then I will have enough coalition forces to
22 address the Diyala River Valley and the other

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1 parts. If I have to tie down a large number
2 of coalition forces for the security of the
3 provincial capital, that being Baqubah, then
4 I am not going to have enough force to get
5 out into the countryside, if you will, and
6 the other key areas of Khalis (Phonetic),
7 Khan Bani Sa'ad (Phonetic) to address the
8 enemy that we know is located in that area.

9 So we will be able to tell
10 probably about two to three weeks from now
11 whether or not the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi
12 police will be capable of manning combat
13 outposts, JSses as you call them, to free up
14 coalition forces to do those more mobile
15 strike operations.

16 b 6 All right. I am going
17 to take you back a little bit to the
18 beginning of your rotation here in Iraq, and
19 I believe that was in September.

20 I would like you to try to
21 characterize, if you could remember back in
22 September -- I know it's almost 10 months now

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1 -- when you initially took over. How would
2 you characterize the situation through that
3 fall from September through Odierno's change
4 of authority, transfer of authority?

5 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: I would
6 characterize it as a security situation in
7 most of the provinces was pretty good. Our
8 primary threat was the IED fight, and we came
9 in here with a specific tactic and strategy
10 as to how we were going to address the IEDs
11 that we faced in Multinational Division-
12 North.

13 In fact, going back to Diyala
14 Province, Diyala Province was being held up
15 as a province that was moving forward. The
16 5th Iraqi Division had been given Iraqi Army
17 in the lead. The police were said to be on a
18 good route forward, and although we had enemy
19 contact in the area, a fear that Diyala was
20 on the mark, some significant decisions were
21 made in the Iraqi government that placed a
22 Shia division commander over the Iraqi Army,

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1 placed a Shia police chief in place.

2 Diyala being mostly Sunni but a
3 Sunni-Shia mix, this caused some initial
4 problems with the population; and as we
5 discovered later, it appears that those two
6 Shia individuals were placed in there to
7 pursue a Shia sectarian agenda in Diyala.

8 That inflamed the Sunnis. It
9 enabled the insurgency to gain a stronger
10 route in Diyala Province and caused us
11 significant issues in dealing with the Iraqi
12 security forces.

13 We eventually had the police chief
14 removed. We eventually now have had the
15 Division Commander removed, but the damage
16 has been done. That, coupled with the
17 improved situation in Al Anbar and the step-
18 up of operations in Baqubah has caused the Al
19 Qaeda insurgency to migrate into Diyala
20 Province.

21 So at the present time we have a
22 significant threat in the province now that

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1 we are going to have to address.

2 (b)(6) As a matter of fact,
3 that leads into my next question. You may
4 have already answered it.

5 Fardh al Qanoon (Phonetic), the
6 operations to secure Baghdad or the Baghdad
7 population, beginning in mid-February,
8 coupled with the situation, improving
9 situation, in Anbar, looks like it drove the
10 insurgents, AQI, Al Qaeda in Iraq, into
11 Diyala Province.

12 Was there any attempt to try to
13 interdict those movements lines through the
14 Diyala River Valley?

15 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Yes, we did
16 some significant operations and began to
17 establish combat outposts in there back in
18 January. I moved two additional rifle
19 companies down to the area, because I needed
20 more infantry in that area, and we did
21 operations in the Diyala River Valley. But
22 an effort to try to interdict in the COIN

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1 environment is very difficult.

2 Even though there are a series of
3 checkpoints throughout the area, and even
4 though we were continuing to do operations,
5 it was obvious that the enemy was able to
6 migrate into Diyala additional fighters.

7 I believe it was always a support
8 zone for operations in Baghdad; and when you
9 take a look at the specific terrain, you have
10 to be careful not to focus on the province.
11 When you look at Baghdad and then you come
12 north of Baghdad, if you draw a very large
13 circle on the map and you look at southern
14 Saladin Province all the way up to Samarra
15 and you draw that circle over into Diyala,
16 including Muqdadadiyah (Phonetic), and run it
17 all the way around through Baqubah, you will
18 see very plainly that the enemy wants to
19 control that battle space.

20 It is farmland. It is very easy
21 to hide in. It has a predominantly Sunni
22 population, and it gives the enemy access to

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1 Baghdad, to Al Anbar, to Kirkuk, and to
2 Mosul.

3 So it is obvious what is going on
4 with the enemy: (a) he has been there
5 already, but he has reinforced that area to
6 hold that, now that he has seen Al Anbar is
7 not going his way, and neither is Baghdad
8 because of the surge.

9 (b)(6) In conjunction with
10 the increase or the uptick in insurgent
11 activity in Diyala, I remember in March you
12 requested reinforcements from Corps, and
13 General Odierno sent you a battalion. I
14 believe it was the 520th Infantry Battalion,
15 Stryker, I think it was.

16 Was that sufficient? Did that
17 meet your request for reinforcements? Do you
18 think that was sufficient at the time?

19 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: It was not,
20 but it was not intended to meet the ultimate
21 request. I laid out the requirement to
22 General Odierno that I thought I would need

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1 at least two additional Stryker battalions
2 and an additional brigade.

3 He had to time that with
4 operations in Baghdad and the arrival of the
5 last brigade into Baghdad. So rightly so, he
6 gave me an initial force that could begin
7 shaping operations in Baqubah -- that was the
8 5-20th Stryker, the regulars -- and with a
9 plan to ultimately give me 4-2 (-) Stryker to
10 control the belts that lead out of Baghdad on
11 both sides of the Diyala and the Euphrates
12 River.

13 (b)(6) That's an entire
14 Stryker brigade.

15 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: It is
16 actually minus two of its battalions. So it
17 is actually lighter than a Stryker brigade.

18 That again enabled us to do
19 shaping operations, and then was able to
20 release brigade headquarters of 3-2 Stryker,
21 the parent organization of 5-20 Regulars, and
22 also an additional Stryker battalion from

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1 them to complete the operations in Baqubah.

2 So it is a sequencing of forces,
3 and I think that this sequencing is going to
4 benefit us in the control of the Baghdad
5 belt, if you will, at Southern Saladin and
6 Southern Diyala, and also will enable us to
7 secure Baqubah.

8 It's the follow-on operations that
9 we are going to have to work out for
10 additional forces, and we are taking a look
11 at that now.

12 (b)(6) Now I believe in May
13 you also requested reinforcements in MND-
14 North, but I only read that through the
15 papers, and there was some publicity, not a
16 lot, but there was some publicity surrounding
17 that.

18 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Right.

19 (b)(6) Was that a -- What was
20 the response from Corps?

21 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well, the
22 response was -- I presented them with a plan.

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1 General Odierno was receptive to that. He
2 is familiar with this area. He was up in
3 this area when he was in Division command.
4 But once again, it was a matter of -- and I
5 fully understood this -- the priority had to
6 go to Baghdad, that we had to look at the
7 sequencing of forces.

8 So as we looked at that
9 sequencing, we were able to bring the forces
10 in on the schedule that I just described, and
11 it should work out to at least meet our
12 primary objective: Control the belt; secure
13 Baqubah. Then we will have to take it from
14 there.

15 (b)(6) All right. I must
16 note that -- just for the record, that I
17 think you are the only commander that has, at
18 least in a public sense, requested additional
19 military forces, that I could see, over the
20 course of the war in Iraq.

21 Do you think the command has been
22 -- your higher Headquarters, the Corps and

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1 the Force and CENTCOM -- have been receptive
2 to those reinforcements?

3 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Yeah, I have
4 not received any negative feedback from my
5 commanders, but I should point out, I would
6 never have done that in a public way, had I
7 not first briefed my commander and made that
8 request to him, and I would not have really
9 made it public unless I was asked the
10 question for operational reasons. But I was
11 asked the question.

12 I believe that as military
13 commanders we should give an honest answer to
14 the American public and, therefore, I gave
15 the answer, ensuring I didn't give any timing
16 or anything else. But, yes.

17 (b)(6) Yes, sir. I believe
18 you now have five brigade combat teams, soon
19 to be six, I think. Is that correct?

20 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: That's right.

21 (b)(6) Do you think that this
22 is -- and you've sort of answered this, but I

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1 would like to just ask it for the record.

2 Do you think that this is
3 sufficient force to accomplish the goals you
4 laid out in 0701 in your operations order in
5 conjunction with the Corps operations order
6 0701?

7 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: I'm going to
8 make a pretty blunt statement here to state
9 that we cannot win this thing militarily.
10 General Petraeus has stated that, and even in
11 the provinces where I believe, as I stated,
12 I've got tactical parity, that we will not
13 win this thing through military means alone;
14 and we all know that.

15 (b)(6) Right.

16 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: We have got
17 to get the Iraqi security forces up to state
18 to where they can secure the population and
19 we can continue to do operations against the
20 cells, the leaders and so forth.

21 We have to get the government,
22 both at the provincial level and the central

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1 government, functioning effectively. We have
2 to get the support of the tribes. It's
3 critical at this point, because at the end of
4 the day, counter-insurgency operations is all
5 about support from the people either for the
6 coalition forces and their own Iraqi security
7 forces or the population is going to support
8 the insurgency. That's no secret.

9 That's the way insurgencies work.

10 That is how they live and breathe, by moving
11 them onto the population.

12 So at this point, we are pursuing
13 all of those lines of effort. We are
14 reengaging the tribes. We began engaging the
15 tribes very heavily when I first arrived
16 here, but their culture, from what I have
17 observed, is: Number one, they will sit the
18 fence and see who is going to win, I think.

19 They look for the power base, and naturally,
20 there is still a great divide between the
21 Sunni and the Shia in this country as to who
22 is ultimately going to rule over the country.

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1 We can't deny that. It's there.
2 So we have to continue to work that effort,
3 having the central government, which is Shia
4 dominated at the present time, to have
5 political reconciliation with the Sunnis and
6 the Kurds, so that we can move this thing
7 forward. We will not win this with just
8 military means.

9 **(b)(6)** How would you assess -
10 - I'm going to ask you probably a tough
11 question, but working under the direction of
12 this Corps staff as compared to their
13 predecessor, and are you getting timely
14 support from the Corps staff?

15 I'm not talking about General
16 Odierno, but I'm talking about the Corps
17 staff, and actually, General Anderson, the
18 Chief of Staff, asked me to ask the Division
19 Commanders that question.

20 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well, we've
21 had an interesting experience, getting a
22 chance to work for two Corps staffs. First

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1 of all, as you know, we did our train-up
2 exercise with the III Corps staff. That was
3 a great experience for us and great learning
4 experience.

5 So we came in here working for V
6 Corps and then transitioned to III Corps, of
7 course. The broad answer to the question is,
8 yes, we are getting the support that we need.

9 The historical analysis and the
10 operational analysis that needs to be made
11 is: What is the Corps' role in a counter-
12 insurgency fight, and how can they best
13 support the divisions?

14 General Odierno was making some
15 adjustments to his staff organization as they
16 look at effects, both in the information
17 world and in the counter-IED fight and, more
18 importantly, I think, as we look, what is the
19 relationship when you have a Corps staff and
20 you have a staff that has been formed known
21 as MNF-I, which is watching and playing in
22 the strategic level, the operational level,

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1 but also wants to dabble in the tactical
2 level.

3 From my perspective, that creates
4 a little bit of friction, nothing that cannot
5 be overcome, but we get good response from
6 the Corps. I try to make sure that we are
7 looking well in advance, at least 30 if not
8 90 days in advance, for our operations that
9 we are going to do, and to make sure that we
10 pass those items to the Corps as quickly as
11 possible.

12 b 6 Do you think that
13 you've been -- You said you were working with
14 the provincial leaders, the tribal leaders,
15 since you got here, and you are, obviously,
16 working with the Iraqi Army and the Iraqi
17 police or the Iraqi security forces in
18 general.

19 Is there any sense that, as the
20 United States conducts these operations,
21 these combat operations to secure the
22 population, in some areas anyway, that the

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1 Iraqi security forces look at that and say,
2 well, the Americans are going to do it, why
3 don't we just sort of stand back and let them
4 do it? Is there any sense of that?

5 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: That can
6 happen, if the tactical units allow it to
7 happen, and the guidance that I gave my
8 forces when we came in here really falls into
9 two categories.

10 First, in reference to the
11 population, always treat the population with
12 dignity and respect. I spoke to my leaders
13 about that. I made video tape messages that
14 I required all the soldiers to view
15 concerning that, and then I coupled that with
16 an emphasis to them that our mission was to
17 ensure that the Iraqi security forces
18 ultimately could secure themselves.

19 So I gave guidance to my
20 commanders that, as you are planning combat
21 operations, ask yourself the question: How
22 can I make Iraqi security forces better by

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1 integrating them into these combat
2 operations?

3 Your ultimate aim has got to be to
4 get the Iraqi security forces to be in the
5 lead and that we would be in a supporting
6 mode.

7 Obviously, we have some
8 capabilities they do not have, attack
9 aircraft, for example. We can move them
10 around with rotor wing aircraft when
11 necessary, but they should be the ones that
12 are leading into the house, if you will, into
13 the village.

14 They should be the ones that are
15 talking to the Muktar of the various
16 villages, and we should be present with them
17 to provide them support.

18 So that's the guidance that I gave
19 my forces, because I do know, having worked
20 with many armies around the world, that
21 Americans want to go in; we want to solve the
22 problem, and we want to be the ones that lead

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1 the way, and there will be a natural tendency
2 for the forces, the Iraqi forces or any other
3 force, to let the Americans do that, and
4 that's not going to get us where we need to
5 go.

6 (b)(6) All right. When does
7 your division have the transfer of authority?
8 You were extended, I believe, for three
9 months.

10 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Right.

11 (b)(6) When is the --

12 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: We currently
13 are looking at a late October. I think the
14 date we are focusing on is somewhere between
15 the 15th and 27th of October. We will be
16 transferring over to the 1st Armored Division
17 at that time.

18 Prior to that, we will transition
19 out all but three of our brigades, the
20 brigade from the 82nd, the brigade from -- my
21 combat aviation brigade from the 25th and my
22 3rd brigade 25th, along with other units such

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1 as my engineers and my fires brigade will all
2 transition out between now and then.

3 So the 1st Armored Division will
4 inherit at least three brigades that have
5 already been on the ground several months,
6 and then two new maneuver brigades and a new
7 aviation brigade when they take over in
8 October.

9 (b)(6) Can you tell me, you
10 know, how far along do you think you will be
11 in securing the population, in particular in
12 Diyala? I'm asking you to look down the
13 road a little bit on this and look into the
14 crystal ball, if you will, and I know current
15 operations are just beginning to kick off.

16 You can't foresee the outcome.
17 But do you care to speculate on the condition
18 of the province as opposed to when you first
19 arrived?

20 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: I am
21 convinced that we will have Baqubah secure.
22 I believe we will have most of the Diyala

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1 River Valley secure, and that the security
2 situation in Diyala -- My objective for the
3 security situation in Diyala is to have it
4 such that the government in Diyala can begin
5 to function and provide services to the
6 people.

7 That will then allow us to turn a
8 situation there, which is at the present time
9 it appears that a good majority of the
10 population, that being the Sunni population,
11 is either overtly supporting the insurgency
12 or they are being coerced into supporting it.

13 So we have to turn that. We have
14 to turn that piece there, and then that is
15 when they will make progress. So I think
16 that we will secure Baqubah.

17 We will have portions of the
18 Diyala River Valley secure, and then I will
19 be able to hand that off to the 1st Armored
20 Division.

21 (b)(6) The Diyala Operation
22 Center -- do you think that that is going to

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1 be a step in the right direction, to
2 replicate the Baghdad Operation Center, to
3 have kind of a unity of command of all Iraqi
4 security forces?

5 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: It will be
6 good for coordination, and what it will
7 enable us to do, a little different than the
8 Baghdad Operation Center, is to put a focus
9 on those governmental services that I just
10 mentioned; because we need the DGs, or the
11 Deputy Governors, that are responsible for
12 the electricity, responsible for food,
13 responsible for all the other things that the
14 government has to provide, to be embedded in
15 that Diyala Operations Center.

16 I really would like to see it
17 function not really as a Diyala Operations
18 Center, but more like a JIATIF (Phonetic), a
19 Joint Interagency Operations Center, where
20 you have governmental as well as security
21 forces interacting in the same place,
22 coordinating and working services and

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1 security operations.

2 So we are going to try to move it
3 in that direction, with the governor as well
4 as the IRAQI Director of the Operations
5 Center being joined at the hip so that we get
6 good governmental services and we get good
7 security operations.

8 (b)(6) Is there an appointed
9 Iraqi commander? Has that been resolved?

10 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: That's been
11 resolved. He has been down there about four
12 or five days now. He is getting his feet on
13 the ground, and I think that that ultimately
14 will be a good thing.

15 We are just now getting the
16 physical structure of the Operations Center
17 going --

18 (b)(6) Right.

19 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: -- with the
20 arrival of contractors. So still going to be
21 another, I'd say, two to three weeks before
22 it is really fully up and running, but that's

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1 okay, because we have the necessary folks on
2 the ground.

3 I have moved one of my tactical
4 command posts there and placed Brigadier
5 General Bedenerik (Phonetic), who is my Chief
6 for Operations, Deputy Commander for
7 Operations, and that will be his principal
8 place that he will be focused on, along with
9 the TAC that we have down there.

10 So we are moving in the right
11 direction.

12 [REDACTED] (b)(6) So your Assistant
13 Division Commander is down there with the
14 Diyala Operations Center?

15 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: He is located
16 at Warrior, which is really 10 minutes away
17 from the Diyala Operations Center, and I have
18 three or four very strong LNOs (Phonetic)
19 down there at the Operations Center from the
20 25th.

21 [REDACTED] (b)(6) Let me ask you another
22 question. You've touched on this already,

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1 but do you think that in the MND-North area
2 the variety of different commands that
3 interface in the provinces that you have
4 control over, that you have command over in
5 the U.S. forces, MNSTIKI(Phonetic), GRD,
6 State Department, Multinational Force
7 elements, and other agencies -- Do you think
8 they are all focused on the same end state,
9 and are they working with the unity of effort
10 necessary to succeed? MAJ. GENERAL
11 MIXON: Yeah, without a doubt. If you look
12 at a wiring diagram, you may think that it is
13 not. And of course, all of that begins with
14 the commanders' attitude and the guidance we
15 came in here with.

16 I made it very clear to my
17 maneuver brigade commanders, first and
18 foremost, that they would be joined at the
19 hip with the provisional reconstruction
20 teams, that their efforts were one of our
21 lines of effort, that being governance.

22 Security and governance and

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1 economic development were our primary lines
2 of effort when we first got in here. So we
3 wanted to make sure that we were all focused
4 on the same thing.

5 The same holds true with the Iraqi
6 security forces, that the training teams that
7 were there with those security forces -- we
8 would work directly with them.

9 I did go to General Corelli and
10 General Odierno and ask for tactical control
11 of those forces. I was given those to clean
12 up what could have been a problem with chain
13 of command and authority. Did not have a
14 problem. We changed it to take on anyway,
15 and now we are all on the same sheet of
16 music.

17 When I do my commanders' calls,
18 the MIT Chiefs for each division as well as
19 my brigade commanders are on the 'Net giving
20 me an update on what's going on inside of
21 there.

22 I have an IGFC cell that I have

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1 formed inside of my division headquarters,
2 which focuses on nothing but Iraqi security
3 forces and what we can do to assist them.

4 The fact of the matter is, though,
5 at this point in the evolution of Iraqi
6 security forces the Ministry of Defense and
7 the Ministry of Interior for the Iraqi
8 government has got to step up and take more
9 responsibility for the logistic support as
10 well as the command and control of their
11 forces.

12 That's my biggest concern as we
13 sit here today, that they will step forward
14 and bring those Iraqi security forces under
15 their wing, eliminate the bureaucracies that
16 are inside of their organizations right now,
17 and quite frankly, the corruption that we
18 know exists in those organizations, and
19 effectively lead the security forces from a
20 ministerial perspective.

21 We have to work on that, and we
22 are working very closely with MNF-I and the

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1 U.S. Embassy in all of those areas.

2 (b)(6) Let me talk a little
3 bit about the Iraqi security forces, in
4 particular, the police, the Iraqi police.

5 How would you characterize the
6 Iraqi police structure and effectiveness in
7 your area of responsibility?

8 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well, let me
9 start by the linkage between the provincial
10 directors of police and the MOI. The
11 relationship between those two needs to be
12 strengthened.

13 Although budgets are passed down
14 to the provincial director of police, the MOI
15 tries to centralize too many of the
16 activities inside the provinces. Even the
17 hiring of an individual policeman has to go
18 down to Baghdad. To me, that's unacceptable.

19 Other things are centralized, and
20 all have to be approved at Baghdad. This
21 stifles initiative, and it also undermines
22 the authority of the provincial director of

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1 police. That's kind of in a large sense.

2 The individual Iraqi policeman,
3 though, has been used to being what we call a
4 station policeman, not a cop on the beat, and
5 we are trying to change that. They will wait
6 in their station for something to happen and
7 then go out and investigate.

8 We are encouraging them and
9 working with them to be present in their
10 neighborhoods on patrol, walking the beat,
11 talking to people, being visible. And that
12 is very difficult culturally to get them to
13 do.

14 We are making progress. We have a
15 very strong provincial director of police in
16 Mosul and Kirkuk. They are working on that
17 perspective. The PDOP that is here in
18 Saladin is working that issue.

19 They are pretty good at going out
20 and working against the enemy, but inside
21 their towns and villages, smaller police
22 stations, if you will, we have not been able

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1 to break them free of their police stations,
2 getting them working in the neighborhoods.
3 But we will continue to work that.

4 We have enhanced our police
5 transition teams, the numbers of those that
6 we have in MND-North, per our request to CPAT
7 and MNSTKI (Phonetic), and I think we will
8 see some progress in the police over this
9 year.

10 [b 6] How about -- How would
11 you -- Do you have any National Police
12 working in your area?

13 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: We recently -
14 - We had some National Police in Samarra.
15 They were not very effective, but now we have
16 -- The 6th National Police Brigade is moving
17 into Samarra as a result of the bombing of
18 the minarets last week.

19 [b(6)] Right.

20 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: So the plan
21 is for them to remain in Samarra during the
22 reconstruction of the Golden Mosque.

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1 (b)(6) I want to go back a
2 little bit to the bombing of the Golden
3 Mosque minarets incident on 13 June.

4 You just mentioned that the
5 National Police went there to help secure
6 that. What do you see -- Do you see any --
7 How would you characterize the Iraqi
8 population reaction, in particular the Shia
9 reaction to that bombing?

10 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: There's been
11 some backlash and, although it be small
12 compared to the last year's bombing against
13 some of the Sunni at Mosul. We have not seen
14 the level of violence that we saw during the
15 first bombing.

16 I attribute that to the fact that
17 the central government, particularly the
18 Prime Minister, moved immediately to Samarra.
19 He brought his Minister of Defense, Minister
20 of Interior with him. He met with the local
21 officials, who were already there.

22 The Governor of Saladin did an

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1 excellent job of moving down there to calm
2 the situation. They used Iraqi television to
3 get the word out as to what they were doing.

4 They made some immediate detentions of the
5 individuals that were responsible for
6 protecting this holy site, and then the Prime
7 Minister went on national TV and gave a
8 speech about -- a unification speech, if you
9 will, about all Iraqis being unified.

10 I think that very quick action by
11 the Iraqi government -- for the Iraqis to see
12 their government taking action has been
13 helpful in reducing the amount of violence.

14 [(b)(6)]: I want to switch to
15 the Iraqi Army now. We do have these
16 military transition teams or training teams
17 that are embedded with the Iraqis and that
18 report to you, as you indicated.

19 How would you assess the Iraqi
20 Army units that you have working for you or
21 that you have working in your area of
22 responsibility?

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1 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well, as I
2 mentioned, the three of the four divisions
3 are under Iraqi ground force command. The
4 2nd, 3rd and 4th Divisions are doing
5 independent operations. They have battle
6 space that they own and control in the area.

7 We are still doing combined
8 operations with them. The Military
9 Transition and Training Teams help us with
10 those combined operations, but we are seeing
11 some pretty good effects with these
12 divisions.

13 We are at a point in this period
14 to where the Iraqi divisions need to get
15 better mobility. Right now they are using
16 our Humvees. They need enhanced mobility so
17 they can cover their areas, and I think
18 ultimately the Iraqi Army will probably need
19 to grow by another two to three divisions to
20 be able to provide the type of security
21 necessary to secure the outlying areas from
22 the cities, and have the police, as we

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1 continue to grow the police -- and we are
2 expanding the police forces -- and then
3 control the inside of the city and do work
4 with the Iraqi Army.

5 So we are seeing some good
6 results, but right now they have, for lack of
7 a better word, in my estimation, have
8 plateaued out and need some additional
9 equipment. Their logistics is a weakness
10 with them still.

11 What I would like to do, and as I
12 mentioned earlier, in the latter part of this
13 year in Ninevah Province I would like to do
14 transition and do a training and assistance
15 role for the U.S. forces that are up there
16 and establish a program to where we would
17 take Iraqi companies and rotate them through
18 a seven to ten-day training program COIN
19 focused, if you will, to work on collective
20 skills; because that is what we haven't been
21 able to get at, and that is what is holding
22 them back.

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1 Now they do operations, and they
2 are getting training by way of real
3 operation, but we need to do operational
4 training for them that will enable them to
5 become better and grow their leaders.

6 We have done a program like this
7 in the 2nd of the 4th -- 2nd Brigade, 4th
8 Iraqi Division, in Kirkuk. It has been very
9 successful, and it has made that Brigade a
10 very good tactical brigade. So that's what
11 we need to transition to, to make them
12 better, to take them to the next level, if
13 you will.

14 (b)(6) Have you seen what you
15 might characterize as steady progress since
16 you have been here in the Iraqi Army?

17 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: I would
18 classify it as steady progress, yes.

19 (b)(6) I want to give you a
20 chance --

21 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: With the
22 exception of 5th Division, I should say.

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1 Fifth Division has been a challenge, but we
2 are going to have to -- primarily because of
3 the intense security situation there, but
4 also because of the division leadership that
5 I mentioned earlier.

6 (b)(6) What about the
7 soldiers?

8 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Soldiers are
9 -- You know, they are soldiers. They still -
10 - They do not have a national identification,
11 is part of the problem. I have not seen any
12 particular sectarian issues except on a few
13 isolated incidences that we have dealt with,
14 but the soldiers that are in the Iraqi Army -
15 - they want to stay and secure their area
16 that they were recruited in and where they
17 are from. That has caused us some challenges
18 as we tried to move units down to Baghdad.

19 We have had literally battalions
20 that have just about disintegrated, soldiers
21 going AWOL and so forth, because of moving to
22 Baghdad for the security situation.

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1 So the nature of the Army will
2 have to change over time to give them more of
3 a national identity rather than a tribal or
4 ethnic identity, and that's just going to
5 take some time.

6 (b)(6) How about the junior
7 leadership in the Iraqi Army?

8 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: It's very
9 weak. We have not developed a -- and it's
10 understandable. You can't develop a
11 noncommissioned officer corps in a couple of
12 years. That's an area that we focus on in
13 every one of our divisions.

14 Our Command Sergeant Majors have
15 run warrior leader training, if you will, to
16 train junior noncommissioned officers. So
17 it's going to take some time to build that
18 up, but that's an area that is going to have
19 to be worked, and that's the kind of thing
20 that we are going to have to put some energy
21 into as a coalition that we can do to get the
22 Iraqi security forces, particularly the Army,

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1 to the next level.

2 b 6 Sir, it may seem like
3 I have highlighted some problem areas in your
4 area of responsibility, talking a lot about
5 Diyala, and I recognize that that is where
6 your focused, especially right now on the
7 18th of June. But I wanted to give you an
8 opportunity to talk about some real progress
9 or successes that you have seen since you've
10 been here, since September of 2006.

11 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Well, as I
12 said, we have seen improvement in the 2nd,
13 the 3rd and the 4th Iraqi Divisions. We have
14 seen improvement in the police, particularly
15 those that are up in Mosul, in Kirkuk, and
16 those in Saladin. But this is a tough fight,
17 and the enemy still has a great deal of
18 strength, still has the capability to put out
19 a significant number of IEDs, improved
20 explosive devices.

21 I attribute that to the fact that,
22 unfortunately, a large majority of the Sunni

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1 population still supports the insurgency.
2 Even at this point after the number of years
3 that we have been here, the billions of
4 dollars that have been spent in the so called
5 winning the hearts and minds effort and all
6 the other things that we have done, we have
7 not been able to turn enough of the
8 population to cause the insurgency to lose
9 its strength, which is within the people.

10 We are on the cusp of that now in
11 many areas as we work with the tribes, and
12 the tribes reject the Al Qaeda mentality,
13 which is very brutal, is very much into the
14 Shirrah (Phonetic) law, the brutality of
15 justice, if you will, and the other things
16 that they do.

17 Having said that, that does not
18 mean that they are going to support this
19 central government and the Shia led
20 government, and that is a concern of mine.

21 So ultimately, how do we come out
22 on the end to achieve the strategic goals

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1 that the United States has set for itself,
2 which is a government that is able to govern
3 and that the security situation in Iraq is
4 somewhat stable? That is still out to see
5 how we will ultimately achieve that
6 objective.

7 (b)(6) Sir, that concludes
8 the questions that I have. I always give the
9 interviewee an opportunity to add anything
10 that I may not have covered sufficiently or
11 simply didn't cover at all.

12 So this is your opportunity for
13 that, sir.

14 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Yes. Let me
15 just make a few short comments about the
16 modular brigades --

17 (b)(6) Right.

18 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: -- the
19 modular division structure, because I think
20 that may be important in the future.

21 The modular brigade organization
22 at its base is a good organization. It has a

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1 great deal of flexibility. Our brigade
2 combat teams have a great deal of combat
3 power, and it is the right organization for
4 the current times. However, they are one
5 battalion short, and they need another
6 battalion in each one of the organizations.

7 That was a deliberate decision
8 that was made in order to have more brigade
9 flags, but I think as we look at those
10 organizations on the ground here, it is
11 apparent that they need an additional
12 maneuver battalion to be more effective.

13 Having said that, when you look at
14 the counter-insurgency fight, we have had to
15 reorganize our heavy brigade combat teams
16 into really motorized infantry, if you will.

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18 When you do that, obviously, you
19 take away the core competency of those armor
20 battalions that are doing that and those
21 cavalry squadrons that are doing that to
22 function, and they do a great job and have

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1 done a great job adapting to the COIN
2 environment.

3 I should say artillery battalions
4 also that have been adapted to motorized
5 infantry. But you do not have enough
6 infantry, once you dismount from the
7 vehicles, to do the intensive amount of
8 search that you need to do in villages, in
9 rural areas that is necessary to really
10 prosecute the COIN fight when you have a
11 determined enemy that is hiding amongst the
12 population and in the countryside.

13 That has been part of our
14 challenge. We've got the world's greatest
15 soldiers, and they have done a superb job, no
16 matter what their MOS, in adapting to this
17 environment. But that organizational
18 structure is not, I should say, the best
19 organizational structure for this, but we
20 have adapted that, and they have done
21 extremely well in adapting to the COIN fight.

22 That's sort of a lead-in, I guess,

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1 to what I would say as kind of a closing
2 comment, is that particular structure -- and
3 I'm talking about the heavy brigade combat
4 teams and the way we have reorganized
5 ourselves for this particular COIN fight.

6 The rotation cycle that is set up
7 as we bog -- what we call bogging, coming in
8 and out of theater -- drives you almost into
9 placing brigade combat teams in certain
10 locations, which may not make the best
11 tactical sense, and I will give you a clear
12 example from the standpoint of MND-North.

13 We have had over the last two
14 rotations a heavy brigade combat team located
15 in Diyala Province, a province where they
16 clearly need more infantry, but because of
17 the rotation cycle, it is difficult to change
18 that process once it gets started.

19 (b)(6) Right. So you are
20 locked into putting that in.

21 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: And myself as
22 a Division Commander has no control over

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1 that. I am -- The bog cycle is set up at
2 Department of the Army. It is based on
3 availability. It is based on equipment. And
4 that is set up.

5 The theater has to be paying
6 attention to that and make those changes.
7 Fortunately, as far as Diyala is concerned, I
8 have brought that to the attention of General
9 Odierno, and they are working to change that,
10 to put a Stryker Battalion in there which has
11 had a lot of infantry, that will be the
12 better force to put in there.

13 Now I have mitigated that by
14 putting additional infantry rifle companies
15 down there, but it is very, very difficult
16 once you get set in place, and particularly
17 once the contacts are being made with the
18 local population to begin changing units out
19 once they have been there two or three
20 months, and that's kind of the way rotation
21 forces you into putting a force in a
22 particular area.

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1 So structurally, I would say, you
2 know, we need to reconsider an additional
3 battalion in each of those teams, and also
4 when we get involved in these kinds of
5 operations, ensure that the rotation cycle
6 does not drive the tactical employment of our
7 brigade combat teams.

8 (b)(6) Any observations on
9 the RISTA (Phonetic) battalion, sir?

10 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: The RISTA
11 battalions are a great organization for they
12 are designed to do, reconnaissance
13 operations, but once again, when you get into
14 the COIN fight, they've got limited infantry.

15 (b)(6) Right.

16 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: And they have
17 to adapt to that environment. So they are
18 well suited for what they are designed for,
19 but they are light on the infantry, even
20 though they do have an infantry company.

21 (b)(6) All right, sir. Well,
22 that concludes the interview. Thank you very

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1 much, General Mixon. Thank you.

2 MAJ. GENERAL MIXON: Thanks.

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