UNITED STATES ARMY
CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

INTERVIEW
OF
BRIG. GENERAL DANA PITTARD
COMMANDING GENERAL
IRAQ ASSISTANCE GROUP
MULTINATIONAL CORPS - IRAQ

24 JUNE 2007
BAGHDAD, IRAQ

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

This is the Multinational Corps-Iraq Historian. Today is Sunday, the 24th of June 2007. We are at the Headquarters for the Iraq Assistance Group at Camp Victory outside of Baghdad, Iraq. It is approximately 1520. Also with me is --

U.S. Army Center of Military History and the III Corps Writing Historian.

And we are interviewing the Commanding General of the Iraq Assistance Group.

Sir, if you could introduce yourself in your own voice with your rank, first name, middle initial and your last name.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Sure. I am Brigadier General Dana J.H. Pittard, and I am the Commanding General of the Iraq Assistance Group, and also the Assistant Division Commander for Maneuver for the 1st Infantry Division at Fort Riley.

All right. Thank you, sir.

Sir, my first question is: I wanted to ask if you could talk about the command relationship for the command, because I know we have the Deputy Commanding General
for Operations who is a United Kingdom two-star General who has some oversight over this. But if you could talk to me about what the relationship is between yourself as the Commanding General and that position also vice the Commanding General of the Multinational Corps, Iraq. How does that all piece together.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Okay. The Iraq Assistance Group is under, obviously, Multinational Corps-Iraq, and I work for General Odierno. But each of the three Deputy Corps Commanders or Deputy Commanding Generals for the Corps have a piece of what we do at the ISF.

If you take the DCG-US, Major General Simmons, initially in the terms of reference had oversight over transition teams, with the IAG being the direct oversight.

Brigadier General -- I'm sorry, Major General Berragan, DCG-UK, is in charge of oversight of the ISF, and then Major General Devlin has oversight with Coalition matters, but also infrastructure matters, too, which also has gotten us involved with things with General Devlin.

So we have involvement with all three in many ways. But that's when III Corps first got here. What has morphed and evolved since then is it was just three -- I
guess, three weeks ago, three to four weeks ago, where General Odierno made the decision that for ISF he wants to put the finger -- his finger in the chest of one guy, and that will be the IAG Commander.

So what that has done now is broadened what the IAG does. The Iraq Assistance Group really has three major functions at this point.

One is executive agent for the Corps for transition teams throughout Iraq, and for some transition teams it's a direct AD CON (Phonetic) relationship with some of them but most are attached to MND. So that's number one.

Number two is the coordinating agency for MNC-I for the Iraq Security Forces, for ISF, and that means that the MNC-I ISF Cell which is led by a British Colonel, is in direct support of what we are trying to accomplish and we've created what is called now the ISF, as in Iraqi Security Force, Fusion Cell, and that's huge.

That is a new unplowed territory which I am very excited about, because it finally links us with issues the transition teams have and they find at all levels and helping to resolve those issues. So we become problem solvers in assisting the Iraqi security forces to solve some of their
own systemic issues.

Then number three that General Odierno wanted us to make sure we do is in line with all of that, is the oversight of LNO efforts with MNSTCI, Multinational Security and Transition—whatever --

Command-Iraq.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Yes, Command-Iraq. Thank you. I always get mixed up with that. But obviously, we all know what MNSTCI is.

So now the LNOs -- we have LNOs. One is for CPAT. One is for CMAT, and we do that with MNSTCI, getting feedback and what's going on with MNSTCI, getting that to General Odierno, which has now led to a weekly meeting between General Odierno and MNSTCI Commander, was General Dempsey, now General Dubik (Phonetic). Every week -- normally, every week, every Friday, they meet.

Every other Friday, we are then brought in, or maybe once in a month, the different GOs from MNSTCI and MNCL are brought in are brought in to that one, and the agenda is set by the IAG and approved by General Odierno.

So that's kind of what IAG has been doing.

General Pittard, I'd like to take you
back to when you first got here in July of 2006, and you worked, I believe, for General Cherelli (Phonetic) -- Correct me if I'm wrong on that -- in the V Corps.

Can you take us through the time when General Odierno comes in, in December, December 14th, and describe any changes that take place.

In other words, I'm trying to capture what direction General Cherelli and General Casey were taking you vice -- or in relation to General Odierno.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Okay. Let's see, General Casey was the MNFI Commander who was here for two and a half years. In fact, he was -- I remember when he came on board when I was a BCT Commander here in 2004-2005.

His focus was transitioning, as it should be, I believe. Obviously, that changed in February 22, 2006, with the mosque bombing in Samarra, which unleashed this wave of sectarian violence throughout Iraq, which called for amending that approach. But transition was key with General Casey as the MNF-I Commander.

General Cherelli fell into that also, of transition, and we had the Baghdad security plan, Operation Together Forward II in August-September of 2006, and that was
to secure Baghdad. Obviously, there were some issues there, and we weren't able to do that overall.

When III Corps came in with General Odierno, General Casey was still in charge of MNF-I. A slightly different focus occurred, and there was a concern in that, when General -- Prior to General Cherelli departing, we had a plan called Transition Bridging Strategy, and the Transition Bridging Strategy called for a number of things, but it really called for the Iraqi Security Forces and the Iraqi government to take more ownership of what's going on in the security perspective.

It called for enhancing our transition teams, because our transition teams are just between 10 and 15 personnel, normally 10 or 11 personnel. It was enhancing transition teams with assets from BCTs in battalions to triple and sometimes quadruple their size, so 30--plus, so that they can really do an effective and holistic kind of advising of their Iraqi Security Force counterparts.

That changed when III Corps came in. What General Odierno said was that, look, I agree with transition bridging strategy, but we must set the conditions to do that first, and his number one condition to do that was security
as a foundation.

So though he said he was committed to eventually doing enhanced transition teams, he felt strongly that security must come first.

Now General Petraeus came in, really with the mandate of, hey, we've got a finite amount of time to secure Baghdad, in particular, but secure Iraq overall, and between security and transition, security is going to win out. So it was a different focus.

I do believe long term, though, that we will be here forever unless we do transition. So we've got to be careful. It is -- Security is an interim -- I'm sorry, it's a short term goal, but long term it's got to be transition, and short term right now, and General Odierno has a very good relationship with the BCT commanders.

He goes out and visits them. He listens to them, and he came back right after taking command, and over the next 30 days of taking command, he said, hey, BCT commanders had said that they want transition teams attached to them.

So the dynamic change for transition teams by, I guess, March 1st, were attached to all BCTs, and that was done because of two BCT commanders, by the way. That's why
they are here now, but supported General Odierno in his
vision on that, and we have moved forward.

The change, though, is that, I believe with Iraqi
Security Forces overall is their long term growth has been
stagnant. Our progress toward TRA Level I is almost not
there anymore.

We've got a short term gain and focus, which is
security, as it should be, because the times call for that,
but so many of our transition teams now aren't really
necessarily advising. They are LNUs for BCTs in many ways.

I wonder if the long term goal of having a
capable, confident and self-reliant Iraqi Security Forces
right now is not being met. Eventually, it will be, once we
have security as a foundation maybe.

Where are they stagnating?

BRT: GENERAL PITTAIR: They are stagnating in a
couple of ways. Looking at logistically supporting them, we
had some tough love last fall, which was cut off the fuel.
Now what we are saying is, well, the operations come first,
and we as military folks say, of course, operations come
first. But there's some tough love in there, too, where you
have to say, well, no, we are not going to give you fuel, and
the Iraqis will figure it out.

We've got some units that are self-sufficient. Third Iraqi Army Division up in Maniwah (Phonetic) Province is self-sufficient on fuel, because we've had tough love up there, and they have continued transitioning up there. It's a different focus. It's not like what we have in, say, the greater Baghdad area.

We don't have BCT commanders right now who are necessarily responsible for the overall progress of their ISF units. That's not a change with III Corps. That's a change in Iraq in the last maybe two years.

As a BCT Commander here in 2005, we had quarterly ISF briefs where I as a BCT Commander was held accountable for the progress of the ISF in my AO, and then I then was responsible for saying, well, this is what I need from you; this is what I need from MNSTCI, this is what I need from my Division Commander, MND Commander, this is what I need from MNC-I.

We don't have that anymore. What we have now is using the ISF and partnering, and partnering, I think, is good if you look at it as a triad with the Iraqi Security Forces at the apex. On each of the other two angles we have
the transition team and the partnership unit. I think that's a great idea, and it's a great relationship of partnering.

We have the partnering, but we don't have BCT and battalion commanders, Coalition side. They are being held accountable for the progress of the ISF. They are being held accountable for security, as they should be also. So that's their focus.

What I'm telling you is that the focus right now isn't the long term stability of the ISF and the progress of the ISF, and that would be a drawback, and I hope that we'll eventually get to that direction.

I hope I don't sound too negative. I'm telling you as bluntly as I can, of how I see it.

It almost sounds like what you are saying, sir, is there's been some backsliding in terms of two years the battalion and Iraqi Security Forces battalion commander was not accountable. Now he's a little less accountable.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Well, he is less accountable for the progress, specific progress and (Inaudible) level of the Iraqi Security Force counterpart. If I'm a BCT commander in Baghdad right now, it would be in
my best interest to have the national police and the Iraqi
Army and the IPS in my AO to be as good as they can. I'm not
that involved with their progress, with trying to resolve
systemic issues.

I may say, hey, they are on their ass as far as
getting fuel or they are not getting ammo, but I'm not
involved in making that happen necessarily, because my focus
is security only, not necessarily their progress.
And yet they have transition teams that are attached to them
that can do that, but many of our transition teams now -- and
it depends on each BCT commander, battalion commander. It's
not the same route. And that's the other thing. It's not
consistent.

As many of them were before, they had maybe two
reports a week. Some have 12 reports a week that they must --
- they have. They are now answering so many RFIs, and they
are doing LNO stuff, and not focusing on the original design,
which is advising, being advisors and trainers.

General Pittard, what is the TRA
level?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Right. That's the
Training Readiness Assessment, and when a unit reaches TRA
Level I, ideally they won't need their advisors there for much longer. In fact, the original plan was, once you reach TRA Level I, then we use the transition teams to go elsewhere to help other units, because we have a finite number of transition teams.

That's been our issue now with the Joint Staff back in the U.S. in the Pentagon, is we're saying, hey, we need more transition teams. They say, wait a minute, wait a minute, a year ago you briefed that by June of 2007 you will have harvested 24 different transition teams, because you had projected, we here had projected, that 24 units would get up to TRA Level I.

We're like at zero right now, because we are not progressing. We are not progressing for a number of reasons. I know you asked that question once. (Inaudible) capability is one. Shortage of leadership, officer and NCOs; and then the fact that taking them out of their AOs long enough to train them.

It's that the ISF is in the perpetual state of combat and operations. And, yes, individuals get their leave, yes, every two weeks. Every four weeks, it's one week of leave, but that doesn't mean there's collective unit
training going on.

We've seen that dynamic change in the national police. Between MNSTCI and MNCI back in the fall of 2006 or August 2006, this was made, yes, we will take out an entire brigade of the national police at a time for redrilling or retraining for four weeks, which is three weeks, and we added a week of tactical training, which is needed. So for four weeks.

That has made all the difference in the world for the national police as far as their progress, and at the same time, identifying leaders with sectarian biases, and then removing them.

Since that has started, the National Commander of the national police has been replaced. The two division commanders of the national police have been replaced. Seven of the nine brigade commanders have been replaced. Sixteen of the 27 brigade commanders have been replaced, and the national police is a much better organization now than it was a year ago.

So when you talk about those replacements, have they occurred in the last six months or the last -- or --
BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: No. It really started in November.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: It really started in November. And that's been part of the IAG focus, is where there is a corrupt leader or sectarian leader anywhere in the ISF, we move to get them removed. But my point in the whole thing was the idea of collective training and the difference that it makes, and we've seen that it does make a difference in the national police, that many people may not be satisfied with the national police right now but, boy, are they better off than they were a year ago.

Before, they were an arm of the Shia militias. Now, yes, they have Shia militia maybe relations, but they are not an arm in any way, shape or form.

Sir, one point of clarification. When you talked about those three issues that are keeping them from being the original goals for tier one status, one of the things was shortage of staff and noncommissioned officers. Is that Iraqi staff and noncommissioned officers or U.S. noncommissioned officers to train them?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: That's Iraqi. It's
Iraqi, and then sending them to school, sending NCOs to
schools and training, because battle space owners, Coalition
and Iraqi, are reluctant in many cases to let leaders go,
because they are in a fight. That again is that dichotomy
between security in the short term and long term progress of
the ISF.

I would argue that the BCGT commanders need to be
involved in all of that, and aren't right now. And I think
that is a change.

With the direction we are going right now, which
again I agree in so many ways with the direction we are
going, because we've gone after JAM. When III Corps came in
and said we're not going to take that, we are going after
you, I applauded that, because I thought that was needed
earlier. But my concern is long term progress of the ISF
right now is not going in the direction as positively as I
would like to see it.

Sir, I wanted to ask you a
little bit more about the manpower piece. You touched a
little bit on it. But in particular, given the small size of
a military transition team, a police transition team, a
border transition team, if I'm not mistaken, you have 14 to
16 people, roughly.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: The majority are 11. The Division ones are 15.

Okay. Given the original plan of being able to kind of steal people to plus-up when we thought we were going to be downsizing in number of brigades here, how is that friction playing out? Is there a manpower issue on the side of getting enough people to put in our MTTs, PTTs, border teams? Is there a shortage? Are you getting enough? Are you getting what you need in terms of quality?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: A couple of things that you said. One is it is exacerbated by the growth of the ISF right now. The Prime Minister's initiative, the Iraqi Prime Minister's initiative is huge. Between now and December '07, so in the next six months, we're going to have 27 unresource MIT requirements, or transition team requirements that we just won't be able to resource.

So some decisions are going to have to be made on our part. We have briefed General Odierno on that, on some options.

Between now and next year, we believe that number
will go up to 65, to include the strategic infrastructure battalions and brigades that are now becoming Iraqi Army units who don't have advisors or transitions with them.

That also includes the Provincial security units or Provincial security forces like what we see with the Marines in Al Anbar. That has been pretty successful. They don't have transition teams.

So if you look at sourcing all those over the next year, that will be 65 unresourced MTT requirements. So the issue is getting that and knowing that, we as the military cannot afford to source that many more up and above what we have.

So our solution has got to be an in-theater solution, which with 20 BCTs -- you almost can figure it out with 20 BCTs in some cases. And also knowing that for a brigade sized unit, Iraqi Army brigade which right now has a brigade headquarters and three battalions, that's four transition teams. Maybe if you just have two, one at brigade and one at the time that you rotate, we may need to take some risks like that.

So we think we can figure out in-theater solutions in that regard with 20 BCTs. But we know we won't
have 20 BCTs here forever. You know, our footprint will go
down from 20 to 15 to 10 over time. So there will be some
issues with sourcing. And the quality -- Well --

No, go ahead.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Getting the quality on
the transition teams is a huge issue. It caused, I guess, a
slight fire storm about, oh, 11 months ago when I said that I
thought the quality of our transition teams was low and that
we need to do a better job of increasing the quality.

I asked for sure to have the ability to pick the
06s and colonels that come on transition teams. I was given
that, and I think 50 names were presented to me, and I said,
no, no, no, no, no. And I picked eight of the first 50 names
that came.

It has made a difference. The 06 leadership at
Division MTTs, at the National Police division transition
team -- those are the only two I didn't pick, though, because
it was already a deal for the 108th Reserve Division to bring
those in. It was the only two guys I hadn't picked at the 06
level.

We asked to pick the 05s. Now because of the
experience of the 06s, the Army said, no, hell, no; you're
not picking 06s, we're not going to let you do it for 05s. And for 04s, the Majors, who are the leaders of our transition teams at the battalion level, I'm very pleased, because the majority of them are coming out of IOE or Command and General Staff College, from Quantico.

We took a lesson -- and that's not just because Mike is here, but we took a lesson from the Marines. I asked Major General Rick Zilmer, who had MF-West when I first got here, how do you do the selections. He said, I personally select them, and on recommendation, duh, duh, duh. I said, that's the way to go.

So I feel comfortable that we are moving in the right direction. If you look at -- It doesn't matter if they are Reserve, Active Duty or National Guard, in my mind. It's an experienced skill set that matters. But if you are a Reservist or a National Guardsman, it must be more recent experience. It must be OIF or OEF as an Afghanistan, Iraq experience or maybe Special Forces background.

Other than that, I would not put a Reservist or a National Guard leader in charge of a team unless they have had those experience. It's just, again, from what I have seen. But picking the right people is what is important.
There is one more segue point to that, which is I wanted to find out what your perspective on the role of putting more contractors in certain positions and where that is going.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: We are moving in that direction in a couple of ways. With our border transition teams -- who, by the way, have no border expertise. I mean, we train them the best we can, but that doesn't make up for the fact that they are not Customs officials or from the Border Patrol.

I am personally from El Paso, Texas. I grew up with the Border Patrol, and I knew that we weren't there, and the leadership here agreed with that also.

We tried to get more help from DHS, Department of Homeland Security. But because of pressure from Congress and probably CNN's Lou Dobbs: we don't have enough for our own borders, and yet they are out there in Iraq. So they limited the number of people that they could send here. Originally, it was just the 12 personnel. Now it's 20. That's the most we are going to get out of them. But our needs are a lot more than that.

We believe that every port of entry where we have
transition teams and every border transition team ought to have some border experts with them.

So in order to get around that, working with MNSTCI, MNSTCI and General Dempsey worked out a contracting piece where we are hiring contractors to help us with that expertise, and they have to come from the Customs department or Border Patrol.

In fact, many of them are active, actively in there, because they are paying them almost double of what they would make. So we are drawing them.

Now there's cries. You know, I heard from -- was it the Governor of the state of Texas and a Representative from Arizona that, oh, we are taking away from the U.S. border which has, obviously, thousands of border patrol, and we are only asking for 65, and that's working.

The first contingent has come in. That first 23 have been trained at the (Inaudible) Academy at Taji, have moved out to our teams, and with those contractors, that kind of expertise will not only help our teams but, more importantly, the ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi Department of Border Enforcement will be helped by that, with techniques. So that is a good thing.
Now also with contractors -- Of course, all of our -- Most of our interpreters are contracted interpreters, but we've got a new contract where we are bringing in a career Special Forces person -- some are Special Forces American with an Iraqi former military officer, and pairing the two of them together and putting them in each of our division level MIT teams to assist them. We are very excited about that.

That first team -- or those first teams will come in in July. If that works out, then we will start using those two-man teams at the brigade level and battalion level. It's a huge contract. We had an option doing it light, medium or heavy. I proposed light, just to see. You know, (Several words inaudible) down the road, but I'm excited about that.

So that's some of the contractor piece of it.

Great.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Let me know if I'm going too long.

No, no, this is great. This is great stuff. You had mentioned that the logistics piece of the Iraqi Army standing on its two feet is weak. Can you
elaborate bit on that? Do they have support battalions, support groups? Do they have the maintenance piece in place yet?

Can you address that a little bit?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Oh, sure. In fact, the Iraqi Army is better off than the other Iraqi security forces, as far as its structure. There is at least a structure. In fact, when I hear MTTs complain about it, I keeping them, you haven't seen anything yet; you need to go to the (Inaudible); you need to go see the national police; you need to go to Department of Border Enforcement, IPS, and see their logistics structure, because it's not as mature as the Iraqi Army's is.

I mean, it starts really at the battalion level with the HSCs. Each battalion, Iraqi Army battalion, has a HSC -- I guess it's Headquarters Support Company, HSC, which we all track. We all track the HSCs. At the brigade level also has an HSC.

At the division level, each division has a MTR, motorized transport regiment, motor transport regiment, which is a battalion sized unit that has trucks that hauls back and forth repair parts and all sorts of supplies for each
division.

For every two divisions, there is a design. There is an RSU, a regional support unit that supports every two divisions. So, for instance, in Al Anbar we have the 1st Iraqi Army Division and 7th Iraqi Army Division. In Habbaniya where it just so happens to be the home of the 1st Iraqi Army Division, there is an RSU set up.

The way it is supposed to work is the RSU gets in support from the national depot. The national depot is at Taji, and the NTR is supposed to go to the RSUs and deliver needed materials and supplies to the brigades and battalions.

What actually is happening in many cases, the NTR is going to the national depot in Taji and picking it up, because there's just stocks of stuff there. Almost all divisions now have NTRs, a second NTR or 2nd IA Division is supposed to get theirs. They have been training now for nearly a year in Numaniyah (Phonetic). Almost all of them are Shia, and most of them are refusing to go up to Ninevah Province.

So all the training they have done for a year is almost a (Inaudible). We are going to end up seeing them with their trucks up there, the Shia that are up there, then
retrain the entire battalion. That's my story.

The logistical capability of the Iraqi Army is getting better. Initially, for food we based it on how the American Army is doing it, by -- We do contracts now. Of course, for almost 200 years the American Army was doing it by cooks, which is what the Iraqis wanted.

So we kind of forced upon them this contracting fuel -- I'm sorry, food contractors and quality of life contractors, and there have been some issues with that. It's gotten better overall, but I think that when we leave, the Iraqis are going to scrap that, because they are not comfortable with it.

Our Corps DCG, General Simmons -- I mean, he had a very good plan -- said, why don't we -- in his Arkansas twang -- why are we doing it like that? And I agree. Not enough -- I don't think there is enough Iraqi involvement in this Iraqi plan.

So from the IAG perspective, it's we talk to our Iraqi counterpart and say what is it that you want to do, and how can we help you to reach your goals, as opposed to imposing a Coalition system that is foreign to the Iraqis that they are not going to embrace anyway and are just biding
their time until we go. So let's figure out what they want
to do and then support them. That's what we want to do.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Sir, I was curious in that one
of the things that you talked about was how the present
strategy is has impacted the use of the Iraqi Security
Forces.

One of the things, just in looking at one of the
most recent updates and the progress of Fardel Kanoun
(Phonetic), for instance, was looking at casualty rates, and
the one of the good stories is the civilian casualties are
significantly down.

If you look at the Iraqi Security Force
casualties as well as our own Coalition force, casualties are
up. If I'm not mistaken, I think it was about 41 percent, up
about 41 percent.

What is the Iraqi Security Force leadership
perspective on that, or is that something you have had any
visibility on?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: I have in some ways.
It's interesting. We look at Fardel Kanoun as, you know,
it's a battle for Baghdad. It's on. Iraqi Security Forces
vary on that.
It's not business as usual, but it varies. It's not the sense of urgency that we have, and we realize that. There is different timelines, and the Iraqi timeline is our timeline.

Ours is more finite, because we know that, with pressure from the American people and Congress also, there is a difference there. But there is also a realization that we will take casualties, because we are on the offensive. It's a much needed offensive.

If we are, in fact, going to do an offensive, we should see initially more casualties from a military perspective, from the Coalition side as well as the Iraqi Security Forces. So I think that's expected, to an extent.

Where we have to be careful, though, is doing it in front of the Iraqis, leading the way in front of the Iraqis instead of side by side.

We really took great pains a year or two -- over the past two years, certainly, for pushing the Iraqi Security Forces into the forefront during operations. That has changed, where U.S. operations are clearly in the lead.

I watched the National Police do an operation, and I was really surprised in watching it just a month ago
and how it was nine months ago, where before the National Police were in the lead doing an operation with their partnership unit in support, providing close-in effects and just overall back-up with their advisors.

Well, just a month ago, Second National Police provided kind of -- kind of an outer cordon, but they were kind of a reserve element while they watched Coalition forces do the operation. I was sort of surprised, maybe because of the urban center situation now that we basically said we are going to secure Baghdad, regardless; I don't care who does it. If we got to lead, we'll lead it.

I just hope that that is only temporary, because if we are not transitioning over to the Iraqis to take ownership of this, then I think any gains we make will be only temporary. But we've just got to be careful. But I agree that we have to gain security first. I just think that we need to pull along our Iraqi counterparts to do as much as we are in the Baghdad area.

Of course, in Diyala right now we have 2,000 American soldiers up there and about -- what, 1,000 Iraqi Army folks who are actually assisting with that operation. That brings a tear to my eyes, because I was in Diyala
before, and we just didn't have (Inaudible) before.

Now because the situation has gotten so bad now, we've had to do that. Hopefully, we can secure it and then be there and partner with the Iraqi Security Forces until they really do have it, and then depart at some point. But we've had to do to Diyala what we did in November 2004 to Fallujah. They absolutely had to clear it with U.S. troops, Marines and soldiers.

One more segue question, if I might. Going from there, sir, one of the most emerging issues is the question of, okay, now we have, you know, what had started in the Al Anbar Province of the local sheikhs, local communities saying enough is enough, we want to go against Al Qaeda in Iraq.

So we have these local support options with lots of different names like Emergency Response Units or Police Assistance Units. What is the Iraq Assistance Group in that, and how do you see that evolving relative to also how the Iraq -- or how the ISF forces will deal with that?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Initially, it was in the reconciliation realm under eye of Major General Mark McDonald, from the Corps perspective, and then at the MNFI
level it was Lieutenant General Land, the MNFI DCG -- for
this DCG. But it's going much bigger than that, obviously
now to where now we have to talk equipping. We've got to
talk with CPAT about it, things like that.

That's where the IAG has gotten more involved
with it. Just two days ago, there was a BTC led by MNCI,
MNCI Corps Chief, Joe Anderson, to try to get our arms around
that, with everybody that has anything to do with PSUs. I
thought it was a very good idea.

Joe Anderson led that effort very well.

The IAG piece of that is now to support that
effort, and CPAT's is to now fund it and resource it. They
say they can fund 20 PSUs, and the big question is, well, is
that 20 up and above Al Anbar, which is eight to nine right
now, and they say yes -- no, it includes that. So what they
really mean is there is only 11 more, which we're finding is
not acceptable.

So there's issues like that, that need to be
worked out between General Odierno and General Dubik
(Phonetic), which will be worked out, because we work
friendly. But that's part of our involvement in that.

You know, the roots of all that actually began in
Tallifahr (Phonetic), I would say, was when (Inaudible was up in Tallifahr, and other places, but specifically when 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, took over, he inherited that kind of methodology in Tallifahr.

When we sent 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division, down to be attached to MNF-West, he began that in Ramadi, and it was there in Ramadi where Chief Sattar and working with then General Anzouma (Phonetic) and began this growth. So I want to give Al Anbar, you know, so much of the credit, but the seeds of that were in other places also, and specifically on that one. First Brigade, 1st Armored Division actually bringing -- had different methodology, which was different from the way MNF-West was operating at that time.

In fact -- You know General (Inaudible), I'm sure, Colonel. But he kind of looked at them like, well, I don't know if that will work, and it actually was very successful, and now General Gaskin (Phonetic) and his folks have inherited that and are taking it and moving out with it, which is great.

General Pittard --

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: I'm sorry.
I'll just take a minute here, and pause.

General Pittard, you had mentioned that the leadership of the Iraqi Army was a -- I forget exactly what word you used, but was a weak area, and I'd like you to talk a little bit about the Iraqi Army leadership at the senior level first, and then at the mid- to junior level, and what are the problems in there? What are some of the success in that area?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Well, what I said was the Iraqi Army leadership was an issue as far as the progress, because of the shortage of officers and NCOs. I'm not sure that the officers themselves are weak. I mean, it varies throughout different units, but when you have a strong leader, it obviously makes a difference.

The Iraqi Army now -- Of course, you've got the Joint Headquarters under General Dahiqur (Phonetic), and the next level is the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, which over this past year we have seen a dramatic growth in its command and control capability. It now has a Joint Operations Center.

When we first got here last year, the Iraqi Ground Forces Command had zero units under its tactical
control, tactical command. Since then, they now have six Iraqi Army divisions, are now directed under the IGFC.

Two other divisions are also under Iraqi command, but it's under the Baghdad Operations Command. That's the 6th IA and 9th IA. So of the 10 active Iraqi Army divisions, eight are now under Iraqi command. That is hugely significant.

Now that running into when III Corps came in, as far as, okay, now we are going to -- We have the solution, the security, it kind of ran into the, well, who is in charge. And right now with the Baghdad Operations Center, they are under Iraqi control, but in essence, most of the units will take their direction from our BCD commanders in Baghdad.

So we'll take a step back in that regard, in my opinion, as far as Iraqis being able to take the lead. However, Iraqis, the Iraqi Army, looking at the Coalition forces as an example, clearly is there, because they've got some great examples with our BCD commanders and how our BCDs are operating, but we just got to get them in the lead.

Back to the Iraqi Army itself, managing at a higher level now, the Iraqi Ground Forces Command has really
matured quite a bit. It has now become, according to the Minister of Defense, Al Bakar (Phonetic), a former Iraqi Ground Forces Commander, by the way, that Iraqi Armed Forces Command is his training area, breeding ground for future Iraqi Army division commanders, and we are seeing that.

Many of them are coming out of the IGFC staff, because the training and the interaction that we are getting — What he told General Odierno is I want them to interact as much as possible with you and the MNC-I and III Corps staff, because they will learn so much from you. So that's a plus.

We are finding at the Division level that systems are getting more and more in place, and that's mainly due because we are on our third iteration of transition teams at the Division level. It's really making a difference at Brigade and Battalion also.

Can you talk a little bit about the mid- to junior level leaders?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: There's issues there. It's that it takes time to grow the mid-level leaders, the majors. The capacity to grow lieutenants in the Iraqi Army is okay, because they graduate from their equivalent of the Military Academy once a year. Getting captains takes a little
longer, but it's the majors where it takes more time.

The Iraqis have a lot of pride in their staff war college system, for no better word for it, command and staff training system. So they are not necessarily willing to enlarge it, because they really like it to be a little bit more elite. But the urgency of the situation is the Iraqi Security Forces, the Iraqi Army in particular, is in a massive growth right now. So we need more mid-level folks.

The Iraqi Army is slowly going to open that up, but it's just taking time. So there's -- and you can tell those with that experience and training with a red stripe.

In fact, I guess -- There's a (b)(6) (Phonetic). He's a battalion commander up in 2nd Iraqi Army Division, and he put on his red stripe, because at the time the Coalition force Division Commander a couple of years ago, then Major General Petraeus, said, yeah, you can wear that red stripe.

Most Iraqi Army officers at the IGFC level can't even sit in their chairs near this guy, because they want him to take off that red stripe. But he won't take it off, because General Petraeus told him he could. The red stripe means you are a graduate of the command and --
BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Right.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: -- our equivalent is CGSC, Command and General Staff College, and there's a lot of pride in that. I only give that example to illustrate that there is a lot of pride in training their officer corps, but we are urging them to open that up more so that they can get more graduates.

Well, I've heard some discussion that -- and of course, they come from a different culture, but I've heard some discussion that, you know, they just don't have the initiative that we -- They are used to a top down driven command structure, and we are trying to train them to have more initiative at the lower levels. How is that training getting through to those younger commanders?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: You know, it's different levels of initiative. What our transition teams are telling us is that it is easier to work with the more junior officers, because they are a clean slate, a blank slate. They are not -- They weren't necessarily raised as officers in the traditional Baathist tradition and Soviet style.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Centralized leadership
style. So I mean, that is a comment, but we see initiative being taken in many different ways. It's just a different type of initiative. And it's not always clear to our Coalition counterparts or transition teams at times that they are, in fact, taking initiative, because it's different from the way maybe we would do it.

What surviving Iraqi Army officers have to do is take more than just the operational situation in consideration. They've got to take into account the political situation. They have to. It's reality here. It's reality.

They also have to take in account religious factors. If they are an effective commander, they are getting calls from everybody. If they are a Division commander, they are getting calls from Council representatives. They are getting calls from factions. They are getting calls from the Prime Minister's office. They are getting calls from all sorts of folks.

Even with that, if that's not enough pressure, then the safety of their own families. Now we can be pretty big and bad here all we want, but my family is very safe in Fort Riley, Kansas. It's not day to day knowing is my family
safe, and who is threatening them? In some cases, militias are protecting their families.

So we wonder why -- why aren't you being more aggressive with militias. So it varies.

A very, very good commander, the 9th IA Commander, Major General Abdullah -- he finally said, that's it, I'm trying to do the right thing in the Area Command, but I'm going to retire myself. He just tired of it. He was tired of getting back channel calls of "you need to go right," and then someone else would call and say, "no, you need to go left." He just -- He got tired of it.

So he left, even though everybody in the Coalition tried to get him to say. He is now back. He is now the DCG of the ICPG, which is great, but he's out of that pressure cooker of being the Rahsaf (Phonetic) area commander. But that is just an example.

Sir, as a follow-on to that leadership piece, when we first came in and the decision was made early on to disband the Iraqi Army and that sort of thing, and we found ourselves kind of picking and choosing -- Hey, he seems to be a pretty good guy, let's make him an Iraqi battalion commander -- how are those guys working
into the mix now? Are they still in the system, compared to guys who were guys who had come back from the old Iraqi Army? How is that working itself out or do you have visibility on that?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Oh, we do, in many cases. Obviously, it was a huge error to demobilize or get rid of the Iraqi Army. So when the ICDC, Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, was created, the Iraqi National Guard was the next level. But at the same time, the NIA, New Iraqi Army, was being kind of trained at Kirkush training are in eastern Diyala.

Eventually, the ING became Regular Iraqi Army. We are still seeing some issues with that now. We have issues with promotion and pay problems with folks because of the way they actually came into the Iraqi Army. But they were originally ING. They are now that the MOD has stood up, we are back to the old Iraqi Army traditions in many cases, they kind of look down on them, like "you're just ING."

We had a case just on Saturday with a guy named (b)(6) (Phonetic) who was this awesome fighting battalion commander in Muktadiya (Phonetic) in Diyala Province just two years ago.

In fact, his battalion was the 205th Iraqi Army
Battalion. It was named by name in a speech by then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld as being one of the top two Iraqi Army battalions in the country. The senior commander then was General Petraeus. He believed the same thing.

General Petraeus a few months ago asked, whatever happened to (b)(6) Well, his family was threatened, and he ended up leaving, leaving the country. We did track him down. I told General Petraeus, he's back. He said, oh, let's get him back in there; we need his help in Diyala. Sounds good. I wrote a letter. General Petraeus did a cover letter, and we sent it to the Minister of Defense.

They deliberated on that on Saturday, as they were picking the Brigade Commander, but they just could not bring themselves to pick this guy. They all agree he's a good fighter. He had made a difference. He stabilized Muktadiya, which is out of control right now, but they could not bring their -- I don't know -- their proud, elitist Iraqi viewpoints into reinstalling him.

Because he was a National Guard?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Well, he was INGO. Oh, he's INGO. What is his pedigree? Oh.
We had our IGFC MTT leader, (Phonetic), on a break, called me by cellphone: Hey, they are deliberating now; they're deliberating now. So what are they -- I just don't think they are going to sign that through.

I thought, if a letter from General Petraeus can't even do it, what can? So to me, that's an illustration of some of the issues of people that the Coalition had a lot of belief in, that the Iraqi Army -- and do you blame them?

I mean, it's a proud Iraqi Army, and they are saying, okay, no, we are now standing back up, but we are standing back up in the Sovereign Iraq; but for those of you who worked with the Coalition, nah, you're just this side of being collaborators.

They never say it quite like that, but even (Phonetic) who General Petraeus thinks the world of -- he's still the Battalion Commander up there in JAG-North, which is south of Baghdad in this little desert location -- he's been short personnel for a while.

They just won't send him -- They will now, because General Petraeus has taken that as I want personnel for that one battalion. But anybody who we embrace too much
is looked on with a certain level of suspicion.

So because of that, we tell that to our transition teams, because our transition teams will get frustrated when they are trying to urge a battalion commander to take action, and they have this squared-away captain or major -- "why don't you use (b)(6) (Phonetic); he's the greatest thing since sliced bread?" Well, the fact that they are putting so much praise on him, it's almost insulting the rest of the Iraqi Officer corps who then will -- who often marginalize him after we are not -- you know, when we are not looking or we are not around or whatever.

So a more complex way of doing this is: If you see somebody you really think is good, you should then back away from them, and then kind of say, hey, there's a group there, I think these three are pretty good, and you include that guy in it.

It's just a different approach that we've found is much more successful, instead of completely embracing them; because we are the people who did invade this country. I mean, there is a certain level of shame on the Iraqi Army side, whether you share that or not.

I've got one last question.
BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: I'm sorry if I'm rambling too much.

(b)(6) No, no, that's great, all good stuff. I'd like to talk a little bit about the sectarian issue in the Iraqi Army, and how that is playing out at the division level and below, and even at the Iraqi Ground Force Command Headquarters.

You know, are the -- Just talk to that issue and the difficulty of working through it.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Well, the Iraqi Army or Iraqi Security Forces?

(b)(6) Well, Iraqi Security Forces.

BRIG. GENERAL PITTARD: Okay. I can take each in a piece.

We really want our transition teams to look at that. I've been turning to the "Inspector Cleuceau" of sectarianism amongst the Iraqi Security Force leadership (Inaudible), and we found it an interesting dynamic.

When it's in a unit, the Shias and Sunnis appear to be getting along in units, in the actual units that they're at, in 9th IA, in the actual units. I said, yeah, sure, right; I don't believe it. But in fact, I've heard it
too many times from transition teams to where I now believe it, that in a unit the Shias and Sunnis in a unit, that they are getting along just fine.

When it comes to dealing with neighborhoods and in areas where there is either Sunni or Shia militias or influences, it becomes a little different on how the character of the unit acts overall.

The Iraqi Army is less vulnerable to that kind of localized sectarianism. So if you looked on a scale of who is most vulnerable and who is the least vulnerable, the Iraqi Army right now is the least vulnerable to that in most areas.

Now in some areas like the 10th IA in Basra, it's all Shia. So, yes, they lean toward Shias. They are all Shia just about, and they are in a Shia area. That's not really the issue.

The issue comes in to where within a Shia area they come into conflict with militia. 8th IA had kind of a delay in many ways, with Major General Oathman who has fought JAM in Diwaniyah, because JAM is disrupting stability there.

So I almost see that as the way of the future for Iraq, in that eventually when we are all gone, there will be issues among Shias. It won't be the Shias united against
Sunnis necessarily. But back to sectarianism, the Iraqi Army field is the least vulnerable.

Of course, on the other end is the FPS, Facilities Protection Service, which is absolutely the most vulnerable, because they owe their allegiance to whoever - whatever ministry has hired them, which is each ministry is - it's based on a political party, because four or five ministries are under Assaderists (Phonetic).

Also in the most vulnerable category is the IPS, the local police, the Iraqi Police Service, because they are most vulnerable to local conditions, because they live in those neighborhoods. So again, I'll stop JAM at checkpoints until JAM tells me, no, you can't stop me tomorrow, because I know you, I know your family, I know where you live; and I'm poor. I can't move my family to Egypt and Syria. So they are most vulnerable in that most vulnerable category.

In the middle area is probably Department of Border Enforcement. There's some sectarian influences. It's kind of the way we've done it. On the Syrian border we have all Sunnis there, and many of them are from the Shamarra (Phonetic) tribe, which is there on the Syrian border. So there's some inbred corruption, but not necessarily
sectarianism.

Now if we remove the Sunni guards on the Syrian border and put Shias there, it might be more sectarian. Just like on the Iranian border, almost all of them are Shia with the exception of in the KRG, Kurdish.

Then the National Police would be from the middle to more sectarian, because they are largely Shia, though we've really made an effort to change that.

There are almost no Sunni commanders in the National Police when we first got here. Now about 50 percent of the Division Commanders, one of two, is Sunni. Four of nine brigade commanders are Sunni. Seven or eight, depending on what day it is -- seven or eight of the battalion commanders -- I'm sorry, nine of the battalion commanders of the 27 are Sunni.

That is at least going in the right direction. But there are sectarian influences, and it starts, I think, at the GOI -- not starts, but it's also at the GOI, because Prime Minister Maliki himself appears to be suspicious of Baathists and Sunnis that are in the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Security Forces. He is just concerned, and I don't blame him. He's lived a life here in Iraq, but that has now
manifested itself into OCINC, and my favorite lady in all Iraq, (Phonetic) -- and she is, obviously -- I think she is evil, but she is pushing the Shia agenda, which she as the principal advisor for Military Affairs for the Prime Minister had no problems with calling directly down to the Division Commanders and telling them the different things they needed to do or get rid of so-and-so.

If there is an Iraqi Army or National Police commander that actively fought JAM, you know that they would hear something. (Phonetic) who was a commander of the 3rd National Police Brigade, was working very well in West Rasheed with our 4th Brigade, 1-ID and 1st of the 28th Infantry, and they are fighting JAM, helping (Inaudible) and fighting Jaish al-Mahdi. Has removed, and that was a shame that that occurred.

So there are some --

Did that happen recently?

BRIG. GENERAL PITTAIRED: That happened -- oh, was it April? I think it was April when that happened.

We've had a few other instances of that. General Abdullah -- he got calls from and this OCINC, the Office of the Commander in Chief, the Prime Minister.
Again, there are so many different inputs to what the government is doing.

Sectarianism isn't necessarily on-purpose sectarianism, but it is the making sure that the Shia agenda and the Shia dominated government remains. Do I understand that? Yeah, I do. I just don't like it, especially as we think reconciliation is the way to go. But that may not be what the Shia dominated government really wants.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Sir, I'm just trying to get you back on your schedule. Is there anything we haven't asked you that you feel like you want to --

BRIG. GENERAL BITTARD: No. I feel like I've gone too far with the answers, but I told you --

(b)(3), (b)(6) It's actually great, sir.

Thanks very much. That concludes this interview.