

~~* S E C R E T *~~

U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

+ + + + +

INTERVIEW
OF
MAJOR GENERAL WALTER GASKIN, USMC
COMMANDING GENERAL
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE-WEST

+ + + + +

JANUARY 11, 2008

FALLUJAH, IRAQ

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

~~* S E C R E T *~~

Approved for Release

~~* S E C R E T *~~

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 (b)(3), (b)(6) This is (b)(3), (b)(6)
3 (b)(3), (b)(6) the Multinational Corps-Iraq Historian.
4 Today is Friday, the 11th of January 2008 at
5 approximately 1805.

6 We are here at the Headquarters of
7 Multinational Force-West at Camp Ramadi -- I'm sorry,
8 at Camp Fallujah outside of Fallujah, Iraq. I am here
9 interviewing the Commanding General, Multinational
10 Force-West.

11 Sir, to validate the recording, could you
12 go ahead and introduce yourself in your own voice?

13 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: Yes. I am Major
14 General Walter Gaskin, and I am the Commanding General
15 of Multinational Force-West and (Unintelligible).

16 (b)(3), (b)(6): Thank you, sir.

17 For the listener's benefit, there was a
18 previous interview done with General Gaskin on the
19 26th of June 2007. This is an interview that is being
20 conducted within a few weeks of the transition to 1st
21 Marine Expeditionary Force.

22 So, sir, I wanted to be able to again

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

3

1 capture some of those not quite end of tour, but
2 coming up on it perspectives.

3 To start off, I wanted to ask: If you
4 look at that period from late June when we spoke last
5 to today, how would you characterize what you have
6 seen as the key operations, initiations, evolution of
7 the fight out here in West at this point?

8 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: I think what you
9 will see is a continuation of what we discovered from
10 right at the beginning of March through June, and that
11 was the taking back of the population centers from al
12 Qaeda, pushing them out into the hinterland north of
13 the Euphrates River, east of Lake Tata (Phonetic) and
14 south down into the wadis and into the areas toward
15 (Inaudible) and the Mesk (Phonetic) security area.

16 We believed then that we had to -- as we
17 have seen now, that we had to have a single focus by
18 both kinetic effect, was removing al Qaeda, but
19 followed very closely we had to have an economic
20 development, a sense of development of governance and
21 a building of capacity of the Iraqi Security Forces.

22 So the first thing that kind of grabbed

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 us, and we were right at beginning of our contribution
2 from the surge -- What really grabbed us was that, as
3 we were able to take the population centers back, the
4 incidents, whether it be IED, small arms fire,
5 indirect fire, dropped precipitously.

6 So then we realized that we were really
7 onto something, but it was not like we had done
8 before, because we had fought in al Qaim, we had
9 fought in Fallujah, we had fought in Ramadi, but this
10 time what we did differently is we backfilled. So
11 there was a persistent presence with the Iraqi Police

12 When I got over here, the year 2006 was
13 the year of police, but I would now characterize 2007
14 as the actions of the police, because they brought to
15 the table familiarity with their communities, loyalty
16 from their community, respect from their community of
17 being one of them, and their agreement to providing a
18 rule of law made them a very viable force for
19 eliminating what we discovered were the (Inaudible) of
20 al Qaeda, and that is stifling, intimidating and
21 murdering the folks within the cities.

22 We also found out that this was a classic

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

5

1 COIN operation separating the al Qaeda from the
2 people, and we made the people the center of gravity.
3 There, when we saw these happening, the discovery was
4 -- as we got into the city, not only did we gate up
5 the city by dividing into precincts and districts
6 within the city and establishing a Joint Security
7 Station that had an Iraqi Police in charge, but also
8 engaging the populace in support, engaging the Muktaf
9 (Phonetic), who was the civic leader for that
10 community, and also bringing in Coalition forces along
11 with our Iraqi forces together as a team in there; but
12 clearing that out, al Qaeda out, putting in those
13 security forces and immediately bringing some relief
14 to the people when there were humanitarian aid, some
15 claims to fix things that were broken during the
16 actual fighting, so that they were beginning to have
17 some normalcy.

18 Then we started having the civic --
19 started looking at bringing the services back to the
20 folks, because immediately once they get some
21 security, they wanted these services, whether it was
22 electricity, water, sewage, trash, rubble removal.

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 All of those items were very meaningful to them.

2 This meant clearing places for the kids to
3 return to school. It also meant day labor for hiring
4 those young folks who were kind of thrown out and
5 caught in the middle of the fighting in there. Since
6 the state owned enterprises were closed, there was no
7 place to work.

8 So not only the hiring of these Iraqi
9 police meant meaningful work for somebody in the
10 community. It also meant that they brought stability
11 and security so other people could work, could open up
12 their shops and they could participate in the day
13 labor build-out that was pushed throughout the
14 communities.

15 So we saw this moving throughout the major
16 population centers. Whether you are talking about
17 Ramadi, Hit, Baghdadi, al Qaim, Fallujah, it's the
18 same process that was working.

19 So we watched the Iraqi police grow from
20 about 11,000 up to its current state of 24,000. We
21 also knew that we had to train those Iraqi police,
22 professionalize them, and to make sure that they were

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

7

1 working within the rule of law. But instantly, we
2 discovered that, because the people believed in those
3 indigenous personnel working in the cities, the chips
4 came in.

5
6
7
8 1.4c
9
10

11 So discover of castouts went up
12 exponentially, and the -- and like I said, the
13 incidents just dropped down. So the cities became
14 instantly calm places to live, and then you saw the
15 bustling marketplaces of Iraq.

16 I think that we were onto something. We
17 discovered how al Qaeda operates, and they operate
18 near a mosque. That's the way they get their
19 recruiting. They had some type of chop shop or place
20 to make IEDs, whether that be vehicles or just the
21 kinds that they buried or shoved out in the roads,
22 those crusher plates; and they have a safe haven where

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

8

1 they could actually hangout and having meetings. And
2 now we discovered that they were very closely located,
3 and they used that to intimidate the police and the
4 leadership of the community.

5 So once we found that, we had to (Several
6 words inaudible). We were even engaged the Imams as
7 far as their leadership in helping that, rebuilding
8 mosques.

9 We practiced that we would not go into
10 mosques like Iraqis go into mosques. They appreciate
11 the respect for their culture and their religion that
12 we brought.

13 (b)(3), (b)(6) Sir, I wanted to ask
14 also, in the context of the governance and economic
15 piece, knowing that as we became less kinetic, how
16 have you seen -- Since we spoke in June, what has been
17 the continued growth of that? And realizing we have
18 had other agencies that were perhaps in play already,
19 some new agencies have come into play, agencies and
20 entities, how do you see that having progressed since
21 we talked last?

22 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: I think it's

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

9

1 tremendous. Matter of fact, probably some of the best
2 things we did in organization was in having a deputy
3 oversight over the economic development portion and
4 the tribal engagement.

5 So the governance, economic development,
6 in addition to those members of the G-5 as well as the
7 CAG (Phonetic) -- all that came with oversight. But
8 the reason why it became even more -- and then I'll
9 talk about the connection of the provincial
10 reconstruction teams -- but just from the staff
11 perspective, that they were to understand what was
12 happening and how the Iraqis felt as being
13 disenfranchised and separated from their federal
14 government, and even more so, separated from their
15 provincial government because of a boycott of an
16 election in 2005.

17 Most of them are now experiencing new
18 principles of democracy that they had never had
19 before. They were very, very used to it as being
20 pushed down to them, this is what you get, this is all
21 you get. So that was happy.

22 Now in order for them to get anything,

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 they had to find a means to pull it out of a
2 government, a government that they didn't really trust
3 because it was now run by a Shia, Shia from a
4 political sense, and 1.4b, 1.4d

5 So they figured that that government
6 (Inaudible). So what we started at the grassroots
7 level -- there was some spark of (Inaudible) up here,
8 and we had a Governor Mamoun (Phonetic). Although he
9 is from IRP, the Islamic (Inaudible) Party, he was
10 still a very brave person, and he never gave up the
11 government shop.

12 His life has been (Inaudible) 35 times,
13 but he came to work every day, and on a vehicle,
14 (Several words inaudible), but he believed that that
15 was the seat of government and that, if he ever left
16 that, he would leave the government.

17 The Provincial Council was meeting in
18 Baghdad, and there was no city governance at all.
19 They were, of course, in hiding because of the murder
20 and intimidation campaign of al Qaeda (Several words
21 inaudible).

22 So once we were able to remove al Qaeda

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

11

1 from the cities, each one of the cities started
2 setting up their own government. They appointed an
3 emir. They had a city council. They were explained
4 the rules of city councilship means that they each had
5 a city council.

6 It is subdivided into sections. They had
7 a section for technical, and there were so many
8 technicals, meaning a professional person, on that
9 committee. You have so many seats for sheikhs, and
10 you have so many seats for then party membership or
11 political membership. But you were beginning to see
12 a representative entity.

13 Once we started getting those formed up,
14 we then can explain to them, in order for you to get
15 money from the government, you've got to prioritize
16 projects, and that includes for the rebuilding, the
17 electrical power, the fuel, all these services that
18 you want. You have to also understand that your
19 government is very, very (Inaudible), because it goes
20 from the Director Generals. Each level led up to the
21 central government under their ministers, and that you
22 now have a governor and we have a mayor, and you have

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

12

1 that line.

2 So we took time out to train them on how
3 to plan civic life, how to run a city, how to develop
4 a budget, because they had never had a budget before.
5 We did some classes up in Urbil where we got the
6 leadership sitting down and doing, you know,
7 Governance 101.

8 We had the leadership come together and
9 said this is how you plan a budget; here is the budget
10 that you have. You can't really have any transparency
11 with the 2006 budget, but then (Unintelligible) in
12 2007, and this is how you got to demonstrate how you
13 would spend that, and because of that expenditure they
14 were able to go back (Inaudible) to the Prime Minister
15 for a supplemental, and they were the first one to get
16 a supplemental budget of \$7 million, because we could
17 show how they were spending the 107 that was given.

18 Then we had a thing called Helicopter
19 Governance, and that is where the DCG, General Allen,
20 was absolutely phenomenal. He was able to put the
21 Governor on a helicopter, along with the PC Chair, a
22 Provincial Police, some other DGs and some of the

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

13

1 members of the Provincial Council, and they would go
2 out and see the constituents around Anbar.

3 Now Anbar would talk about (Inaudible),
4 and you are talking about an area the size of North
5 Carolina or New York. It's an all day drive to go
6 anyway. So when we put them on a helicopter and they
7 could actually fly into these municipalities and
8 actually do what they are supposed to do by their
9 rules - in other words, when the Provincial Chairman
10 goes in, he validates their city council: You've got
11 so many of those represented on here and, yes, you've
12 got that, and okay, what projects that (Inaudible).

13 The Governor meets with the mayor and
14 accepts the Mayor's papers: Yes, you have gone
15 through the proper vetting. You have been nominated
16 by your Provincial Council. I now say that you are
17 the Mayor and, oh, by the way, I'm Governor Mamoun
18 (Phonetic), because some of them had never seen him
19 before. They had heard about him. He's up there in
20 Ramadi. And you got a Provincial Chairman, you know.

21 We discovered that, by their own method,
22 that Anbar is divided up into 10 police districts, and

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 we were trying to divide them up another way. But
2 then we said, hey, they know the districts there are;
3 let's just (Inaudible) districts, and it turned out we
4 got 10 districts.

5 A district of al Qaim includes, you know,
6 your baby and your saber, you know, all that, and
7 Fadifah has a triad like we thought, but we found out
8 that Hit had had Baghdadi and Kasouli (Phonetic).

9 So I mean, those districts that were --
10 Well, it says 10 districts. So we (Several words
11 inaudible). He goes out, and he meets at the police,
12 district police, and talked about hiring, a lot of
13 trained criminal enterprise and those things that you
14 would expect the Chief of Police to do and respond to
15 the Provincial Chief of Police.

16 Of course, the government will then take
17 their petitions, bring it back and prioritize to the
18 province based on funds that he has available. And he
19 had \$107 million, and look at all the things that
20 people need. It exceeded actually what he had. So
21 that's what drove them to do that.

22 The major cities around is where he did

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

15

1 Helicopter Governance.

2 The other part of that governance is that
3 it's whole country, this whole area is tribal. And if
4 you understand that as how important and how
5 fundamental the tribal society and the influence and
6 position of the sheikh, then you begin to understand
7 how everything works.

8 They will tell you that they were tribal
9 before they were Muslims, and they will always be
10 tribal. You can ignore that fact if you want to, but
11 it's to your own peril.

12 They will also tell you that nothing
13 happens unless the sheikhs agree to it. I can tell
14 you, too, that the sheikhs are the ones that say
15 Fight, and the sheikhs are the ones that will say
16 Don't Fight. The sheikhs are the ones who said don't
17 participate in the election.

18 So understanding why they do what they do
19 and who the power brokers are as far as the sheikhs
20 and their influence, and seeing how the sheikhs are
21 grouped together, we were very fortunate that sheikhs
22 happened to be -- You know, just like we had our areas

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

16

1 of operation get-together, so we had the Fallujah
2 sheikhs, the Ramadi sheikhs and everybody west of
3 Ramadi, all the western sheiks. Frankly, that's what
4 they call themselves, too, western sheiks.

5 Then we would have a number of sheikhs who
6 were expatriots. They were living in Jordan or Syria.
7 Five of them have come back. Five of the major
8 sheikhs have come back out of about eight. But you
9 know, there is a real misunderstanding if you believe
10 that these sheikhs left and deserted their people.

11 It was all the other way around. It's the
12 people who sent their sheikhs off. Sheikhs are so
13 important in this society that, when they are killed,
14 as al Qaeda had done to sheikhs, it was devastating.
15 It was like losing a patriarch. I mean, you just lost
16 a head of your existence. You actually lost your
17 connection up through the tribal ones to Mohammud or
18 through Moses.

19 I mean, these guys trace their history all
20 the way to Adam and Eve, and they can tell you,
21 grandfather -- and one sheikh talked to me, you know,
22 21 grandfathers ago. I mean, you know, that's the

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

17

1 level of which they (Inaudible) sheikhs.

2 So when you lost your sheikhs who were the
3 keeper, who protected, you provided for them, they
4 said, no, we can't (Inaudible). So they sent them out
5 of the country -- to get them back. And because they
6 have never lost influence, they were always sending
7 the word through whoever they designated to carry it
8 while they were gone.

9 So being able to engage with those sheikhs
10 and talk about the future of Anbar, our position is
11 that you've got to realize that the Shias inside --
12 get over it. Get over the fact that the Shia is
13 inside, and connect with that government that's going
14 to be able to take care of your people.

15 So our thing that we wanted to do with
16 engagement with the sheikhs was use them in the
17 connecting and the reconciliation that has to occur
18 between the government and the province. That's what
19 we did, and I think that was the major movement that
20 connected together.

21 The sheikhs approved the leadership. The
22 leadership views the sheikhs council, as they have

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 always through history, and out in the government
2 centers further out, there is a sheikh's room because
3 of how the sheikhs believe. And they remind you that
4 Maliki, Barahnsalem (Phonetic), or any of the
5 leadership in Baghdad belongs to a tribe.

6 So they understand. There is nothing new
7 to them what we are saying to you. Most of the time,
8 you don't understand. They understand exactly what we
9 are saying, you know. They will play like this
10 political game, but they understand the influence, and
11 we will not be ignored, you know, on the sheikh -- or
12 belief that they are the foundations of reconciliation
13 that will occur out here.

14 The thing that we were able to do is to
15 forge genuine relationships with the sheikhs. So I
16 talk about our Sheikh Kamese (Phonetic), and when I
17 talk about Sheikh Hakim (Phonetic) or Sheikh Maher
18 (Phonetic) or Sheikh Spa (Phonetic), you know, I'm
19 talking about guys I know, and that we have set down
20 and eat goat together and talk about the issues of the
21 day. It's not someone who you just send a note to.
22 We've got to genuinely understand.

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

19

1 There are two things that I think that
2 have brought about our relationship with the sheikhs
3 that are very important: Trust and respect. You
4 know, if you trust me, then when we talk, we can talk
5 very candidly.

6 I can tell you when I fought you, why I
7 fought you, and why I won't fight you again and why I
8 hate al Qaeda, and I am not going to ever, ever turn
9 again on you, because you helped me kill al Qaeda, and
10 I have a blood feud with al Qaeda, and it takes six
11 generations to eliminate a blood feud. So it is
12 permanent.

13 The other thing is respect. You know, I
14 am not somebody running around a fire with a loin
15 cloth on. I am a man. I am a very educated man, and
16 a lot of them are. I have a sensing of my country.
17 I have a history and a respect for my history, and
18 meaning means a lot. So I don't expect you talk down
19 to me, at me or by me, you know.

20 So when you get there, you know, it's like
21 you are not the only one with good ideas. You may be
22 in a better position to use your ideas, but I have

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

20

1 good ideas as well.

2 That professional interchange built on
3 trust and respect allowed us to get further along and,
4 I am convinced, faster than we ever dreamed possible
5 for creating stability and peace out here.

6 We became -- They prefer to call us
7 brothers, rather than friends, and I used to say we
8 are a friend, you know, friendly forces. Friendly
9 forces are colleagues, but a brother is a family.

10 So friends, you can get mad with and lose.
11 Brothers, you can get angry with your brothers, but
12 that passes because you are bound by blood. So that's
13 the relationship that we sought, and that's where we
14 had (Inaudible).

15 That relationship has been started a long
16 time. It wasn't just -- forged along in here, but the
17 relationship had been started. You know, these
18 Marines out here, you know, there's something about
19 these Marines, and their ability to see that we were
20 sincere in it, whether we were out in al Qaim or in
21 Fallujah.

22 So when they hear of us talking about

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

21

1 leaving, you know, they are very concerned. I have
2 had several examples of what they think about leaving.
3 One, I was talking to the Mayor of Fadifah. He says,
4 you know, are you leaving? I said, well -- He says,
5 no, are you leaving, because the last time you left us
6 to go fight in Fallujah, they lined us up in the
7 soccer field and shot some of the leadership of the
8 city. So we just need to know if you are going to be
9 here with us until we can get up on our feet and be
10 able to defend ourselves. And I promised him that we
11 would be here, and we are still here.

12 We have built capacity of their police.
13 But as Sheikh Kamese says about leaving, you know, you
14 can't take a cake out of the oven before it is done
15 just because it smells good. He believes that.

16 He was talking about us moving out of the
17 city. He was talking about the IP. He said these IPs
18 are training. They are going to do very good one day.
19 What the Coalition forces do for them is give them
20 professional training and allow them to be able to do
21 what they are put there for, is their security, and
22 that is a lot to them.

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

22

1 [REDACTED] : Sir, what do they say
2 when you talk to the tribal leaders, when you talk to
3 the Governor -- What is their metric for knowing when
4 it will be time for us to leave?

5 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: The first thing we
6 had to learn was this. You know, it's not my culture,
7 really, (Several words inaudible) and how they go
8 about making decisions.

9 We are very Type A personalities. We go
10 into a meeting. We have an agenda. We have a time
11 frame which the agenda is going to have, and whoever
12 facilitates moves the meeting along.

13 For Iraqis, when they go to a meeting,
14 decisions are made. They come to the meeting for the
15 formal part of discussion and probably (Inaudible).
16 So if you go in there thinking that you are going to
17 get a decision, you'll get a lot of talk, a lot of
18 batting back and forth, and if you witness it, you
19 will see a lot of arguing back and forth. But they
20 are only talking about the issues that they didn't get
21 to discuss before they got to the meeting, because
22 this is already decided.

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

23

1 So they have already decided that we are
2 their guests, and like guests we aren't here forever.
3 You are here for a particular purpose. So they wanted
4 us to very candidly and openly state what our purpose
5 was, because they remind us that there is no land in
6 Iraq that doesn't belong to the sheikhs. So you can't
7 buy it. You can't come out and put a house on it.

8 So there's only a few ways to get land.
9 It is through hereditary. You get it through the
10 government taking it, as Saddam used to do, or you get
11 it through conquering.

12 Well, what are you doing? So when they
13 hear that term "occupation," their connotation of
14 occupation is in the conquer mode. You know, you are
15 here to take my land. But if you help me get rid of
16 those who mean me harm, then you are obviously my
17 friend, and if you fight along with me and shed your
18 blood, you are my brother.

19 So they think that we are going to leave
20 eventually, but they didn't want us to get caught up
21 in the political implications of leaving that they
22 hear. I mean, they are very astute as far as that

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 line.

2 They didn't want us to leave until they
3 were able to stand up on their own and independently.

4 (b)(3), (b)(6): Given what you described
5 about the situation, sir, any concerns as you get
6 ready to hand over? What degree of risk is there that
7 al Qaeda would be able to reenter Anbar Province?

8 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: Well, you know,
9 that's probably the difficult part. That resides as
10 both the Corps and from the Force as they come in.

11 Now we had sort of a (Inaudible)
12 breakdown, a reduction of forces, a lot of forces and
13 you were leaving, but that's also predicated on
14 building a capacity by itself.

15 So, you know, we got two Iraqi divisions
16 out here, the 1st and 7th, and we've got -- There are
17 4,000 Police, and we've got the border patrol and we
18 got the Iraqi highway patrol, all of them developing
19 in capacity.

20 So I know it's there, but about 24 months
21 ago -- 24 months -- Now I'm at about 18 months left
22 before I think the Iraqi forces will have the capacity

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

25

1 to stand up on their own. But that's predicated upon
2 us maintaining our force levels about where they are,
3 coming down to potentially -- When I started out in
4 discussing this, I had 14 battalions, U.S. battalions,
5 and by the time I get down to this, there will be
6 eight because of the where we had planned to go.

7 So here are the dangers. I'm often
8 pushing away the peace dividends. You are doing so
9 well, the incidence levels are so low. And I hear
10 that from both Coalition side and the Iraqi side.

11 Currently, from the 1st Division there is
12 a 4th Brigade in Baghdad. The 3rd Brigade just left
13 to go to Diyala. I already had one battalion, 221,
14 and I've got another Iraqi battalion, 217, down in
15 Menoah (Phonetic), because they are good fighters.

16 We just moved 57 Cav out of 13 BCT, had
17 moved into MND-C area, Torahbor (Phonetic). That is
18 where they are going to be fighting. So the point is
19 that, to make this plan work that we call "next step"
20 to where the Iraqis will have two divisions that
21 occupy battle space, has entered with the population
22 centers with the police in the center, in the

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 population centers, an Iraqi Army outside ready to
2 respond and assist them on anything that exceeds their
3 capabilities.

4 This is a lot of territory and, therefore,
5 we had planned out, when you start moving units out,
6 you risk that. So my greatest concern is that we
7 don't move the cake out of the oven just because it
8 smells good. It's because we are doing well, and it's
9 because I am of the belief that, just like we ran al
10 Qaeda out and they went around and started using the
11 Tigris River to come down into places like Diwaniyah,
12 Salladin and the fight that MND-North has, you know --
13 I apologize (b)(6) (Inaudible), because I know who
14 pushed those guys up there to fight. But if (b)(6)
15 fights now -- and he is really engaged in that in
16 every aspect -- they got to go somewhere.

17 They have already declared that Ramadi is
18 the Islamic capital of Iraq. We saw with the
19 (Inaudible) campaign, they will attempt to come back.
20 The difference is, in all the attempts that we saw so
21 far, whether they be suicide bombers or little cells
22 trying to get back in, the Iraqis (Several words

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

27

1 inaudible).

2 We have been preparing them for operations
3 out in the desert, because every operation they have
4 been on, they have been (Inaudible). I think that is
5 another thing that was unique about our area, is how
6 we partnered with -- We partnered with all 21
7 battalions, all seven brigades, and all both
8 divisions. We had transition teams at every level of
9 that, division, brigade, and we enhanced the
10 transition teams enough for those that were at the
11 battalion level, they could push some down to the
12 company level, if necessary, for operations.

13 We took them on very type operation we
14 have, whether that was using the (Inaudible) in the
15 lake and up and down the Euphrates, aero-stuff where
16 we put them on helicopters and did assault operations.
17 We did move into contacts or we did coordinated
18 attacks, which means airborne and ground. Every
19 operation, we have had the Iraqis with us, even when
20 we were clearing out the cities we had the Iraqis with
21 us.

22 So that they are good fighters. They have

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

1 been bloodied. They know and understand the clearing
2 fight, and that's why they were kind of pulled off to
3 do other things. That's what I mean by (Inaudible).
4 These guys are good. There is no doubt in my mind,
5 and I think the more they will be able to do these
6 things with us, the better they will become.

7 You just can't buy experience. You have
8 to earn it, live it, do it. So my greatest concern as
9 I hand off is that General Kelly will be able to hold
10 onto and continue the timeline of development of the
11 ISF.

12 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, we are only on your
13 schedule for about a half-hour. So I don't want to
14 impinge on the rest of your schedule.

15 Is there anything else I haven't asked you
16 before we wrap up that you wanted to make mention of
17 as you reflect back on your tour?

18 MAJ. GENERAL GASKIN: I think we about did
19 it all, but the point is that I hope that you would
20 get around to talk to the (Several words inaudible).
21 I think that made the difference, that we (Several
22 words inaudible), and even the MOG had a battle space

~~* S E C R E T *~~

~~* S E C R E T *~~

29

1 as well, and because of the cross-pollination between
2 the (Several words inaudible), really became principal
3 to how we could do that.

4 Having the DCG able to make it one battle
5 space between the two RCTs and the BCT, I think, made
6 all the difference, because it made the boundaries
7 invisible on the bigger fight, and it will be easier
8 to move forces back and forth between -- rather than
9 just having the BCT with all those assigned.

10 So every one of those colonels who had
11 (Inaudible) BCT command had a joint unit, because he
12 had an honor battalion, a Marine battalion with him.
13 So they all got the experience of capabilities of the
14 various size units.

15 (b)(3), (b)(6)

Sir, thanks very much.

16 That concludes this interview.
17
18
19
20
21
22

~~* S E C R E T *~~