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U.S. ARMY CENTER OF MILITARY HISTORY

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INTERVIEW

OF

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

C-3 OPERATIONS

MULTINATIONAL CORPS - IRAQ

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SEPTEMBER 23, 2007

This transcript was produced from tapes  
provided by the U.S. Army 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) the  
writing historian for Multinational Corps - Iraq and  
for the U.S. Army Center of Military History, and with  
me is --

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

the Multinational Corps - Iraq historian.

(b)(6)

Today is 23 September. We are  
about to interview (b)(3), (b)(6) the C-3  
Operations Officer for the Multinational Corps - Iraq,  
at the al Faw Palace at Camp Victory, Baghdad, Iraq.

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

it's been about three  
months since we last interviewed you on 16 June. At  
that time, the Corps was about to begin the real surge  
operations, Phantom Thunder followed in August by  
Phantom Strike.

Could you review from a Corps perspective  
the major accomplishments of those two operations,  
recognizing that Phantom Strike probably hasn't ended  
yet.

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

Just for the history, I

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guess, Phantom Thunder was really designed to pull together all of the divisional efforts in North, West, Center, Baghdad, to a lesser degree Center, South, and Southeast, and it started on 15 June, which is also the same date when the last surge brigade, the plus-up brigade, which was 2-3 ID, became fully operational, capable. It actually got here a little earlier than that, probably 20-25 days earlier than that, but that is when they reached they FOC date.

It was really focused on what we've been talking about, really, since we got here, was the strategy of taking away support zones in the belts where we thought most of -- at least from the AQI side of it, most of the organizers, the actual people conducting the attacks and the many ways supplies, to include cars and explosives, were coming from for the spectacular attacks, the high profile attacks mainly against Shias gathering civilians which was fueling the sectarian violence.

So we really went back to what we started with when we first came here, is how do we break that

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cycle of sectarian violence. We decided a long time ago that one of the first steps had to be was cut down the number of mass casualties, mostly on the Shia side, caused by these spectacular attacks.

That, in turn, resulted in the Shia doing more covert sectarian cleansing. So that's kind of the background. That's when we kind of kicked it off with 3 ID, which is now MND-Center focused in the Arab Jabour area and the area in the southern belts, Iskandariyah, Moqtadiyah -- Mahmudiyah, sorry -- and a little bit further south, to deny those accelerants from getting into Baghdad, with one brigade, 3-3 ID, on the east side of the Tigris River focused in the Sompak (Phonetic) Narwan (Phonetic) area.

That is also -- I mean, like I said, that's when the last surge brigade got here. Not all of the brigades went into Baghdad. So when -- You know, the original genesis or original reasoning behind the surge is kind of what I described, but really the strategy was focused on, number one, protecting the population of Baghdad.

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So a couple of the surge brigades did go into Baghdad proper to 4-1 ID and the 2A-2, but the rest of them went into the belts. That was what really Phantom Hammer was designed to do.

(b)(6)

Hammer or Phantom Thunder?

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

I'm sorry, Phantom Thunder. I'm getting my operations mixed up. It was (Inaudible) Torch, was the name of their operation, the Phantom Thunder.

For Phantom Strike, it started off as a -- It was a little bit different focus. We started to look at what was causing -- and we've been looking at it, but it became very obvious probably about, oh, nine months ago that the number one killer of our soldiers was the buried IEDs.

So we started doing some hot spot analysis of where we were losing the most soldiers to buried IEDs. Then as Phantom Thunder started to work, coupled with 3-2 Stryker brigades operations in Baqubah, we started to see the migration of al Qaeda in Iraq to other places outside of Baghdad, outside of

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Baqubah, at that point we thought mostly moving up the Diyala River Valley toward the Hammerin (Phonetic) Lake in the Hammerin Mountain Ranges and into MND-North, Samarra, outskirts of Samarra primarily, Mosul and up, Kalopah (Phonetic), Mosul and Kalopah being in the Ninevah Province.

So we started to do some analysis where the buried IEDs were moving, and almost at the same time as we were looking at where al Qaeda was moving.

There was a distinct corollary between where the buried IEDs were happening and where we thought al Qaeda was moving.

So Phantom Strike was designed originally to go after -- in those areas of the buried IEDs, the implacers, the facilitators and the many ways AQI in those specific areas.

So again, it was a series of division operations, and division operations, you know, which turned into brigade, battalion and company operations, to go after that, was the original concept.

That expanded to include EFPs, which was

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the second most lethal weapon in terms of coalition casualties. We probably lost -- We probably still lose more soldiers on a ratio. I mean, there's less EFPs out there, but we lost soldiers, but the deep buried IEDs tend to be very large and very catastrophic.

So that became the focus of those two operations. Since we've kicked it off, it's kind of expanded to grow into other IED spots.

Another focus area for Strike was also what we've called the "quarry" area, Operation Bedrock, which is about halfway between Lake Tharthar (Phonetic) and Taji, which traditionally has been on -- Well, it's always been on the scene between MND-Northwest and Baghdad.

So with the 13th MEU here, which has since left, we had the opportunity to get into that area and found some pretty significant homemade explosive caches in that area, plus 11 Cav. We freed up some battle space for 11 Cav by changing their battle space with the arrival of 42, one of the surge brigades,

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took space away from 11 Cav, gave it to 42, and allowed 11 Cav to go ahead and move further to the west than they have ever been able to before --

(b)(6) That is part of --

(b)(3), (b)(6) It's all part of the same.

(b)(6) But MND-B -- That 11 Cav was--

(b)(3), (b)(6) Right.

(b)(6) So they expanded really outside of -- quite a bit outside --

(b)(3), (b)(6) It's always been Baghdad's battle space. It's just giving the numbers of forces available to Baghdad, and then the issues we have always had with Taji and Tarmeah (Phonetic) areas. They've never been freed up to do that before, but by taking Taji -- not Taji, but Tarmeah away from that brigade, 11 Cav, they could expand their battle space for the west and get out into areas it's probably been -- It's very sparse out there.

So it's probably not a sanctuary, but it has definitely been a place where they have been on

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store or train, offered them freedom of movement, really, from al Anbar over into Diyala or al Anbar maybe up north.

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

You have mentioned Operation Phantom Strike and Phantom Thunder. Just one aspect to clarify: Operation Bedrock was considered part of Operation phantom Strike or was it considered a separate --

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

It has taken on -- It was originally conceived of as a separate operation. There was a variety of ways we were looking at it. It actually was a -- We considered forming a JSOA, joint special operational area, for a while and really giving it to Seejesota (Phonetic), and they did do some targeted operations out there, did some intel builds.

The Corps has been watching it, was watching it through our eyes and doing some analysis on it, but then really, you know, when the 13th MEU, the extension of the 13th MEU was approved, that gave us the ability to put a ground force out there and

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apply some pressure.

The problem with that area was -- has always been and was this time, is MND-North's battle space is so large, they have never really applied the pressure.

So like I was telling you, (b)(6) in Baghdad is they have been focused on Baghdad and securing the locks into Baghdad, and they have never had the combat forces to get out there, and MNF-West had never had the combat forces to get out there.

So Bedrock actually originated as a three-division operation where North would block from the north, Baghdad would block from the South and the East, and MNF-West with the MEU would get in there and clear it.

It didn't work out that way, but we did get the MEU in there to actually do some operations in that area that we were concerned about.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Were there any other named operations? We kind of introduced with (Inaudible), Phantom Strike and also heard originally

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some discussion of Phantom Hammer as another operation.

Any other operations since we spoke to you last that we should address here?

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

No, I don't think so.

The Hammer -- that's the one I always get confused with Hammer -- was -- or is still Diwaniyah. I forget the date on it, but there was one day -- one night, actually, early morning, when I think it was somewhere around, give or take, 1080 rocket/mortars, a combination, shot at Fawbek over a course of about 45 minutes down at Qadasiyah (Phonetic) Province. City is Diwaniyah.

At that point, the boss said, okay -- and if you remember, we did Black Eagle previously, went in and cleared Diwaniyah, did a pretty good job clearing Diwaniyah, but the problem is that, as soon as we pulled out and turned it over to the IA and the IPs, it very quickly went right back, and in some cases worse than where it was before.

So it kind of coincided with the Polish

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rotation, which is as the C-2 for Qadasiyah Province and Diwaniyah. I think it's their ninth rotation or 10th rotation, but the old unit was going out. A new unit was coming in.

We started the planning effort with the old unit and carried on with the new unit, and it is a plan to go in and re-clear Diwaniyah, coupled with a IP development, construction of JSSes and COPs in Diwaniyah.

It was all based upon that one incident, pretty significant the numbers of mortars and rockets that were fired.

(b)(6) So we want to retain -- That's part of the retain and hold/clear routine? Clear, hold, retain?

(b)(3), (b)(6) It would be. What has changed since we planned this is the conditions have changed significantly in Diwaniyah.

So this has become an on-order mission, and right now the other piece of that was we applied some pretty significant pressure with Sejisodah

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(Phonetic) forces in ISOF in Diwar'iyah, and this Polish rotation doubled the numbers of maneuver platoons they have available to them, plus they've brought some of their special operations troops, their SOT, with them, which are having an impact, plus internal issues that JAM and Badr are having with the assassination of the Governor of Qada'siyah (Phonetic).

So there's a lot of things, dynamics, that have changed in Diwaniyah, and right now the conditions don't warrant Phantom Hammer. So it's an on-the-shelf operation that we will be prepared to execute.

Now you did bring up the clear, hold -- or clear, control, retain piece of it. The other piece of it, I would tell you, is -- I mean, General Odierno -- and I've never heard General Petraeus say it, but I'm confident he believes it, is part of this strategy is we are not going to give up the areas that we have cleared and controlled --

(b)(6)

Right.

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

-- until we have a force,

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an Iraqi force that we are very confident can then retain that ground. That is what the plus-up brigades have allowed us to do, and it didn't happen in the past, not because people didn't understand that concept.

It is you only had the brigades that were here at that time, and so you would clear. You would control for a while, and you would turn it over to the Iraqis to retain, and they were just not physically capable of doing it, and pretty soon you had the same problems you had before you cleared it.

So we -- You know, with Baqubah, with the areas near Jabour, northern area of Jabour, Tarmiyah (Phonetic), and really the support zones in Baghdad itself, we are at our limits right now in the areas that we can clear, control, retain, and do what I just said, and not turn it over until you have a high confidence that the Iraqi Security Force, whoever it's turned over to, preferably IPs but more likely IA or National Police, are able to do the retain piece, so you don't end up going in and clearing an area, you

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know, and months later you're right back there doing it again, which was the case at Diwaniyah. ID sent a unit down there to clear it right before we got here, and then, of course, we did it again. I think it was April/May time frame, and then we were contemplating doing it again, but I guess the conditions are much better for now.

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

Any other named operations we should mention that happened since we talked to you last?

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

Those are really the big three. Phantom Hammer is kind of the overarching thing. So not sure we ever put an end -- I know for a fact we never put an end date on Phantom Hammer -- or I'm sure, Phantom Thunder.

Phantom Thunder, I think, is in my opinion any still going on.

(b)(6)

So there was no clear demarcation line between Thunder and Strike?

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

No. I mean, at least not in writing there wasn't, and the boss may tell you

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something different. In my mind, there is not. It is more based upon the focus of that effort.

Like I said, Thunder was focused on, you know, the kinetic and non-kinetic operations in the support zones around Baghdad, and that effort is still very much going on and still very much a focus.

(b)(6) I'm going to take you back a little bit to December/January, just for this one question, because I'd like to try to get it clarified while I have the time with you.

When General Odierno comes in and he reverses the strategy at the end of December/beginning of January, so instead of the focus on transition, it's the focus on security, securing the population, I've seen in the documents that the first mention of the joint security stations on your 2 -- Frago 179 on 2 January, and the clear language in there that you are going to stay 24/7, once you clear it, to hold it in partnership with the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Security Forces, until that area is totally secure. Then you will turn it over to --

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What I'm interested mostly is, you know, the idea behind the joint security stations. They are jointly manned. What I want to try to pin down: Is that an original concept for the III Corps for either you, your C-3 crew or General Odierno?

It's a little bit hazy on that. I see it all of a sudden come up, and I don't really have much background on how it got developed.

(b)(3), (b)(6) You know, the concept of -- and there's really a couple of questions in there, Bill. But the concept of going from a transition focus to a focus, you know, a main effort of securing the population, primarily Baghdad, was really kind of an evolutionary thing over the course of probably about two months.

It was kind of tied to -- You know, General Casey before he left kind of made the statement that that strategy was not working. So we really started working this under General Casey.

About the same time that happened, General Casey -- it was announced that he was moving on;

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General Petraeus was going to replace him. I was not privy to it, but I know that General Odierno and General Petraeus had talked quite often on the phone even before General Petraeus got here, probably -- I don't know -- 30 days out or so, in preparation for his testimony with confirmation hearings before he came over here.

That is really when the concept of, you know, the main effort being securing the population with a focus on Baghdad kind of came out. The concept of getting soldiers back out onto the streets or out onto the streets for a 24/7 presence was part of that conversation.

You know, if you are going to do that, if you are going to keep them out in the neighborhoods 24 hours a day, seven days a week, there has to be a place where they have a --

(b)(6)

A base?

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

Yes, a base. So the

actual concept of a JSS -- I'm not sure that that wasn't just a product of the overall strategy.

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(b)(6) Could it be that 1st Cav developed that?

(b)(3), (b)(6) The 1st Cav definitely had a plan or a part in the development of that, but you also remember that this -- Well, you may not remember -- This concept had been going on for a long time out in MNF-West. They called them combat outposts.

(b)(6) The Marines?

(b)(3), (b)(6) The Marines, yes. Much as I hate to give them any credit. But MNF-West had been doing this for a while, and they called them combat outposts. (b)(3), (b)(6) an Army guy, in particular, in Ramadi was very much executing this concept of clearing a certain area, building an outpost, and then manning it jointly for 24/7.

So I think it was very evolutionary over time, that we just kind of applied that strategy to Baghdad. You know, the reality of having to give soldiers someplace where they could be and there was some level of force protection for them and they could

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command and control the forces that were out, coupled with what the boss had seen going on out in MNF-West.

I think that was really the genesis of most of it.

(b)(6)

Good.

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

The command, in particular, has pushed really hard since arriving here essentially from the start with the realignment of -- do we say you are downsizing? You are actually going to add five brigades, ran hard to get everybody in place as part of that surge, essentially listening to General Odierno prepare the staff mentally for what was ahead during the summertime, continued to get them the expectation of, hey, we are going to continue to run hard all summer, we've got to be particularly watchful as we get into July and August that al Qaeda in Iraq and other elements didn't find an opportunity to put on a big show to influence the October -- I'm sorry, the September testimony of General Petraeus.

We now have kind of gone through that testimony. We are at a point where we, I think, by

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common estimate, have made some real headway.

My question then is: Are you seeing any fatigue factor in there, just as the Operations Officer, either as you look around at the staff, your own staff, around the broader staff, as well as the operational units out there, knowing that layered on top of that was the 15-month extension?

(b)(3), (b)(6): Oh, absolutely. And I'll be the first one to admit that one of the first ones to talk about a 15-month rotation was probably me, but I'll also be the first one to admit that -- I mean, 15 months is a long time to be over here doing this, especially, like you're saying. I mean, bringing the five brigades on, the change in the strategy, and really a very aggressive, I think -- and to the credit of not the Corps staff but to the MNDs and really the brigades and battalions who are out there, the almost constant increase in op tempo in terms of operations we have had here over -- well, since at least June 15th and probably, in many cases, before that. Probably started back at the beginning of Fardel

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Kanoun, which I think was February 15th or somewhere around that time.

So I mean, the credit for the increase in op tempo and operations really goes to the soldiers and the junior leaders that are out there every day doing it.

But, yes, I mean, even a year -- you know, working seven days a week, anywhere from 14 to 18 hours a day, there's going to be some friction. But I don't see that that has been a huge issue with this Corps staff.

I mean, there are issues, but I don't think it's been a huge issue with this Corps staff, and I credit that just -- I mean, it's a pretty solid team, and there's some pretty impressive folks on this Corps staff, led by a very capable Chief of Staff that kind of keeps everybody humble and trucking along, and then, of course, the great command climate that the boss sets for the staff.

I would lying to tell you that -- I mean, it's not a long time. The fatigue is there. It's

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just I don't think anybody is having much of a problem muscling through it.

(b)(3), (b)(6) So by and large, you are not seeing any concerns in terms of troops in the field, in particular, or staff?

(b)(3), (b)(6) : I would tell you, 15 months -- I mean, 15 months may seem like a long time for us, but 15 months for a kid in a rifle squad is going to be an eternity.

You know, when 3-2 left, 32 Stryker -- or actually, once they got through up in Baqubah with Arrowhead Ripper, I never did get up there to see them, but I remember folks that did coming back and basically saying that they're basically spent, that we just can't push them anyplace else.

That unit, to their credit, started off in Mosul. We brought them down to Baghdad or actually, V Corps brought them down to Baghdad before we got here. They operated in Baghdad.

That was the unit we sent, at least one battalion, down to Diwaniyah, and then we sent the

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brigade headquarters and a couple of battalions up to Baqubah to clear that.

So those kids did their fair share over here in the 15 months they were here, and by the end of it, they were spent, and I think you start to see that in soldiers, that they have just about reached their limits, especially at the pace we've been pushing them.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Has that influenced your planning in terms of broader ops as you are working with the MNDs or Fs as you talk about a unit, that you realize that they are at a certain point? Does that discussion happen between you and the operations officers at the MNDs or Fs?

(b)(3), (b)(6) Not directly. I think, you know, obviously, the lower down you go, the better realization or better feel you get for how much of an impact it's had.

So it's not a topic that directly enters into the discussion, I think, but I think it's a common understanding amongst most of us that there are

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limits to what they can do.

(b)(6)

Op Order 07-01

has three lines of operation in it: Security, capable credible ISF, legitimate capable GOI, as well as security.

I wondered if you could discuss the progress of what the Corps has done and what the ISF and the GOI line of operations -- lines of operation?

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

You know, the capable governance in terms of the GOI is really not our area that we should be focused on. Building capable governance, for us, is more at the provincial level as the PDOPs and the provincial governor, in many cases the operation centers that we stood up or help to stand up, that the Iraqis have stood up.

That being said, the actions or inactions of the government of Iraq has such an impact on what we are doing almost day to day that the CG, General Berrigan, the Brit Deputy Commander, in particular, spent a lot of time in personal engagement with the senior leaders of the government of Iraq, Prime

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Minister's National Security Advisor, Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, the Office of the Commander in Chief, the OCINC, in particular the Minister of Defense, the Minister of the Interior.

From my foxhole -- and we don't pay that much attention to it, but from what I've seen is I think there has been some remarkable progress in the GIO and the security standpoint, if you will.

One of the things that we were very concerned about when we got here, because it was happening in the V Corps and, in particular, 4th Infantry Division -- and I'm sure you remember it well -- is the restrictions on where we could and couldn't do operations, Sadr City being one the key ones.

We probably had a couple of cases of that up front, but it has basically become an agreement between us and the government of Iraq that there will be no sanctuaries anywhere in Baghdad. It doesn't matter where it is, if it's Sadr City or Monsour or Aqadimiyah (Phonetic), that there will be no sanctuaries.

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That has been strongly backed by the Prime Minister, in particular, and the entire government of Iraq.

There was some real concerns about the OCINC when we first got here and their influence on the Prime Minister. We have seen that influence, I think, deteriorate.

(b)(6)

The OCINC?

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

The Office of the Commander in Chief. It's very similar to something Saddam had, and I forget the name that Saddam called it.

When we first got here, that office and the few trusted advisors that the PM had were countermanding or influencing the PM against decisions and recommendations made by his senior military and security advisors.

That has -- Their influence has gone down significantly since we've been here, and now they are, in fact, involved in the GOI's reconciliation program and, in many cases, making great progress.

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You know, one of the benchmarks out there -- and I hate those benchmarks. One of the benchmarks was that, you know, no government interference. Now, of course, government is going to provide guidance and direction, but no political interference in the job of, in particular, General Aboud and the Baghdad Operations Center, and we have seen great backing for General Aboud.

A lot of that is I think the government is maturing and starting to understand the issues that they face, I think, a little bit better, and it's just not about the TAC ferries (Phonetic) and, you know, and the Saddamists. That may not be their only issue.

It may not even be their biggest issue that they are facing, and just that the government has been in place now for a little while and has matured.

ISF -- I think there's been great growth in ISF. We get wrapped around the axle on these what we used to call the transition readiness assessment, TRA-1, 2, 3 and 4.

Since changed names to the Operational

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Readiness Assessment, and we get wrapped around the axle about, you know, a lack of progress to TRA-1, which really means they are conducting fully independent operations with minimal coalition help.

If you look at the categories of how we do those ratings, really only two of them are operational, you know -- well, actually three. But the thing that continues to lag that keeps them at less than TRA-1 is their ability to support themselves. It's the logistics infrastructure, which is just not there.

We have made some progress in that area, obviously not enough. But in terms of, you know, Iraqi units that, from what I -- when I talk to commanders and when I talk to 3's, and from what I've seen, you know, there is a high degree of confidence in a lot -- I say a lot; I don't know what the number is -- of Iraqi units out there from the commanders that are operating with them day by day.

I think that is really for two reasons. One is they are, in fact, getting better, just through

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experience. Two is, as part of the plus-up strategy and protecting the population, we have gone to this concept of partnering as opposed to just relying on the transition teams.

So they are working every day with coalition, in most cases American forces, learning from them, and developing confidence in that partnering relationship and working.

So I think the ISF has grown. I remember it must have been December of '04, maybe January '05, the first battalion to take -- one of the first two anyway -- battalion to take battle space in Baghdad was one I was working with, and from that point to, you know, what the Baghdad Operation Command and the 6th and 9th Iraqi Armies and the National Police were able to accomplish in Baghdad today is just -- You know, that's only been two, two and a half, three years, whatever it is. I think it's pretty amazing what they have been able to do.

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

In a very broad sense we have touched on a number of things, but I wanted to

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ask a very broad brushed question.

When you look back, when we sat down with you last, it was the day after the surge was complete on the 16th of June. In the broadest fashion, how would you describe what is different now as we sit down with you here on the 23rd of September?

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

Well, obviously -- I mean, in all categories we would like to go down, they are down. The number of attacks on us, ISF, civilians, coalition casualties, Iraqi casualties, whether it be ISF or civilian are down. Casualties per incident are down. IEDs are way down.

So I mean, everything we were trying to drive down is down, but if you go back to the original thought on why we are doing this, it was always the number of casualties we were taking -- the Shia mostly were taking -- I say mostly, just because it was very nondiscriminant. But those numbers are way down, and that has a lot to do with the efforts, like I say, going to the Belts, and then some very precise targeting by 1st Cav as MND-B, C-Jesotaf (Phonetic)

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and other forces against BVIED networks that operate in Baghdad.

There was -- We know enough about it to know there was a

1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

In terms of leadership and really foot soldiers in all three of those networks, they have been degraded pretty significantly, which is having a huge impact.

Going to operations inside of Baghdad, plus the fact of their ability to reinforce or resupply from the Belts, supporting zones, has been greatly diminished.

So I mean, that is significant, in my mind, and you've heard everybody else say this, too. I mean, the goal is obviously zero civilian casualties. So the casualties are still too high, and we've still got some work to do to bring that down further.

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Then the other thing, you know, that was not even a thought the last time we sat down was this concept of concerned citizens and the reconciliation with the tribes or with tribal leaders or with groups is probably a better way or putting it, because some of them are not even associated with a tribe, and the impact I think that's had on security.

It obviously started out in MNF-West probably fall of '06 and really turned the corner February/March of '07 to the point -- and you've heard this stat throw out there, too. I mean, I think it was up to on average somewhere between 15 and 60 attacks a day out in MNF-West, and I think probably over the last month we are probably averaging less than -- definitely less than five, probably around two or three a day.

What happened out in MNF-West is IEDs started to get pointed out by the locals to the point that they would take orange spray paint out and spray paint the road where the IEDs were to be cleared.

The same thing happened in Baqubah when we

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went out to Baqubah. There were 40 deep buried IEDs, large IEDs, and out of that only five of them exploded -- 35, and it may have been 42, 41, I don't know, but somewhere in that area, only 35 exploded, because most of those were pointed out by locals that had just had enough of al Qaeda, and really had enough of the violence, instigated primarily by al Qaeda.

So I'd say, you know, that has significantly changed, and that gives me a lot of optimism that we can continue to make improvements here over the five months we've got left or whatever it is.

I think that is absolutely the way forward for security, is to continue to expand these concerned citizens, and then the next hardest step is going to be getting them integrated into a legitimate ISF force recognized by the government, and so they are working for the government for the security of the Iraqi people, as opposed to working for us to secure a piece of infrastructure or run a checkpoint or whatever it is that they are doing at that point.

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[REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6) One of the changes, just in listening to General Odierno talking -- This happened -- I think one of the things that we looked at in the end of July was the realization that our folks had been on AQI.

Can you talk to me about what that shift in focus from AQI to what about the Shia extremist groups, the JAM extremist groups. Has that become the main focus, and what do you see as the point at --

[REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6) I don't think we could ever say AQI is not the focus. I mean, from a national perspective, I don't think Shia extremism, at least what we got right now, really impacts our national security interests, you know, minus the fact that, if they take control of the national resources of Iraq and do not cut off access to -- you know. But I think that's pretty much a stretch.

So I think our focus has to be the absolute destruction of AQI. You know, one of the things we can't -- We are going to leave this country one of these days, and what we can't have is a

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sanctuary almost like Afghanistan was before we went in there. So I think that has to remain our overall focus.

The Shia strategy we are working on right now is really not anything different than what we've been doing in the past, but the difference between AQI and the Sunnis is -- The strategy all along has been the destruction of AQI, but in order to do that, you have to drive a wedge between the normal Sunni population and the extreme Sunni population, in this case AQI.

There's some in the middle, you know, 1920s, Jaish Mohammed, others that are going to go one way or the other, but basically, you know, you had this side, you had AQ on the other side, and you had some groups in the middle.

So how do you drive that wedge and either force people to go to one side or the other? That was really the awakening and stuff like that when people -- and AQI did it to themselves. I mean, they just -- The Sunni population, from the moderates to even some

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of the extremes, had just had enough of the extreme, extreme that AQI was putting in place in areas that they -- small areas that they did gain control of.

So how do you do the same thing with the Shia population, knowing full well that a large majority of the Shia population are not extremists, and it's a handful that are causing issues? How do you drive that wedge?

We've chosen to do it by saying we are not focusing on the Shia population, and it even complicates it, because the Shia population -- I mean, you know, you're talking about OMS, you're talking about JAM, you're talking about Dahwa (Phonetic), you're talking about ISKI (Phonetic), you're talking about Fadilla (Phonetic) or Badr.

So what part of shia are you talking? That was confusing company commanders. It was confusing me. So -- and it's not been published yet.

The kind of push we are taking is it's really not much different than what we tried to do with the Sunnis.

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You know, we have to drive a wedge between the vast majority of the Shia population that does not support extremism, does not support terrorism, does not support a lot of the stuff we've seen going on here over the last couple of years -- drive a wedge between them and those that do that and do support that?

Then it becomes a lethal targeting against the extremists and a nonlethal engagement against the moderates to keep them moderate and really drive the wedge in that Shia population.

Now you know as well as I do -- I mean, the key to any insurgency for the insurgent is popular support or at least populous non-interference. So I think that's what is really different in AQI, especially when you look west, Ramadi, Fallujah, is the people of Ramadi and Fallujah now just absolutely refuse to accept AQI being amongst them.

So AQI is very much on the outskirts and have gone to other places in the country, trying to get back in. So if we can do the same thing on the

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Shia side, you know, the moderate -- the vast majority of moderate Shias, Shiites that will not accept extremism, if they refuse to accept extremists, then that separates them and allows us to do lethal targeting and really isolate that group.

So I don't see much difference on either side. It really comes down to, and really the buzz line is, you know, that we conduct, in particular, lethal targeting based upon actions and not upon affiliation or based upon behavior and not affiliation. So that's kind of where we are going with that.

(b)(6) On future planning, General Petraeus came back last week and seemed to indicate that he was going to work on or have the staff work on a revision to his campaign plan. He was thinking of certain themes, and he actually enunciated a couple. But I know you are working on 08-01 or beginning to work on it.

I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about the direction you are having your staff work on,

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and if there is any general themes that you are conceptualizing.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Well, the big thing should come as no surprise. I mean, it's so how do we go back down to 15 and really -- 15 BCTs and sustain the progress that we have made? That's really kind of the focus of what 08-01 will be.

We are shooting for late November/December publication. So it's very much a -- Matter of fact, I'm going to hand the boss the first hard copy tonight and kind of let him -- It's just conceptually laying out where we think we are going -- let him start, which he works very well with the big black pen scratching his thoughts on there and kind of guiding us along as we do this.

It's a realization, (b)(6) that there is going to be a tremendous amount of stuff that changes between now and next July, which is when General Petraeus has said, you know, we back down to 15, and that's what the current plan lays out.

You know, between PICs, I think every

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province except for Baghdad is projected at least -- or at least will be considered for provincial Iraqi control between now and July. It may include Baghdad, but I think Baghdad is August, if I remember correctly.

Of course, the Corps Headquarters will change out to 18th Airborne Corps again. Every MND will change out between now and then, to include all the coalition partners.

There's been lots of talks about the U.K. and their future force structure and participation. That still has to be seen. Then, of course, the biggest one, like we said, is -- You know, we've made some strides with 20; and if you go with the assumption that we were able to make those accomplishments because we had the additional force structure, how do we hold what we've got and go back down to 15 at the same time?

So you kind of tie all that together. You know, what does PIC look like? You know, what is the future of the operational commands? We've got about

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five of them now, one in Baqubah, one in Samarra, one in Karbala, one in Baghdad, one in Basra. They are talking about standing one up in al Anbar, probably Ramadi, and one up in Mosul.

Coalition participation -- You know, if we get out the next summer 15 BCTs, we get out the next summer, new command team, probably not a force but everybody below Force is new. [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d

[REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d You know, where is AQI at that point?

So it's going to be try to pull all that together and come up with a coherent strategy. One of the major objectives as we know we are changing out in February, is giving 18th Airborne Corps something they can work off of for about the first three months until they get a chance to get on the ground and get their assessment and decide if they want to go a different direction or a slightly different direction or maybe a hard right turn from where we are right now.

[REDACTED] (b)(6) But the idea -- I mean the focus from since you first got here was really to

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establish -- to secure the Iraqi population.

Do you think that that will change to, let's say, transition what it was back in '06?

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

I think it depends on what area you're talking about. I think it's going to be a -- Just given the Force structure and what we can do, I think it's going to be a blending of the two strategies.

I think that the focus in Baghdad will absolutely remain protection of the population, although with not quite the same numbers of forces, but I think it will be pretty close.

I think the focus in the support zones or the Belts will remain, less brigades but the focus is disrupting the flow of accelerants into Baghdad. To do that, though -- I mean, we've really got to focus in those areas.

So I think in other areas that there will be more of a transition focus based upon really two things. One, we are going to have to if we want to focus on Baghdad, but there is a high degree of

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confidence, and really the boss is comfortable in some of these areas about going to a transition based upon what we talked about before, just proven capabilities of what the ISF has been able to accomplish.

(b)(6) So you think, like maybe an Anbar is a good example?

(b)(3), (b)(6) I think Anbar is a great example.

(b)(6) Go down to maybe one brigade or less than that?

(b)(3), (b)(6) Less than what we've got now.

(b)(6) Yeah, less than what we got.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Ninevah -- I mean the question is out there about Ninevah. Is it time to look at transferring Ninevah? Probably not Mosul, but you know, you get into the Azira (Phonetic) Desert and Talahfar (Phonetic). In Talahfar ISF is doing a tremendous job.

Mosul: IPs and IA up there are doing a great job. So there are some areas -- You know,

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Kirkuk is going to be a special circumstance until 140th is resolved.

Down south, you know, we are pretty much in operational overwatch in most areas down there anyway. So it's really, does the strategy become, you know, kind of hold everything you've got wherever you've got it, as best you can, or in the counterproposal -- I don't know which way we're going to go on this -- is does it become a surge to the center, that the focus, which has always been Baghdad, but I mean do you focus on Baghdad and assume risk someplace else with transition?

It will always be a risk with transition.

You're never going to get around that. As good as the Iraqi Security Forces are, they are not nearly as good as our kids are, and they never will be. So there's always going to be a level of risk, no matter what you do.

So we are very much focused on ISF and al Anbar right now, not because MNF-West needs them, but because, I mean, if they are going to be capable of

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doing this, we've got to recruit more. We've got to make sure the training continues. We've got to make sure they get paid. We've got to make sure tat they are fed, you know, force structure is right; you know, there's a C-2 structure over it.

So you know, where we go down, other things have to go up.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Just observing, there seems to be a slight change in the relationship between MNFI and MNCI just over the last two to three months. There just seems to be -- and General Odierno has kind of alluded to some guidance that he has about wanting to make sure we are kind of not just handing over our staff work over to them, that there is some delineation between what we do and what the do.

There seems to be a little bit more of who is doing strategic and who is doing operational in both the realm of the strat ops folks, but also even the General's comments about strat effects, these types of things.

How are you seeing that relationship

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changing, and is that --

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

No comment.

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

: You can do that. You

know, it's sort of hard not to ignore that there is something different in how that is --

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

: You know, I don't -- You

didn't really see the old MNFI staff either.

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

: Not really or at a

distance.

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

: I mean, I really don't

see that much of a -- I mean, we are all very comfortable at the platoon and company level. So I mean, that's our natural -- So there is a natural tendency to look down. And then, you know, I don't envy the Force staff, because it's what we've always said, and you know as well as anybody else.

I mean, tactical operations at lowest levels can have a huge strategic impact. So they got a boss, and rightfully so, that has to have an understanding for what's going on at the tactical level to deal at the strategic level.

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So there is -- I mean, there is absolutely friction, and there is going to be friction. I mean, I expect friction between the two staffs when they -- you know, we think they are getting in our business, and they think that they are not getting in our business. They are trying to get the information their boss needs. It's normal staff friction.

I don't see any major changes.

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

Okay.

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

But every once in a while something will come up that appears there is major friction, but I mean that's been going on forever.

(b)(6)

On the consolidation, though, the study that you are looking at and the 220 slots or whatever, how is that going to -- Is that going to blend the two staffs more?

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

Well, if you remember, this staff started off as one staff under CJTRA (Phonetic) General Sanchez, and it was split. And when General Sanchez became the first Force commander, and shortly after that replaced by General Casey, and

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General Metz became the first MNCI commander. But when III Corps came over last time, General Metz was a Deputy under General Sanchez.

The re-merging, if you will, of the staffs has been talked about for a long time. I mean, there's hundreds of ways of doing it, and there are -- You know, what we're working on right now, though, to kind of set the record straight, is not the merging of the staff. It's where are the redundancies in the staff, which is really the first step toward the merging of the staffs, which will happen after we are gone.

For instance, my chemical officer is also the Force chemical officer. The Corps Provost Marshall is also the Force Provost Marshall. The Corps Surgeon is also -- So we are looking for areas like that where there may be some redundancies that -- you know, and this can probably be written after I retire, but you know, you kind of watch the testimony General Petraeus went through.

He kept saying 15 BCTs. The second day of

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testimony people started throwing boots on the ground numbers out. I spent enough time in Kosovo to know what a pain that is, when there is a fixed number.

We were tracking, you know, how many people we had, to the guy, in Kosovo and how many were coming down from SCOPSI (Phonetic), because you couldn't have -- and how long they were going to be there, because if they were there for many than 24 hours, you're going to bust your troop cap, and that's just -- In my personal opinion, that's just a ridiculous way of doing business. But then you started seeing numbers being thrown around toward the tail end of his testimony.

So if that ever comes to fruition that we are into that type of counting of bodies again, I mean, there's going to have to be some efficiencies gained in different structures at different places, and Headquarters is a great place to start, because headquarters are usually fat, and they tend to grow over time, to save the combat power we've got on the ground.

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That's really, I think, why we are doing it.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Do you have time for one more big picture question?

(b)(6): Yes.

(b)(3), (b)(6): Okay. Here's a big picture, the last big picture question on my list: Over the course of this time, one of the issues has been control the aviation space or the air space and the issues of the fact that we have an air component - the Air Force component, which doesn't really have a resident command in theater that reports to the chain of command here.

Can you talk to that issue and what the challenges have been and if there's been a way ahead to solve that?

(b)(3), (b)(6): It's really two separate and distinct issues. One is control the ISR assets, which is not really what you asked me, and I would almost prefer not to go to that one. The other one is control of the air space.

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Now what we are doing right now is really no different than doctrinally how things are set up. The problem is you've got two major -- in my image, one theater, but you've got really, in my opinion, two major theaters of war going. You've got Iraq, and you've got Afghanistan, and you have the CAOC, Coalition and Air Ops Center, and the CFAC that's focused on both.

So the CAOC, which controls -- you know, does the air space control, sits down in al Yahdid (Phonetic), I think, and they've got people forward to exercise that air space control.

So an argument could be made that there ought to be, you know, a CAOC type organization up here in theater, given this is probably -- especially over Baghdad, probably the most complex air space that we have ever operated in, and potentially anybody has ever operated in.

Really, the genesis, in my mind, and the issue is -- and the Army is just as good as anybody else. I mean, we've for a long time developed -- I'm

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not saying it's wrong. We developed systems to support a Cold War style fight.

You know, Abrams tank is a great example.

Although the Abrams tank has adopted beautifully to the COIN fight we are in, that's never what it really designed to do.

1.4a, 1.4g

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1.4a, 1.4g

So that's what was kind of causing the issues. The Air Force -- and it's really assent -- through the CAOC has agreed that -- really, that automated system for doing that is going to have to be

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NAR reworking it. Should be about November time frame that they will have, last I heard, some sort of fixes to that.

Procedurally, we have agreed to some things about maybe everything doesn't have to leave all that air space. So it's just a natural, I think, and as UAVs, numbers of UAVs grow to include, you know, brigades have their own UAVs now, the Ravens, which are fairly low altitude but potentially are issues. Divisions have their own UAVs. You know, Corps has their own UAVs. The Air Force is flying UAVs.

That's just something we are going to have to come to grips with as two services. Putting a CAOC in theater or up here in Iraq with us -- would that solve all of it? I'm not sure it would. I mean, I think we would get better dialogue.

I think there's a lot of misunderstanding between the two because of the distance. In my mind, procedurally we've worked through a lot of the issues. Now technology-wise, we've got to be able to better

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refine that.

So -- and nobody is arguing with the fact that we don't want to put a manned fighter in jeopardy. Nobody is saying that. It's just that, you know, we also don't want to lose the target we've got going on every time a fighter responds to a TIC.

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

Okay. Thanks. That

concludes this interview.

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