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INTERVIEW

OF

MAJ. GENERAL JAMES SIMMONS

DEPUTY COMMANDING GENERAL

MULTINATIONAL CORPS-IRAQ

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JANUARY 2, 2008

BAGHDAD, IRAQ

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(b)(3), (b)(6): This is (b)(3), (b)(6)
(b)(3), (b)(6) the Multinational Corps Iraq Historian.
Today is Wednesday, the 2nd of January 2008, and we
are at the al Faw Palace, Headquarters of
Multinational Corps Iraq, outside of Baghdad, Iraq.
It is approximately 11:28.

I am here interviewing the Deputy
Commanding General for Support, Major General Simmons.

Sir, just to validate the recording, could
you introduce yourself in your own voice?

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Major General James
Simmons.

(b)(3), (b)(6) Great. Thank you, sir.
I would like to refer the listener to the
previous oral history interview that was done on the
18th of June 2007 as a companion piece to this
interview. Sir, if it is acceptable to you, we had
previously had a release agreement on file. If that
is good for you, we will just consider that to still
be in effect.

MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Okay.

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1 [redacted] Thank you, sir.

2 Sir, I wanted to ask kind of a big broad-
3 brushed question first, if I could, especially given
4 the continued dramatic changes of events since we
5 spoke last.

6 Where at this point do you see the center
7 of gravity in the campaign?

8 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think that,
9 you know, based on the execution of the surge and the
10 -- both with U.S. forces, the [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d brigades coming
11 in, and then the significant increase in the Iraqi
12 Security Forces, we have created an environment that
13 is secure enough for local leaders, Iraqi leaders, to
14 start filling the gap on providing services and
15 leadership in Iraqi communities.

16 Based upon that aspect, it has enabled the
17 provincial governments to start working somewhat more
18 effectively.

19 I think the center of gravity right now is
20 really at the central government of Iraq coming to an
21 understanding of how to meet the national level needs
22 of the Iraqi people in the areas of governance,

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1 economics, education, and security.

2 I think that, if the violence level
3 remains where it is or if it continues to decline
4 based on intelligence driven combat operations, then
5 the Iraqi government has a window of opportunity to
6 fulfill those requirements.

7 (b)(3), (b)(6) Thank you, sir.

8 Sir, I wanted to ask a little bit about
9 the relationship between MNFI and MNCI. Of course,
10 one of the basic level issues is MNCI is based on 3
11 Corps, and MNFI has individual augmentees that rotate
12 in and out.

13 Just as you have seen that changeover in
14 MNFI staff, has that caused any realignment of the
15 relationships of the areas of responsibility between
16 MNCI and MNFI?

17 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: The short answer is
18 no. I think of more interest from a history
19 perspective, though, I think that we have clearly
20 demonstrated throughout the sustained operations here
21 once we stood up the Corps structure in 2004 through
22 the conclusion -- or the conclusion of 2007 in

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1 particular -- is that it is imperative that you have
2 a corps headquarters whenever you are conducting major
3 combat operations.

4 Corps headquarters are what translates the
5 strategy into tactics. So that operational bridge
6 that exists between those two is absolutely imperative
7 in an environment as complex as you find on a
8 battlefield or in an counter-insurgency operation.

9 The idea that somehow you can translate
10 that from the four-star level, strategic political
11 level, down to the division commander level without
12 that intermediary headquarters to refine, develop,
13 bridge that operational gap -- people that think that
14 way, in my personal opinion, are mistaken in their
15 understanding of war.

16 Napoleon had it correct. Frederick the
17 Great had it correct. Eisenhower, Bradley, all of
18 those guys had it right. The corps headquarters is the
19 bridging headquarters that allows that translation to
20 take place, and really empowers the division
21 commanders to have freedom of action in their battle
22 spaces.

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1 [REDACTED] Has that played out well,
2 in your mind, during this period?

3 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: In my opinion, this
4 particular corps headquarters has probably -- Well, I
5 do believe, has demonstrated at a level of proficiency
6 that has probably not been replicated, in my humble
7 opinion, since probably World War II, of which 8th
8 Corps or 3 Corps might be good World War II examples
9 of how an effective corps commander and an effective
10 corps staff made that bridge during that period of
11 time.

12 I think it is a combination of the
13 experience of the commander, the experiences of the
14 corps staff that have all come together at the right
15 time and place to create a headquarters that is -- It
16 is efficient.

17 While efficiencies are not necessarily all
18 that important in combat, it is an efficient
19 organization, but much more important than that, it is
20 an incredibly effective headquarters, and not just
21 providing resources and prioritizing resources to the
22 subordinate division commanders, but clearly

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1 establishing the combat priorities and the constant
2 analysis of the enemy and the moving locations of
3 where the threat is here in Iraq, as a result shifting
4 the priority and trying to stay ahead of the bow wave
5 as the insurgency has moved about.

6 (b)(3), (b)(6) Sir, in your area of
7 observation, again defining those different areas of
8 responsibility for MNCI and MNFI, have there been
9 areas that were the areas of which there was the most
10 discussion concerning what the way ahead was in
11 particular areas, knowing that those two entities had
12 different focuses? If so, can you give me a sense of
13 what has engendered the most discussion about finding
14 that right way ahead?

15 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Two areas leap to
16 mind right away, and that is the development of the
17 Concerned Local Citizens. I believe that, you know,
18 there was some understanding at the tactical level
19 that this was something that had some potential. So
20 this is translating it in reverse.

21 It came from the tactical level. An
22 understanding was gained at the corps level, and then

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1 that was translated so that the Force commander and
2 his staff and the government of Iraq could embrace the
3 idea.

4 So that would be one, and I do think the
5 Concerned Local Citizens and their impact in the local
6 communities, starting out in Al Anbar, has made a
7 significant difference here.

8 The other area is one in the area of
9 logistics and one that probably will not get a whole
10 lot of study as people look at it. But, you know, once
11 again we rebuilt the airplane while it was flying, in
12 that we transitioned to a different logistics
13 organization and structure during this rotation over
14 here.

15 We came in with the 13th Sustainment
16 Command, who had made a partial transition to the new
17 structure, and that was followed up by the 316th and
18 the 1st TSC down in Theater Sustainment Command down
19 in Kuwait.

20 What that has done, it has provided
21 support to the divisions based on an area support
22 basis, irregardless of the patch that the Sustainment

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1 Brigade has been wearing on their shoulder. As a
2 result, we now have the visibility for how to deliver
3 equipment, how to deliver personnel, how to deliver
4 supplies with as few stops from the source to the user
5 as I think it is probably reasonable to do on a
6 battlefield.

7 As a result of that, we have been able to
8 field more equipment -- for example, the MRAPs, the
9 mine-resistant vehicles that we are bringing in to
10 counter the IED threat. We have been able to field
11 those at a very rapid pace while being able to get
12 training for the crews and logistics training for the
13 maintenance personnel or maintenance training for the
14 maintenance personnel at a much faster rate than we
15 would have been able to do under the old traditional
16 system that we came into the war with.

17 So I think those two areas are two good
18 examples of the Corps Headquarters being that bridging
19 example that we talked about.

20 (b)(3), (b)(6): As far as looking to
21 certain areas that are either in the midst of being
22 merged to some degree or on consideration to be

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1 merged, can you speak to that evolution in terms of
2 areas of joint responsibility?

3 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think it is
4 fairly easy to merge the functions of the one -- the
5 personnel functions into one, because those are almost
6 entirely administrative in nature, and to reduce the
7 redundancy between the two staffs.

8 I think there is quite a bit of synergy in
9 merging the logistics staffs between the two
10 organizations, but I do believe there are some things
11 from a logistics perspective that will have to be
12 retained at the Force Commander's level, but most of
13 the day to day, log cap normal logistics activities
14 can be; migrated into the Corps Headquarters, and
15 there will be some probably savings of people there.

16 I also believe there is ability for some
17 merging, probably some significant merging, in the
18 areas of intelligence. Where I don't see the ability
19 to do much merging is in the areas of operations, in
20 the 3 shop.

21 I also think there is a distinct
22 difference in the 5 functions at the Force level and

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1 the 5/9 functions that go on at the Corps. So you
2 know, at the Force level I see the predominant staff
3 section at the Force being the 5, and the predominant
4 staff section at the Corps being the 3.

5 So I don't think you can have a successful
6 merging in those areas because of the different focus
7 and levels of emphasis at the two different
8 headquarters.

9 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, in a broader sense
10 -- you kind of touched on it a little bit with regard
11 to the Sustainment Command, but you also have purview
12 over some of the other entities that have moved and
13 continue to migrate in terms of their structure and
14 the modularity of the Army. I'm thinking of military
15 intelligence, signal.

16 IN general, the fact that we are already
17 in the midst of some of these transformations as we
18 are fighting the fight here, has that worked out?
19 What kind of advantages and disadvantages has that
20 brought us on the battlefield?

21 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, the Signal
22 community -- you know, whenever we crossed the berm in

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1 2003, we had Signal -- two Signal brigades, I guess,
2 and six Signal battalions that were providing
3 operational and tactical columns for the Force as we
4 made the march to Baghdad.

5 Through commercialization, the fielding of
6 the joint nodal network and the CPN structures, we are
7 now down to two Signal battalions under a single
8 Signal brigade, providing services here across all of
9 Iraq, uninterrupted services, both Internet and voice
10 columns on an instantaneous basis.

11 Part of that has been technology, but most
12 of that has been commercialization and organization,
13 and it is seamless from the joint perspective at the
14 Force level all the way down to the tactical level.
15 So that one I have -- The transformation on that piece
16 of it with the JNN system and everything has worked
17 very well.

18 The Battlefield Surveillance Brigade,
19 which we converted here whenever we changed out the
20 504th and brought in the 525th, is not a complete
21 transformation yet. It is a hybrid right now.

22 The human piece is working very well. The

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1 Signet piece is getting better every day and getting
2 more capable every day. The use of UAVs in ARISTA
3 mode and in an ISR mode, I think, has pretty much been
4 worked to a level of fidelity that I don't think
5 anybody foresaw in 2003.

6 Coupled with the UAV is the
7 manned/unmanned teaming aspect that we are doing now,
8 and it is not a machine-to-machine interface. It is
9 a combination of things that have happened that is, in
10 some ways, generational as opposed to something that
11 is just military in nature.

12 The UAV operators and managers, for the
13 most part, are very young, and they are very
14 comfortable with entering into Internet chat rooms and
15 moving information in a language that most of us don't
16 understand.

17 As a result, when they see something that
18 the UAV is picking up, they pass that information
19 through these chat rooms to the battle space owner or
20 battle captain, also usually a fairly young person,
21 who interprets that, understands what the situation is
22 on the ground, and then flexes a TAC aircraft or

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1 reconnaissance aircraft, armed reconnaissance
2 aircraft, to the site, and then it is hand-off to a
3 manned platform who then, in conjunction with the
4 battle space owner, makes a decision as to whether or
5 not to engage the target.

6
7 That aspect of it is revolutionary on the
8 battlefield, and it is well ahead here of what most of
9 the doctrine folks and the force development folks
10 back in CONUS actually think.

11 We are well beyond the theory on this, and
12 we are doing this every single day out here, and part
13 of it is just because of the great young people that
14 we have. But this is a breakthrough.

15 This will fundamentally change the way you
16 do combat operations forever, and I'm not sure that
17 everybody has grasped the significance of that yet,
18 but I will tell you that it is a huge battlefield
19 advantage that our Force has because of that
20 development.

21 Combat Aviation is another area. This is
22 the second helicopter war. I don't care how you want

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1 to break it out. Vietnam was the first helicopter
2 war, but this is the second helicopter war, and we do
3 not do any kind of combat operations here without
4 tactical rotary wing aviation coverage for that
5 operation. Again, most of this manned/unmanned
6 teaming with UAVs is done with helicopters.

7 The amount of flying hours that we have
8 flown this year, which is over 500,000 and something
9 that most people do not think was sustainable from a
10 maintenance perspective -- in other words, being able
11 to produce that many flying hours through phased
12 maintenance -- The safety record is the best. It is
13 actually lower than it is in the units that are not
14 employed in combat, both in the Army and in the Marine
15 Corps.

16 The effects on the battlefield, the
17 incredible responsiveness in firepower, the additional
18 acquisition capability that you have through the
19 target acquisition systems on the aircraft have
20 enabled the ground commander to have a set of manned
21 eyes to look at something, and then have the lethality
22 to take the target out if it needs to be taken out,

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1 that we have not had on the battlefield before.

2 The amount and the method of moving
3 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines around the
4 battlefield is primarily done by rotary wing aircraft.
5 The amount of cargo that is moved, high priority cargo
6 that is moved by these platforms is absolutely
7 astounding whenever you break out the numbers, and it
8 is not the normal, day to day logistical stuff.

9 I'm talking about the high priority stuff
10 that's got to get there now, and that is managed that
11 way.

12 Then the flexibility that you get from
13 both UH-60s, CH-47s, 53s and 46s to do air assault
14 operations, to go into an area in which the enemy
15 thinks is a sanctuary in the middle of the night, zero
16 elimination, has given us a tactical advantage over
17 the enemy to be able to strike them with total
18 surprise that we have not achieved on any other
19 battlefield.

20 So I think that one is a huge victory.
21 And, oh, by the way, from the loss recover launch we
22 have consolidated UAVs under these aviation formations

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1 as well, which has significantly reduced the accident
2 rate and given us more eyes in the sky as we have
3 worked our way through that aspect of it.

4 So those three areas are significant. I
5 also think that the advances that we have made in
6 battlefield medicine has also fundamentally changed
7 combat. We've got the highest survivability rate of
8 any war from our folks that are severely wounded by
9 getting them to the appropriate level of care rapidly
10 through our Medivac aircraft, and then the outstanding
11 surgical care that our soldiers get in these combat
12 support hospitals.

13 There are two other aspects of the medical
14 side of this thing that I think are huge changes. The
15 first one is we put physical therapists in the brigade
16 combat teams. That has reduced the number of soldiers
17 that had been evacuated out of theater, because the
18 physical therapists have been able to treat injuries
19 in combat that, through exercise programs and
20 rehabilitative programs, have been able to keep the
21 soldiers in the fight. So I think that one has been
22 huge, a lesson that we learned from the Special Ops

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1 community.

2 The other area that we are spending a lot
3 of time and effort on is on the mental health side of
4 it, which I think is going to have positive long term
5 effects in that we are going to have less folks going
6 into the VA system 10-15 years from now suffering from
7 the effects of combat than what we have had in the
8 past.

9 We are not where we need to be yet on that
10 one, but we are making strides in the right direction.
11 So I think that has had a huge impact on what we do as
12 well.

13 The other one, though, that is a sustained
14 plus has been the efforts of our EOD forces under Task
15 Force 1.4a Those folks have just done a magnificent
16 job in the counter-IED fight, and the number of
17 soldiers' lives that have been saved through the
18 fielding of the right kind of equipment, through the
19 outstanding support that our EOD companies provide
20 down to the BCTs has been remarkable, coupled with the
21 Corps engineers and the engineer groups that are in
22 divisions with the route clearance effort, the

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1 bridging efforts for enhanced mobility in the theater,
2 I think, have all coupled together to empower the
3 Force to be able to go wherever we need to go and have
4 a freedom of maneuver here that has been, for the most
5 part, incapable of being interrupted by the enemy.

6 [REDACTED]: Sir, you were talking
7 about the aviation aspect of this and, in particular,
8 as the senior aviator. One of the things that has
9 changed since we talked last is there is a fairly
10 recent reduction in the overall number of helicopters
11 we have at our disposal. How has that worked itself
12 out, and have you played a key role in working that
13 our or was that something that was developed at a
14 different level?

15 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I've been
16 involved in it, and I guess there's probably a lot of
17 people in different places that say I have been the
18 principal person involved in it, but it has really
19 been a staff effort, a team effort, with [REDACTED]
20 (Phonetic) and the guys in the C-3 Aviation shop, [REDACTED]
21 [REDACTED] in the C-3, the four aviation brigade
22 commanders, the Marine air wing commander, all working

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1 together to figure out how we can support three
2 maneuver divisions, Multinational Force West, the
3 Marine forces that are here, and the missions at the
4 Corps level with the reduction of basically two-thirds
5 of a brigade's worth of aircraft.

6 So the solution was we would take the
7 number of battalions that we had, but we had to have
8 four aviation brigade headquarters and a Marine air
9 wing headquarters to be able to do the effective
10 planning and coordination for the combat operation.

11 We tailored a force with the 12th Combat
12 Aviation Brigade as the headquarters. That was the
13 Corps Aviation Brigade headquarters. We moved that
14 down to MNDB, gave them the 4th Squadron of the 3d
15 Armored Cavalry Regiment with 24 M-10s, Apaches and 10
16 Blackhawks, and then took 18 additional Blackhawks and
17 the 3d Battalion of the 158th Aviation Regiment and
18 moved them down to Taji as well to support MNDB.

19 We also took an attack company from the 2d
20 of the 159th and moved them down to Taji to support
21 combat operations in Baghdad as well.

22 Then we brought in Task Force 1.4a, brigade

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1 headquarters out of Alaska, to pick up the Corps
2 mission, [1.4a] folks of Brigade headquarters, and they
3 are doing the Corps mission with what is left of the
4 2d of the 159th. That gives them the capability to
5 put 16 Apaches up.

6 The 5th Battalion of the 158th -- it's
7 actually a [1.4a] -- with the Chinooks, Blackhawks
8 and medivac to be able to support the Corps functions
9 and support OCFI and CJSOTF, and the maintenance
10 battalion, the 412th ASB, who is supporting both of
11 those two brigades.

12 So as a result, we have been able to
13 mitigate some of the effects of losing [1.4a]-plus
14 aircraft in the theater.

15 Are we as capable as we were before? No.
16 Do we have the capability to sustain the fight at its
17 current levels? Yes, but it does mean that we are
18 going to have to be much more efficient and effective
19 at producing flight hours through our phased
20 maintenance programs in order to be able to sustain
21 that.

22 So right now I would say we've got a good

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1 Band-Aid on the problem, and we'll see here over the
2 next several months if that Band-Aid is sufficient or
3 not to sustain the operations over time.

4 (b)(3), (b)(6) : On the aviation side,
5 sir, one of the new equipment fieldings that's
6 happened, at least out west, has been the MB-22 tough
7 rotor system. Have you had any visibility on that
8 fielding?

9 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, yes. I was
10 with the Marine air wing the other day, three days
11 ago, got a good lay-down on what they've done with the
12 Osprey.

13 A tremendously capable platform. You
14 know, we are going through the crawl, walk, run stage
15 of how to integrate it into combat operations. I
16 think the potential for the machine is fairly
17 significant, but you know, inside the Marine Corps
18 this is going to take some lessons learned and some
19 reviews on tactics, techniques and procedures,
20 nocturnal revisions; because you've got such an
21 incredibly different capability.

22 It does do some of the same things that

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1 you did before, but it gives you such incredible
2 flexibility of moving some things that -- you know,
3 better than 240 knots of airspeed, that you were doing
4 at 110 knots before, and you got much longer legs with
5 the capability of being able to do it.

6 I don't know how long it is going to take
7 before we figure out exactly what the optimum use of
8 it is, but what we have seen so far is definitely
9 sustainable in combat, and it gives great flexibility
10 to the commander of Multinational Forces West.

11 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, another key item
12 fielding here -- and you have mentioned here a little
13 bit earlier, but I wanted to talk more about the MRAP
14 acquisition and fielding -- certainly, when you look
15 at this period of time, something that's come online.

16 Can you talk to me a little bit about what
17 the decision process was and what the challenges have
18 been, and where are we in the fielding process?

19 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all,
20 we just came to the conclusion that the 1114-1151, we
21 were sustaining too high casualties on the battlefield
22 to be satisfied with that as a platform, and we had

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1 reached the weight and safety limits of the vehicle
2 with all the armor we put on it.

3 We had, with our route clearance teams,
4 vehicles that were resistant to IEDs. We had about
5 537 of them here in the Corps, and the Marines led the
6 fight on this and said we need more of these kind of
7 vehicles out west where they were primarily dealing
8 with the deep and buried threat.

9 So the Marines started the program of
10 replacing some of their vehicles with these MRAP
11 vehicles, and then we identified a requirement for a
12 one-for-one replacement of the 1114-1151s in the
13 Corps.

14 As the procurement decision was made, it
15 is, of course, incremental because it is a procurement
16 decision, and subsequent decisions were made about how
17 many forces we were going to have in theater.

18 Basically, so far we at the Corps have
19 fielded three different variants of the vehicle.
20 We've had four vehicles that have been hit by IEDs
21 since we've started the fielding, and we have had no
22 serious casualties in any of those. In fact, two of

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1 the vehicles self-recovered back to the FOB.

2 Soldiers are very excited about them. The
3 noncommissioned officers had figured out the tactics
4 techniques and procedures. We kind of finally
5 settled, though, that they weren't exactly right for
6 every possible mission that you could be involved in.

7 So we have gone with -- Originally, our
8 plan was 27 MRAPs per company. We have now gone to 18
9 MRAPs and nine up-armored Humvees in a company as an
10 interim model as we work our way through the fielding
11 process.

12 The Marines are up, over 650 vehicles
13 fielded, and we have fielded right around 400 in the
14 Corps. That will increase here. We will start
15 running about 120 a week here starting this week --
16 fielding a week. So we are rapidly putting those out
17 on the battlefield.

18 (b)(3), (b)(6): With regard to the M114
19 up-armored Humvee, sir, is the process -- One of the
20 processes of the discussion was the transition of
21 those that we were discarding, to transition those
22 over to Iraqi Security Forces?

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1 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Right. The Iraqis
2 are still, you know, in many cases running around in
3 pick-up trucks. So to be able to more rapidly enhance
4 the capability of Iraqi Security Forces, we are
5 fulfilling a request from the Prime Minister to sell
6 8500 of the 1114s that we replaced with MRAPs to the
7 Iraqis, and I think that will significantly enhance
8 the capability of the Iraqi forces.

9 (b)(3), (b)(6): Have you personally been
10 pleased, given the speed of this type of fielding; and
11 besides the program, have you been pleased the type of
12 support from the manufacturers, contractors?

13 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think that,
14 for the most part, the contractors have done a superb
15 job. I think the Marine Corps has accepted the
16 ownership of being the Joint Program Office for this,
17 and I think they have done a great job.

18 SPAWARs down at Charleston has done a
19 great job of gluing these things together, getting all
20 the right government furnished equipment installed on
21 it, and I think the fielding process here in Iraq,
22 both with the Marines out at TQ and with the multiple

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1 facilities that we have here in Iraq for the Corps has
2 been done very, very well, most of that being done
3 under Army Materiel Command.

4 So, yes, I am pleased with it. More
5 importantly, the platoon sergeants are pleased with
6 it, and that's where the rubber really meets the road.
7 So it appears that we are meeting their requirement.

8 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, changing gears a
9 little bit, I wanted to ask about an area that there
10 is something of a mission overlap and an outcome
11 overlap with regard to detainee operations, knowing
12 that we have a piece in that, of course, and knowing
13 that we have operational units in the field who have
14 to deal with detainees when they are released relative
15 to the battle situation there, also that we have an MP
16 aspect that is involved with that, and we have medical
17 aspect that is involved with that.

18 What do you see as the biggest challenges
19 that we are facing with the detainee issue, and
20 knowing, too, that there is some level of debate about
21 the best way to do the detainee situation?

22 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, the MP

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1 brigade that I am responsible for is responsible for
2 police transition training. They have nothing to do
3 with detainee operations. However, I am the conduit
4 from the Corps dealing with Task Force [1.4a] and with
5 General Petraeus on the detainee operations.

6 In particular, the most controversial
7 aspect of that has been about the detainee release
8 piece of it. I think Task Force [1.4a] has set up a good
9 process to identify who the irreconcilables are and
10 who the folks are that there is potential for them to
11 be reintegrated back into Iraqi society with some set
12 of job skills and all to give them an opportunity to
13 reject being a part of the insurgency, and becoming
14 meaningful members of the Iraqi civil society.

15 The tightrope that you walk with the
16 divisions is making sure that you do not release more
17 into the division commander's battle space than what
18 they can find guaranteed sponsors for out in their
19 battle space.

20 Then that is coupled with an understanding
21 that the United Nations Security Council resolution
22 will run out on December 31st of next year, and that

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1 we have kind of a mandate at that point to do detainee
2 business in a different way.

3 So we have adequate detention facilities.
4 We are building two more, but I believe over the next
5 several months we will reduce the detainee population
6 by a number. I don't know what that number is. It
7 could be 4,000, could be 8,000.

8 It could be a little bit higher than that.
9 But I think the secret to it is or the key aspect of
10 it is that we've got a cooperative process between us
11 and the Force and Task Force 1.4a of coming up with a
12 methodology that allows the division commanders to
13 have a vote in how many detainees get released into
14 their battle space on a daily basis.

15 If we come to the appropriate resolution
16 on that, it will be manageable, and it will be a
17 success story. If we screw it up, then we are going
18 to end up with creating additional stress on the
19 forces in the areas where we released large numbers of
20 these detainees.

21 (b)(3), (b)(6): Has there been a risk to
22 detainees in terms of when the operational commanders

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1 -- I'm trying to think of the best way to ask this
2 question. Some of the reports about detainees that
3 don't have sponsors or the safety of detainees when
4 they are released, if there not some system in place
5 -- how big a concern has that been? Can you speak at
6 all to that?

7 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I mean,
8 honestly, there are bad people that are in our custody
9 that the local Iraqis -- In many cases, these guys are
10 the leaders of criminal gangs versus so much about
11 being a part of al Qaeda or some kind of rogue Shia
12 element. They are leaders of criminal gangs, and the
13 local Iraqis do not want them released back into their
14 area.

15 The problem with it is that, in most
16 cases, we do not have any kind of evidence that says
17 these are criminals. What we have is intelligence
18 that says these are people that were contributing to
19 the insurgency.

20 So, yes, there is a challenge in the local
21 Iraqi community whenever these folks are released that
22 they want them policed up by the Iraqi police and then

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1 incarcerated under Iraqi law.

2 As long as that is done legally and in
3 accordance with the judicial system that is set up
4 with the Iraqi system -- you know, that means they
5 have been released, and they did something nefarious,
6 and they were arrested under criminal law -- then
7 those processes are okay.

8 I think the ones that we get concerned
9 about i the rumors that are going around that, you
10 know, there is local justice that is dealt out with
11 these folks whenever they arrive back in their
12 community.

13 The truth is that we do not have any
14 significant evidence that that is going on. It
15 appears that it is a rumor, and we are always trying
16 to get at the bottom of rumors, but we haven't been
17 able to produce any significant evidence on it.

18 (b)(3), (b)(6): Changing gears again,
19 sir, I wanted to ask about a development of Op Plan
20 08-01, which just was published on the 28th of
21 December.

22 I just wanted to ask, in the broader

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1 sense, what your role in the development of that Op
2 Plan was, and again from your area of focus what are
3 the key aspects of 08-01?

4 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Primarily, you
5 know, in looking at the roles and missions of the 17
6 brigade size formations, that is all underneath my
7 purview, the logistical aspects of it, the aviation
8 aspects of it, the engineering requirements that have
9 been levied on it, how that works with the creation of
10 a civilian service corps, what role the Corps Engineer
11 Brigade provides in helping to develop that. Those
12 are the kind of portions of the plan that I had some
13 small part in working out.

14 Of course, right now I am in the process
15 of taking the back-briefs from the subordinate
16 commanders on how they intend to carry out the
17 Commander's intent in the execution of this Op Plan.

18 (b)(3), (b)(6): Looking ahead to the rest
19 of 2008 and the idea that we will draw down to pre-
20 surge levels, what are the biggest challenges you are
21 seeing from unit support, logistics standpoint of how
22 to best draw down? What do you see as the biggest

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1 piece of that?

2 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well,
3 transportation is always the biggest issue. I mean,
4 you are going to continue to do RIP TOAs with units,
5 and so as a result you are going to do that normal
6 transition, and then you have accelerated some outflow
7 of equipment and people. So as a result, you are
8 managing limited quantities of transportation
9 resources to do all that.

10 So it works fine. We've got a great staff
11 that figures it out. But if you look at it abstractly
12 and said, wow, this is a tough thing, you could be
13 overwhelmed by it. But we've already got systems in
14 place to manage it. So that is one aspect of it.

15 The other thing is making sure that people
16 understand we are not actually vacating the battle
17 space. We are thinning the lines out in some areas,
18 but for the most part, we are still going to be
19 covering down the same battle space that we were
20 covering over before. We are not giving up any battle
21 space as we go through this process.

22 I think that's kind of key to what it is

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1 that we are doing. In many cases, you know, we might
2 have had a brigade there, and we will end up with a
3 battalion or two there, and it includes members of the
4 Iraqi Security Forces.

5 So I think in the end it is the right
6 time. The security levels are right to start looking
7 at this, but it is going to take time to get back down
8 to that number of brigades.

9 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, I wanted to ask a
10 couple of questions, if I could, on the benign kinetic
11 side of things, in that there has been a couple of
12 areas that all of our senior leaders have been engaged
13 with.

14 One of those is the senior leader
15 engagement with the media. Again, looking as an
16 outsider, it kind of seems as though we have made more
17 headway in being able to get the story told back home
18 to our own public about the job we are doing over
19 here.

20 Any sense for what your role in that has
21 been? Have you seen that have an impact? Is it just
22 my perception or have you seen any changes in the way

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1 we have been able to get that word out?

2 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all,
3 i think at the most senior levels there is an
4 acknowledgment that the free press in a democratic
5 society is of equal importance to the military in a
6 combat zone.

7 The free press holds people accountable,
8 holds governments accountable. It holds generals
9 accountable, and the American people have a right to
10 know about what is going on over here, and a free
11 press is absolutely instrumental in doing that.

12 Making leaders at all levels, not just at
13 senior levels, at all levels available to the press,
14 I think, is the right thing to do. Now I do not think
15 -- this is my personal opinion. I still do not think
16 that we have the American people being properly
17 informed of the heroic activities of our soldiers,
18 sailors, airmen and Marines on the battlefield.

19 I think this is a failing of our press.
20 I think we -- There are no Ernie Pyles in this war.
21 There is no one out there that is reporting on Company
22 C of the 16th Infantry to a level of detail that the

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1 American people feel like they know soldiers, sailors,
2 airmen, Marines.

3 This is the first time since the
4 Revolutionary War that we've gone to war with an all
5 volunteer force, and the American people do not have
6 a face and name attached to the soldiers, sailors,
7 airmen and Marines that are over here fighting this
8 fight.

9 The other aspect of it is that our media
10 press, in particular, has transitioned to sensational
11 and temporary reporting on big events, with very
12 little analysis associated with it, and as a result,
13 it is a headline. It's a ticker across the bottom of
14 a screen and somebody standing someplace reporting on
15 something, and in many cases they are not even where
16 the event actually took place.

17 It's just kind of creating an image that
18 they are sending back home. I don't think that is
19 necessarily the right way that the American people
20 would want the press to be reporting the fight.

21 What I find is that the more you engage
22 the media and the more you can get the media down with

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1 soldiers, the youngsters out there on the battlefield,
2 then the more accurate the reporting becomes.

3 So you have to work at building a
4 relationship with folks in the media, just like you do
5 with building relationships with anybody else. I'm
6 not -- It is much more critical probably than what we
7 are emphasizing in our education right now.

8 (b)(3), (b)(6): One of the things General
9 Odierno highlighted in particular, sir, was the idea
10 of more engagement with the Arab media. Have you had
11 a chance to experience that personally, and have you
12 see any results from that?

13 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: I have on several
14 occasions briefed both the western and Arab media on
15 IEDs, on helicopter shootdowns, on those kinds of
16 activities that some people would say I'm a subject
17 matter expert on.

18 Most of the time, what I find is that
19 there is some urban legend or myths that have been
20 developed out there, and people just don't have a real
21 good understanding of what it is that you are doing
22 and how you are going about it.

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1 In a lot of cases, what it ends up doing
2 is killing a story instead of it becoming a story,
3 that you know, they have turned over a rock; they
4 think there are some worms under it, but then whenever
5 you inform them and actually answer their questions --
6 that's another thing that is kind of important to
7 dealing with the press -- is that there is not really
8 a story here.

9 [REDACTED]: I'm not sure how much
10 visibility you have on this, sir, but if you do, I
11 would be interested to know your thoughts. Again, on
12 the non-kinetic is the Information Operations side of
13 our process.

14 Looking back on the Corps, sir, of now to
15 the end of the tour, have you had -- do you have a
16 sense for the effectiveness of our IO campaign? Has
17 that changed over the course of time, and do you have
18 any sense for is it better or worse? If it is better,
19 what are we doing differently that is working for us?

20 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, I think it's
21 a lot better than it was whenever we got here, because
22 I'm not really sure we had an understanding of what we

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1 needed to do.

2 I think the IO team has done a magnificent
3 job in making sure that they separated out information
4 operations and public affairs stuff. I do think that
5 we have gotten better at transmitting messages to the
6 Iraqi people through the information ops channels that
7 has made a difference. That is to inform them about
8 what is really going on in their country with regard
9 to al Qaeda in particular and special groups in
10 general. I do think it has had a positive impact on
11 how the Iraqi people have viewed those particular
12 groups.

13 It's hard work. It is some of the harder
14 work that we do.

15 (b)(3), (b)(6): Intelligence, sir:
16 Knowing that, certainly at the General Officer level,
17 being able to have intelligence feeds that you are
18 comfortable with to help shape your decision making
19 process -- again, when you look at that now, looking
20 back here in the last six weeks of the assignment of
21 3 Corps at MNCI, how have you seen the intelligence
22 support for decisions you have needed to make, and has

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1 that changed at all over time?

2 In other words, have different streams of
3 intelligence proved to be more predominant as the
4 fight has gone on?

5 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, first of all,
6 I think (b)(3), (b)(6) has done two things. The 2 has
7 done two things.

8 One, he is, without doubt, the best
9 intelligence officer that I have ever known. He is
10 able to use his staff to figure out trends through
11 analysis that says, you know, this is the direction
12 that the enemy is going, and providing the necessary
13 information, data, intelligence to allow General
14 Odierno and, in some cases, myself to make informed
15 decisions about how to counter an enemy capability or
16 how to defeat an enemy capability or how to kill or
17 capture high value targets.

18 The other aspect of that, though, is that
19 I think (b)(3), (b)(6) has probably exhibited one of the
20 best examples of senior level leadership that I have
21 ever watched as he has molded his team, created a
22 sense of cooperation with the intelligence staff at

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1 the Force level, and a sense of partnership with the
2 intelligence staffs at the division and brigade levels
3 that is built on trust and confidence in one another.

4 I think a lot of times we look over -- or
5 overlook that set of leadership skills that this
6 particular Colonel had at this particular time and
7 place on this fight, and I think it has made a huge
8 difference.

9 [redacted (b)(3), (b)(6)]: Do you feel as though the
10 specific channels, [redacted 1.4c]

11 [redacted 1.4c] -- Has your
12 reliance on any of those shifted over the course of
13 time?

14 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Yes, they have, but
15 they ebb and flow. You know, at one time full motion
16 video will be important. [redacted 1.4c]

17 [redacted 1.4c]

18
19 So what I would say is you got to have a
20 holistic approach to the intelligence piece of it, and

21 [redacted 1.4c]

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1 actually the wrong way to go. You've got to have a
2 holistic picture, the whole package together.

3 We've gone through several cycles here.

4 [REDACTED]
5 1.4c

6 [REDACTED] (b)(3), (b)(6) : You touched on a number
7 of technology things. Knowing that you have a lot of
8 areas that have oversight of technology, are there any
9 other key technology that you think we will look back
10 on that have been introduced during this period that
11 we haven't talked about?

12 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: The techniques that
13 we have employed to impact on the enemy's ability to
14 use indirect fire, I think, is something that we
15 haven't talked a lot about -- you know, with [REDACTED] 1.4g

16 [REDACTED] 1.4g

17 We just kind of take it as a matter of
18 fact that those kind of things are going to happen,
19 and it's actually a lot of hard work that goes into
20 making it happen.

21 Precision indirect fires, I think, is
22 another area that has made significant impact here on

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1 the battlefield.

2 This is one of those, I don't know exactly
3 how to say it: Airspace management probably would be
4 the way to say it, how to more efficiently and
5 effectively manage the airspace matters, and you ought
6 to base your management of the airspace off of what
7 your most lethal killers are, not based off of what
8 some doctrinal expert has figured out back at Langley
9 Air Force Base.

10 (b)(3), (b)(6) : So that is actually --
11 That is a very interesting point, and that's something
12 I didn't think to ask you, but I know was a concern at
13 one point as to how do we control the airspace? How
14 do we coordinate with the Air force on how to come to
15 an agreement on that?

16 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: I think we have
17 pretty much got it worked out. What I would say is
18 that the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Army are in
19 violent agreement.

20 So if three of the four services are in
21 violent agreement on how to do something, then the Air
22 Force as a minimum should be asking themselves, if

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1 these there guys are all dead set that this is a way
2 to do it, we at least ought to be flexible enough to
3 entertain their ideas and thoughts.

4
5 Once we got over that hurdle, then
6 everything kind of started coming together, and this
7 is something that needs to be pointed out. This is
8 not an argument with Air Force guys that are in
9 theater. The guys that are in theater see the same
10 problems that the Navy, Air Force and marines see in
11 theater.

12 This is a problem that is created, because
13 the CFAC guy ain't here. If he was here, then this
14 problem would go away, because he would be living and
15 breathing this stuff every day as opposed to being
16 somewhere else doing something else.

17 (b)(3), (b)(6) : When you talk about
18 command and control in general, there is that awkward
19 element in that we have commanders in theater, but the
20 aviation assets that come from the Air Force side are
21 not under that umbrella. Is that something that has
22 been discussed?

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1 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Many times, and
2 this is in no way, shape, form or fashion to discredit
3 the airmen that are operating here on the ground and
4 in the air over Iraq. But I would tell you that, in
5 my opinion -- this is my opinion -- the idea that you
6 are going to fight from some fricking remote location
7 and that you are somehow able to ascertain what is
8 going on here in the battlefield is ludicrous.

9 It's just like UAVs. The guy that has to
10 control the UAVs is the guy that owns the sensor and
11 shooter. One guy has to own both of them, if you are
12 going to employ them in lethal operations. That is
13 not some guy sitting in a control station 10,000 miles
14 away. It just doesn't work.

15 So those are all my opinions. I do
16 believe that I am the General Officer that has the
17 most flight time in Iraq as a General Officer. So I'm
18 out there listening to the radios every day.

19 I am going to leave out of this interview
20 and I am going to go climb in my helicopter and I'm
21 flying to Balad today. You know, I listen to the
22 ground commanders. I listen to the fighter pilots.

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1 I hear it all over the radio, and I know exactly where
2 the rough points are, and the guys that aren't here
3 doing that don't know what they are.

4 I don't care what they think. They are
5 dealing on theory. They are not actually dealing with
6 wiggling the sticks around in the air. I don't have
7 -- I don't place a whole lot of credibility in their
8 comments.

9 (b)(3), (b)(6): Sir, are thee any last
10 thoughts that I haven't asked you about that you are
11 free to comment on?

12 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Well, this is one
13 that I -- We all stand on the shoulders of some
14 incredible young fellows that do really unbelievable
15 stuff every day, and they don't know it. They think
16 what they are doing is what any normal American would
17 do under the same circumstances, and I'm just not sure
18 that is true.

19 I think they are extraordinary people. I
20 do believe they are the next greatest generation of
21 Americans, and I believe they have accepted
22 responsibility for their country and, no matter how

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1 long they serve, I believe they will reintegrate
2 themselves back into American society, whether it is
3 after a three-year enlistment or after 20 years or
4 after 30 years, and I think they will accept
5 responsibility for the communities that they live in.

6 I think they are going to fundamentally
7 change America. I think we are once again seeing what
8 an incredible nation we are a part of that produces
9 young people that are able to do the kinds of things
10 that these do.

11 Their bravery is absolutely unbelievable.
12 They are the most intelligent, most informed group of
13 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines that have ever
14 been anywhere.

15 If they don't personally know something,
16 they know to acquire the information over the
17 Internet, and it makes them incredibly well informed
18 whenever it comes to doing what they do.

19 I'm incredibly proud of them. I'm
20 terribly honored to have been able to serve with them.
21 It has been the highlight of my military life to be
22 able to spend some time and be around them.

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1 The other thing I would tell you is that
2 I think I've got an advantage over everybody else when
3 it comes to General Officers over here, because in
4 addition to being the DCG of the Corps, I'm a pilot in
5 B Company, and my life is just as intertwined with
6 those young men, women in B Company as it is with the
7 Corps staff and my personal staff up here.

8 I understand what they go through on a
9 daily basis. I understand the challenges that they've
10 got in their families and in their home life, and I am
11 absolutely amazed every day at the magnificent stuff
12 that they do.

13 You know, I fly three to four missions a
14 week, because I got to go places, and so I might as
15 well fly myself whenever I go do it. And being able
16 to connect the dots -- you know, I sit through the
17 morning BUA and listen to the Force 2 talk, and then
18 I end up down the next morning getting ready to fly a
19 mission, and I've got the specialist of the 158th S2
20 section briefing the intelligence picture along the
21 routes that we are going to fly, and it all connects.

22 That didn't happen before. it happens

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1 because these kids are incredibly talented on mining
2 data off of our systems. So we are a lot better than
3 what we think we are. We are much, much better than
4 what we think we are.

5 This is going to be an incredibly talented
6 armed force for a long time because of the experiences
7 that they have gathered over here. But I've been
8 associated with this Corps since 1990.

9 I've known every Corps Commander since
10 1990. I've known every Chief of Staff of this Corps
11 since 1990. I've known the Corps staff since 1990,
12 and this is by far the best group that has ever been
13 put together to serve as a Corps headquarters at least
14 since 1990.

15 It is an incredible thing to be a part of,
16 and it really is -- I really think it is historical.
17 Somebody will sooner or later write a book about it,
18 I think, that will capture the impacts that happened
19 here. But there has been a lot of great work done.
20 There is more work to be done, but this outfit has
21 done their work.

22

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

Great, sir. Anything

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1 else?

2 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: No. Thank you.

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

4 MAJ. GENERAL SIMMONS: Appreciate it.

5 (b)(3), (b)(6) That concludes this

6 interview with Major General Simmons, Deputy
7 Commanding General for Support.

8 Again, as a reference there was an
9 interview on file from the 18th of June 2007 which I
10 reviewed as a precursor to this.

11 This is (b)(3), (b)(6) the MNCI
12 Historian, on Wednesday, the 2nd of January 2008, at
13 1235.

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