

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

Government formation is progressing but remains fluid. I don't believe we will see resolution for several weeks. Prime Minister Maliki is growing more confident and increasingly rigid on his core positions based on perceived support from regional players and the possibility of splintering within Iraqiyya. Bilateral meetings continue as each bloc seeks to gain an advantage. The Ambassador and I are strongly encouraging additional deputies meetings as soon as possible, to be followed by a meeting of the principals. This will likely take place following bilateral meetings between SOL and the Kurds.

There was an increase of rocket attacks on the IZ last week. Fortunately, the attacks didn't result in US casualties or significant damage. We continue to strongly encourage the Iraqis to take appropriate measures to stop these attacks.

While we support a nationwide census, we are concerned that its timing could complicate the government formation process. The census remains contentious due to the question of ethnic identification. GOI leadership is considering the delay recently recommended by the Ambassador.

ISF development remains a priority. In discussions with GOI leaders, we recommended an increase in the Ministry of Defense budget to adequately address sustainment. We assess that shortfalls in the current sustainment budget could negatively impact the ISF's ability to reach minimum essential capability by December 2011.

Political

The Government formation process is gaining momentum. The Ambassador and I are encouraging the Barzani-derived track, which calls for 7 – 10 days of meetings among the principal deputies from each of the four blocs and shortly thereafter a meeting between the principals. In a 26 September meeting with the Ambassador and me, PM Maliki indicated his support for deputy and principal level meetings of the four blocs following successful completion of his ongoing bilateral engagements with the Kurds. I believe we will see this unfold over the next couple weeks. In addition, we are closely monitoring potential fissures as they develop within each camp to prevent them from undoing the progress we've seen thus far. We've also seen increased pressure from ^{1.4b} to form a grand Shia alliance, recently solidifying its support for Maliki and pressuring ISCI chair Ammar al Hakim and the Sadrists to support a Maliki premiership.

The Ambassador and I had a number of meetings with key leaders this week, to include:

- KRG Deputy Prime Minister Shaways: The DPM stated that PM Maliki is pushing for bilateral negotiations between SOL and the Kurdish Alliance before a meeting between the principals and deputies from all blocs. He also expressed concern about the possible splits within Iraqiyya.
- Prime Minister Maliki: The PM continues to show little flexibility and rejects diminution of prime ministerial powers, believing it would make the premiership weak and susceptible to a coup. He continues to press for bilateral meetings to work the issues but recently agreed to a meeting between the four blocs.

- Dr. Allawi: Allawi and his bloc publicly stated they will not recognize the National Alliance since it was established after the election. They insisted they would not participate in a government with Maliki as premier and that the election results should dictate how the government is formed. This statement was most likely intended to shore up the Iraqiyya base with its anti-Maliki tone.
- Sheik Abu Risha: Abu Risha indicated his respect and support for Allawi because he is more secular than Maliki. He indicated his support for Iraqiyya based on its inclusiveness of Sunni, Shia, and Kurds. He believes Maliki has too much power outside of the constitution and that he will not accept the presidency.

My overall assessment is that we will not see resolution for several weeks. Meanwhile, the Embassy is encouraging compromise through the use of bridging language designed to bring the blocs together on the sensitive issues of de-baathification and realignment of power.

In other political developments, PM Maliki publicly indicated his intent to proceed with the census on 24 October, most likely an effort to gain favor with Kurdish politicians. During our meeting with him, however, the Prime Minister did not appear to have made a firm decision. Ambassador Jeffrey and I are concerned that the census has the potential to impede progress on government formation. Accordingly, the Ambassador recommended a delay, which is currently being considered by the GOI.

Security

The level of violence this week remained consistent with what we have seen over the last several months. There were 165 security incidents, an increase from the previous week and near the 12-week average of 162. There were no US forces killed in action and two non-combat related deaths.

We saw an increase in indirect fire attacks on the IZ throughout last week, and assess that the Embassy is being specifically targeted. We further assess that Kataib Hezbollah (KH) is behind these attacks. We continue to push the Iraqis to concentrate on the points of origin and to shut down KH freedom of movement and its ability to launch rockets. To assist them with these operations, we are providing the ISF with additional ISR and intelligence. During our meeting with the Prime Minister, I emphasized that increased GOI/ISF action was imperative and that we would take unilateral action to protect our joint forces and USG personnel if necessary.

Despite political sensitivities toward combined counterterrorism operations, we enabled Iraqi forces to target an ISI cell leader responsible for IED and IDF attacks. In addition, three military emirs were captured, two from Mosul and one from the Abu Ghurayb. The capture of the Mosul emirs will reduce the operational capacity and command and control of the west Mosul network, assessed to be the worst area for AQI attacks. Their capture will also lead to actionable intelligence that will facilitate additional targeting of the West Mosul AQI/ISI network.

ISF Development

During my meeting with the Prime Minister, I urged him to increase the Ministry of Defense topline budget to reflect the priorities necessary for sustainment of Iraqi Armed Forces. I emphasized that Iraq's military is the fastest growing in the world with the highest operational tempo, both conditions that demand proper resourcing.

Progress in training our ISF partners was highlighted by two events last week:

- Iraq's Air Force Academy graduated 20 new pilots, with eight specializing in fixed-wing and 12 in rotary-wing. This graduation brings the total number of Iraqi Air Force pilots trained through this program to 102. These officers are part of Iraq's comprehensive plan to raise the level of training and performance of their Air Force pilots and will increase the Iraqi Air Force's capability to train new pilots, help develop a self-sustaining pilot training program, and provide the foundation for a professional and credible Air Force.
- In order to improve institutional police training capacity, the Ministry of Interior partners with NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I) to provide training at five police colleges. NTM-I training at Camp Dublin focuses on training of Federal Police by Italian Carabinieri. On 23 September, 535 students (includes 82 Kurdish Zerevani) graduated from the Camp Dublin Federal Police Training Center. These graduates will enable the Iraqi police force to move closer to achieving police primacy, a necessary step that will allow the armed forces to begin focusing on Iraq's external defense.



Transition

We continue to work closely with our Embassy partners to ensure they have the resources necessary for a successful transition in December 2011. While we have made progress, there is still work to be done. Ambassador Jeffrey and I encourage the creation of a joint DOS-DOD, GO-level planning team in Washington DC to address complex issues such as the OSC-I/INL transition and transfer of LOGCAP authority.

Current boots on ground is 48,233. We occupy 92 bases, 56 of which are partnered.

Economic and Energy

Electricity is a key driver of stability and will play a critical role in Iraq's strategic success. USF-I and the Embassy are taking a multi-pronged approach to address electricity shortfalls, including work with the GOI to improve electricity generation. This effort centers on improving existing power plant performance, repairing broken generating equipment, and completing current plant construction projects. In addition, the USG has funded a public relations campaign to address public expectations and demand for power. Electricity riots this summer were based partly on unmet public expectations, exacerbated by Ministry of Electricity (MOE) announcements that overstated power availability. We

will continue to engage with GOI officials to encourage prioritized funding for the MOE operating and maintenance budget and other initiatives.

I travel to Turkey this week for my first regional engagement to build relationships with key leaders, including members of the Turkish General Staff, the Minister of Interior, and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. I will thank them for their support to USF-I and to Iraq; reinforce the US commitment to a stable, secure, and self-reliant Iraq; and reassure them of our shared goal of an inclusive Iraqi government.

Very Respectfully,



Approved for Release