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USF-I Weekly Assessment 13-19 December 2010

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

There has been continued progress in government formation as the 25 December deadline approaches. Prime Minister Maliki and Dr. Allawi met last week to discuss a number of formation-related issues. Both publicly expressed satisfaction with the outcome of the meeting, increasing the chances for cooperation and an inclusive government. The Chairman's visit with PM Maliki was certainly helpful and demonstrated that the US is firmly behind a government that includes meaningful participation by all parties. While outstanding issues remain, the blocs are communicating and working toward mutually acceptable solutions. The Council of Representatives (COR) met on Saturday and approved lifting de-Ba'athification orders on Salih Mutlaq and two other Iraqiyya leaders, a breakthrough that paves the way for their involvement in the new government.

The Iraqi Security Forces continue to operate at an increased operational tempo to mitigate threats associated with the Ashura commemoration, government formation, and the Christmas holiday. To date, there have been 12 Ashura-related attacks, taking place primarily in Baghdad. We assess these attacks were committed by al-Qaeda-Iraq (AQI) in an effort to incite sectarian violence and discredit the ISF. We continue to work with the GOI and ISF to pressure extremist networks and to address threats, including those against Iraqi Christians and pilgrims returning from Ashura.

US and ISF counterterrorism (CT) forces conducted partnered operations resulting in the detention of numerous high-level operatives, including one of the masterminds behind the Christian church attack on 31 October. CT forces also apprehended the third-ranking member of AQI, who is providing valuable information on the network that will enable future operations.

Political

On 14 December, Prime Minister Maliki and Dr. Allawi met to discuss the challenges facing the new government and Allawi's potential role as head of the National Council for Higher Policies (NCHP). In public statements following the meeting, both characterized the 90-minute session as a positive step forward. In another significant development, the COR voted to lift de-Ba'athification charges against three Iraqiyya leaders, satisfying one of the primary demands by Sunni politicians to ensure their participation in the new government. In addition, the COR discussed committee appointments and conducted the first of three required readings of the FY 2011 budget. Finally, the blocs are making significant progress on nominations for cabinet posts, with an announcement forthcoming early this week on most of the positions.

The creation of the NCHP continues to be a topic of debate and negotiation. A number of unresolved issues remain: the number of individuals representing each bloc, authorities of the Council, and the voting status of the head of the Judiciary. Iraqiyya and the National Alliance continue to work through these issues. We are encouraging all parties to honor agreements made in November and to facilitate

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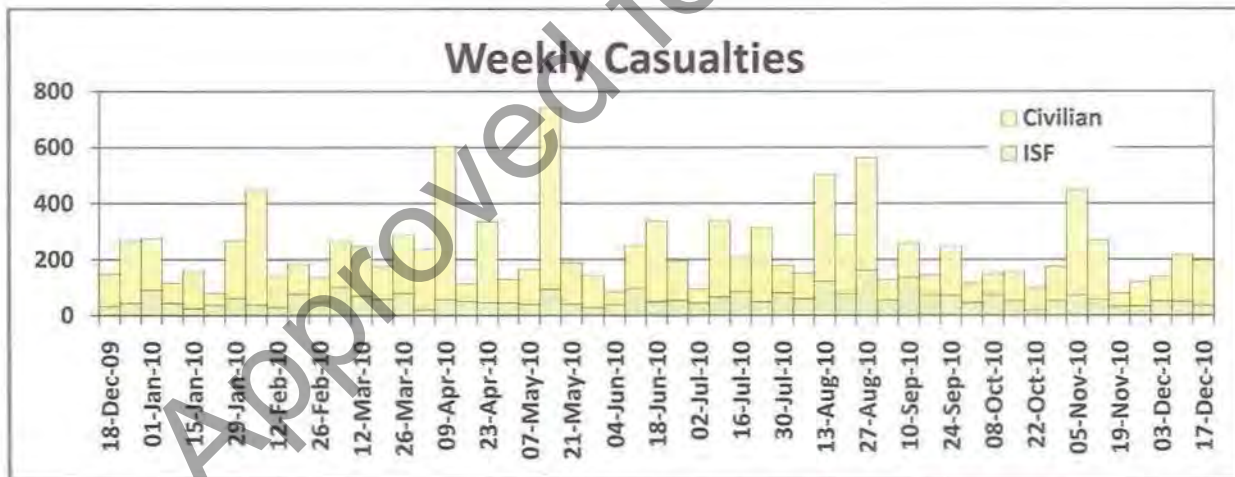
passage of an NCHP law as soon as possible. Passage of the legislation prior to the government formation deadline is unlikely; however, we assess Allawi will not raise objections as long as the legislation is presented to the COR for consideration by that date.

Masoud Barzani was reelected chairman of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) during the KDP's 13th congress in Irbil. The opening session of the week-long congress, the first in over 10 years, was attended by Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, COR Speaker Nujaifi, and Dr. Allawi. Attendance by key GOI leaders sent a strong signal that all parties are committed to an inclusive government.

The UN Security Council passed a number of Chapter VII-related resolutions formally ending the Oil for Food program, extending legal protections under the Development Fund for Iraq by six months, and lifting restrictions on development of a civilian nuclear program. Passage of these resolutions is a significant milestone for Iraq and signifies its re-integration into the international community.

Security

After being elevated for two weeks, the number of security incidents dropped to 115, below the 12-week average of 151. The number of casualties decreased to 198 (35 killed, 163 wounded) but remained above the 12-week average of 180. Ashura-related attacks in Baghdad, Diyala, and Salah ad Din accounted for 91 (17 killed, 74 wounded) of the casualties.



There have been 12 Ashura-related attacks since 3 December. We assess AQI conducted these attacks to take advantage of large Shia gatherings in an effort to incite sectarian strife and to portray the ISF as unable to provide adequate security for Iraqi civilians. In a heroic act, a Sunni police officer prevented a potentially catastrophic attack during a parade of Shia pilgrims by tackling an operative as he detonated his suicide vest. Although the police officer was killed, his sacrifice saved countless lives.

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During the Ashura commemoration, the ISF concentrated their efforts in the holy city of Karbala, establishing checkpoints to protect pilgrimage routes and several concentric security circles around the city itself. In addition to unilateral ISF operations, our counterterrorism forces provided assistance by conducting numerous partnered operations to preempt attacks on pilgrims and by deploying forces to key locations to provide quick-reaction forces in the event of a security incident. At the request of the ISF, USF-I also provided radar coverage over holy shrines to track potential indirect fire attacks. As a result of this increased security posture, there were no attacks on the main pilgrimage sites in Karbala. The ISF will remain focused on providing security over the next several days as pilgrims return home and throughout the remainder of the holiday season.

As Christmas approaches, we continue to work with the GOI, the ISF, and our Embassy partners to address the heightened threat to Christians. Due to recent ISF operations resulting in the detention of AQI leadership, we assess AQI will likely attempt isolated, small-scale attacks targeting Iraqi Christians, particularly those located in Baghdad and Mosul. We believe they will do so in an attempt to continue garnering international media attention. The ISF has implemented additional security measures to prevent these attacks, including continued pressure on extremist networks and increased checkpoints and patrols throughout Christian neighborhoods and near places of worship.

We continue to monitor threat streams indicating Shia extremist groups intend to kidnap US personnel in order to bargain for the release of high profile detainees. While the overall threat is low to personnel on US bases, we are increasing our security posture and ensuring all personnel maintain a heightened level of vigilance.

There was a sniper attack in Najaf last week that wounded one of our local national translators. This was the third effective sniper attack within the last 30 days. We continue to work with our Iraqi partners to dismantle cells conducting these attacks, exemplified by the countersniper operation in Tikrit mentioned in last week's report. We are also addressing our security procedures to protect US personnel from this persistent threat.

During this reporting period, US and Iraqi counterterrorism forces conducted 35 partnered operations, resulting in the detention of over 60 individuals. Of particular importance was the apprehension of (b)(6) one of the masterminds behind the 31 October al-Najat church bombing who was also responsible for preparing explosives used in the attack. Also noteworthy was the capture of (b)(6) the AQI Minister of Public Affairs and its third-ranking member. During questioning, Khattab has provided extensive information that will enable future operations against the network. Additional operations resulted in the detention of a number of AQI high-value individuals, including the overall Sharia Emir for the Southern State, a Financing and Logistics Emir in Anbar Province, the West Mosul Military Emir, the Public Relations Minister of Anbar Province, and a foreign fighter facilitator responsible for bringing operatives into Iraq from 1.4b as recently as 10 December. Finally, the most active foreign facilitation network into Iraq will likely be degraded with the detention of (b)(6) a suspected extremist facilitator and Libyan national. (b)(6) a prolific

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source of suicide operatives, was recently detained in Alexandria by the Egyptian State Security Investigation Service.

We appreciate DOD recognition of Information Operations (IO) as a traditional military activity and welcome the Department's consolidation of IO oversight and management functions. This reorganization will be helpful in gaining Congressional support for IO in Iraq and all operating environments. We also appreciate the OSD Comptroller's recent approval of the expenditure of funds for our FY 2011 IO activities. This funding is key to our success in this critical mission area. We will remain engaged to keep key stakeholders apprised of ongoing IO efforts and funding priorities.

ISF Development

The ISF continues to receive equipment that will assist Iraq in developing its external defense capabilities. On 15 December, three Bell T-407 helicopters were delivered to Camp Taji. These training helicopters will be used to produce qualified pilots capable of conducting armed reconnaissance missions. An Iraqi Army Aviation squadron has been established specifically to fly the T-407 and the Armed Scout Helicopter (ASH), its fully mission-capable counterpart. Two newly-qualified instructor pilots, along with their US Army advisor counterparts,



will use the T-407s over the next year to develop a cadre of instructor pilots and line pilots to smoothly transition into the ASH when it begins to arrive in 2011.



In addition to the Bell helicopters, the ISF took delivery of eight M1A1 tanks and three M88A2 tank recovery vehicles on 13 December. This brings the current inventory of M1A1s to 51, with a projected inventory of 140 by end of 2011. This was the final delivery for the M88A2, resulting in a total

inventory of eight.

In an effort to improve planning and budget capabilities, 41 participants from the Ministry of Interior, the Kurdistan Ministry of Interior, and the Kurdistan Ministry of Peshmerga completed an Iraq Senior Security Management Course on 16 December in Istanbul, Turkey. The Naval Postgraduate School, Defense Resource Management Institute (NPS DRMI) facilitated this out-of-country training event. The course focused on providing a framework for senior leaders to integrate ministerial planning and resource allocation processes. The course also covered methodology and procedures that the MOI will implement during the 2012 planning and budget submission cycle.

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Transition

We continue to work parallel planning efforts with CENTCOM and other components that will guide our transition in 2011. In addition, we are working with the Embassy to identify areas requiring particular attention, including construction requirement timelines, contracting mechanisms, and equipment transfers. We appreciate the recent CENTCOM endorsement of the State Department's request to delegate security responsibility for DOD personnel who will be assigned to OSC-I, as well as CENTCOM's support for authorities and DOD funding sources for OSC-I-related construction. Finally, we expect to finalize land use agreements for future US Mission sites once the new GOI is seated.

I had a productive visit to Washington DC. I look forward to visits this week with the Chief of Staff of the Army and the Chief, Army Reserve, and traveling throughout the country to visit with the troops on Christmas.

Respectfully,



Approved for Release

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