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USF-I Weekly Assessment 18-24 April 2011

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani hosted a meeting in Irbil with Dr. Ayad Allawi and Adil Abd al-Mahdi this week. Barzani indicated his willingness to facilitate communication between political blocs to reaffirm commitment to last November's "Barzani Initiative" and advance the government formation agreements. We hope this will be a productive first step toward open dialogue between the blocs.

The Arab League Summit scheduled to take place in Baghdad in May was delayed for the second time. While the reason given for the delay was regional unrest, many Iraqi politicians felt it was more likely retribution by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) for the GOI's recent support of Bahraini protestors. Arab foreign ministers will meet on 15 May to determine when the meeting will take place and whether or not it will remain in Baghdad. A number of GOI officials have strongly urged the Arab League to keep the Summit in Baghdad due to the significant resources it has invested to prepare the city for the event. In addition, holding the meeting elsewhere would be a setback for a government that is striving to successfully reintegrate into the region and the Arab community.

Demonstrations in Iraq continue to be mostly small and peaceful. However, there were violent protests in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) city of Sulaymaniyah.

The number of security incidents decreased; the number of casualties rose slightly. A signature AQI attack at a checkpoint in downtown Baghdad was the first major AQI attack in the city since January, largely due to the efforts of the Iraqi Security Forces. Indirect fire (IDF) attacks against USF decreased for the second consecutive week. This may be due in part to a number of recent joint counterterrorism operations targeting Shia extremist groups.

Political

In an effort to move forward on stalled government formation initiatives, KRG President Barzani met with Dr. Allawi and VP-nominee al-Mahdi to discuss full implementation of power-sharing agreements made last November. We are hopeful this meeting will reinvigorate government formation efforts and we will work with the Embassy to assess the results and develop a plan to move forward.

The Arab League announced it is delaying the summit scheduled to take place in Baghdad on 10-11 May. In a press statement, the Deputy Secretary General attributed the delay to political unrest across the region. The League will hold a meeting of Arab foreign ministers on 15 May to discuss rescheduling. Iraqi politicians expressed disappointment with the decision, citing concerns about the considerable resources the GOI has invested to upgrade infrastructure and increase security. Some blame the postponement on the GOI's public criticism of GCC intervention in Bahrain and expressions of solidarity with Bahraini protestors. Most hope the Arab League will

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commit to holding the twice-delayed summit in Baghdad and simply reschedule to a later date.

The majority of demonstrations in Iraq this week were peaceful, focused on the provision of essential services and government corruption. There were approximately 18 demonstrations throughout the week. Most were small, with turnouts ranging from dozens of people to a few hundred. There were exceptions, however. Rising political tensions have led to clashes between police and protestors in the Kurdish city of Sulaymaniyah. And in Mosul, thousands of protestors, including the provincial governor, decried the possibility of a continued U.S. military force in Iraq.

Protests in the IKR have been focused on political reform, namely ending two-party dominance of the KRG. Goran, the main opposition party, appears to have joined forces with two Kurdish Islamist parties in an effort to exploit public dissatisfaction. We assess they may have instigated violence during recent demonstrations, particularly in the city of Sulaymaniyah. On 17 April, 300-500 demonstrators burned tires and threw rocks at police. The violence resulted in 57 civilians injured; most by inhaling tear gas or by rocks thrown by other demonstrators. Four suffered minor gunshot wounds. In a demonstration the following day, 15 Iraqi police and 3 civilians were wounded after protestors threw rocks and shot ball bearings at police. The rise in violence has led the KRG to adopt an increasingly intolerant stance toward protests; they have denied permits and then arrested those protestors deemed "unauthorized." On Thursday, 500 Peshmerga forces were deployed to Sulaymaniyah to provide additional security during demonstrations. We are concerned these forces, loyal to the PUK and KDP, may target Goran protestors, inflaming an already tense situation. We are closely monitoring events in the IKR and are strongly encouraging Kurdish leadership to respect the right to peaceful protest and to prohibit the excessive use of force by security forces.

There have also been demonstrations in Mosul. Atheel al-Nujaifi, the provincial governor of Ninawa has participated in (and even led) some of the demonstrations, which occurred despite a curfew imposed by the Ninawa Operations Command. On Friday, over 2,000 protestors gathered at various locations, demanding the departure of USF from Iraq. In addition to his participation in protests, al-Nujaifi announced his intention to launch a campaign to collect a million signatures as part of a petition demanding U.S. troops' withdrawal by December 2011. We assess that this is an effort by al-Nujaifi to redirect pressure on the central government and away from the provincial government and himself.

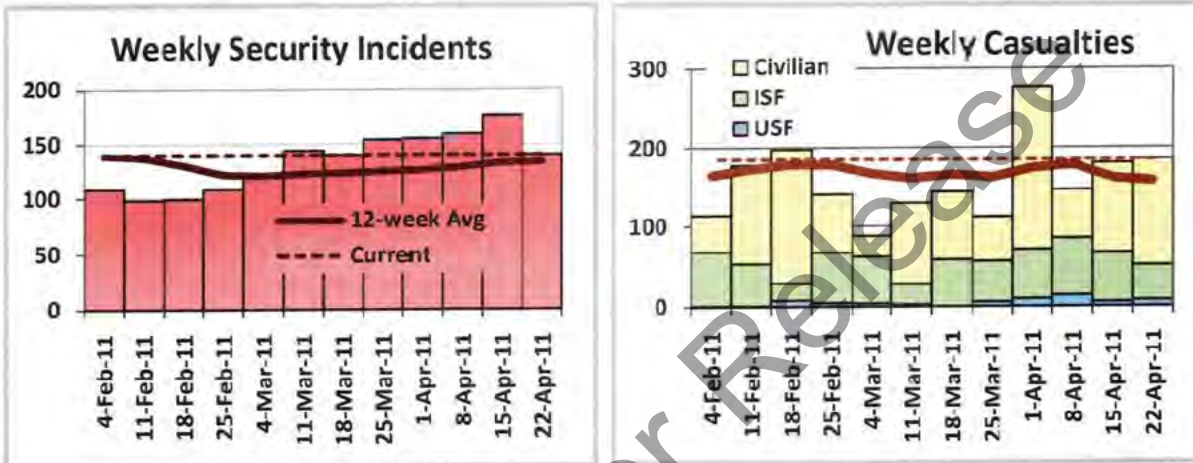
Due to inclement weather, United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq was unable to conduct its weekly visit to Camp Ashraf. At this time, the situation remains stable. In our engagements with GOI and ISF leadership, we continue to discourage further military action and underscore the importance of a credible investigation that will demonstrate the GOI's commitment to a peaceful solution. The Embassy is actively facilitating communication between the GOI, the MeK, and the United Nations to determine suitable resolution.

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Security

During the reporting period, there were 140 security incidents, a decrease from the previous week, but above the 12-week average of 133 for the seventh consecutive week. The number of casualties was 185 (28 killed, 157 wounded), an increase from the week prior and above the 12-week average of 157. Two U.S. service members were killed in action (see below) and six U.S. service members were wounded in action. The IDF attacks targeting USF decreased for the second week in a row, from 18 to 11.



Extremists detonated two vehicle-borne IEDs just outside the western entry control point of the international zone on 18 April, killing 5 and wounding 15. We assess AQI conducted the attack, which likely targeted a convoy carrying GOI officials during morning rush hour. This was the first major AQI suicide attack in Baghdad since late January, reflecting the sustained pressure by the ISF resulting in a large part of AQI's Baghdad network being degraded.

On 22 April, two U.S. service members were killed by explosively formed penetrators (EFP) while conducting a logistics patrol in Al Kut. Based on the target and location of the attack, we assess a Shia extremist group, likely Asaib al-Haq (AAH), was responsible. We continue to work closely with GOI and ISF leadership to execute counterterrorism (CT) operations targeting Shia extremist groups to disrupt their ability to conduct these attacks.

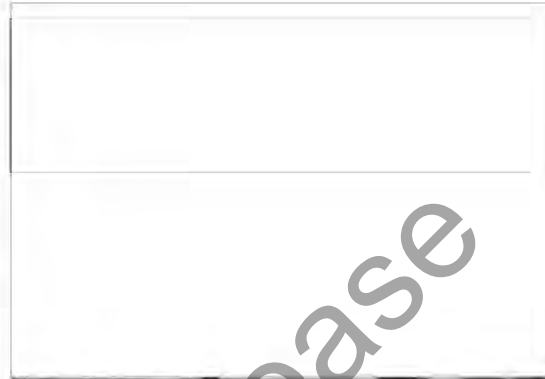
U.S. and Iraqi CT forces conducted 33 operations, resulting in the detention of 37 extremists. Twenty-eight of these operations targeted Sunni insurgent groups. CT forces detained an AQI financier responsible for funding operations in northern Iraq. His capture will further degrade AQI's ability to finance operations in the Mosul area and will impact foreign fighter facilitation efforts. Also detained was an AQI Sharia Emir who advised new recruits, issued fatwas against USF and GOI officials, held Sharia courts, and acted as the religious judge for assassinations and murders. Other successful operations resulted in the detention of AQI operatives responsible for multiple attacks targeting USF, ISF, and GOI officials. Five operations targeting Shia extremist groups (SEG) resulted in the detention of SEG operatives, including an IDF leader and multiple individuals associated with Promised Day Brigade attacks on U.S. and Iraqi forces in

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Basrah Province in southern Iraq. We are cautiously optimistic that the increase in Shia targeting will continue as a result of Prime Minister Maliki's direction to his operational commanders to approve and execute targeting packages regardless of sect.

ISF Development

Over 250 Iraqi Oil Police students graduated from the third rotation of the Oil Police training course at Camp Dublin in Baghdad. Fifteen of the graduates are Kurdish Zerevani forces. This course is part of a new training program initiated last fall through NATO Training Mission-Iraq, with the Italian Carabinieri serving as primary instructors. This training program utilizes a "train the trainer" concept where the top graduates from each course continue with training and will be qualified to serve as instructors for future courses.



In its ongoing effort to address deficiencies in its logistics processes, the Iraqi Air Force Training School at Camp Taji recently concluded its third session of the Supply Systems course. The course provides a foundational understanding of the supply systems fundamentals, including warehouse management, principles of material handling, and material management inspection. Additionally, the students were taught the importance of supply warehouse discipline, accounting, asset procurement and visibility to better serve the task of keeping aircraft mission capable.

Transition

We continue to work with our Embassy partners in order to provide support of the U.S. mission in Iraq. For example, Department of State (DOS) personnel recently completed 40 hours of initial MRAP driver training with assistance from USF-I trainers. The five-day course of instruction consisted of rollover training, day and night driving, and recovery operations and resulted in 30 DOS personnel being licensed to operate the Caiman Plus variant MRAP. DOS plans to train an additional 270 personnel to operate the MRAPs. In addition, DOS took possession of its first five Caiman Plus vehicles earlier this month.

Over the past several weeks, we have conducted a series of Rehearsal of Concept (ROC) drills focusing on 10 locations across Iraq that will have an enduring Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) presence. These ROC drills examined critical operations at each location in order to identify gaps and synchronize our expected initial operating procedures and coordinating mechanisms between USF-I and U.S. Embassy-Baghdad. These efforts have been crucial as we hone our efforts and identify areas where additional focus is needed as we approach OSC-I initial operating capability on 1 June 2011.

We appreciate the recent efforts of USCENTCOM to open dialogue with the Government of Kuwait as we request their support of our operational maneuver out of Iraq. We are optimistic that these efforts will set the stage for favorable decisions.

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Speaker of the House John Boehner's trip to Iraq went very well, as did the visit from General Dempsey. Next week USF-I will proudly host Operation Proper Exit IX, welcoming Soldiers who previously sustained combat injuries. They will travel throughout Iraq to witness the positive changes that have been realized largely due to their sacrifices.

Respectfully,



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