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**USF-I Weekly Assessment 22-28 May 2011**

**USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT**

**Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:**

There was no significant movement on government formation this week. The Council of Representatives (COR) remains out of session and many GOI officials are traveling abroad. The political blocs continue to meet, but have not reached agreement on either the National Council for Higher Policies (NCHP) or security ministers.

On 26 May, the Sadrist Trend demonstrated its opposition to U.S. Forces (USF) in a parade that drew approximately 23,000 participants and 10,000 observers. Although the event appeared to be well organized, the crowd was far smaller than anticipated. There was no violence; however, participants marched in a militaristic fashion and chanted Jaysh al-Mahdi (JAM) slogans. Some GOI officials expressed concern that the parade would inflame sectarian tensions and was not in the best interests of the Iraqi people. Muqtada al-Sadr conducted a televised interview in which he reiterated his threat to reactivate JAM and boasted about Promised Day Brigade (PDB) attacks on USF, directly linking PDB to the Sadrist movement. The Ambassador and I engaged Prime Minister Maliki to express our concern and to ascertain how he intends to address the criminal activity of al-Sadr and his followers. He indicated he was considering various courses of action.

Security trends remained consistent. The number of security incidents rose slightly and was nearly even with the 12-week average. The number of casualties decreased but remained above average. AQI conducted 18 coordinated attacks in Baghdad on 22 May, resulting in 14 killed and 63 wounded. The high number of attacks demonstrated a degree of coordination between Baghdad AQI cells; however, the number of casualties could have been much higher, indicating the Baghdad AQI network is struggling to regain capability lost last year as a result of successful joint counterterrorism (CT) operations.

**Political**

Meetings between political blocs continued; however, there was no discernable progress on the NCHP or the security ministries. Despite initial indications that it might be willing to compromise on the NCHP, the stalemate continued when the State of Law bloc indicated it would oppose Iraqiyya's proposed method for selecting the head of the council. Ayad Allawi informed us he submitted two additional names for security ministers; he has received no response from Prime Minister Maliki.

On 26 May, an estimated 23,000 Iraqis participated in a Sadrist Trend parade protesting the presence of USF in Iraq, falling far short of the 100,000 Muqtada al-Sadr called for. Although there was no violence or clashes with the ISF, there was a distinct militaristic overtone. Participants marched in formation and wore uniform clothing adorned with the Iraqi flag. The reaction of GOI officials was generally muted; however, some expressed concern that the event was a message of intimidation from Sadr and weakened Iraq's image in the eyes of the international community.

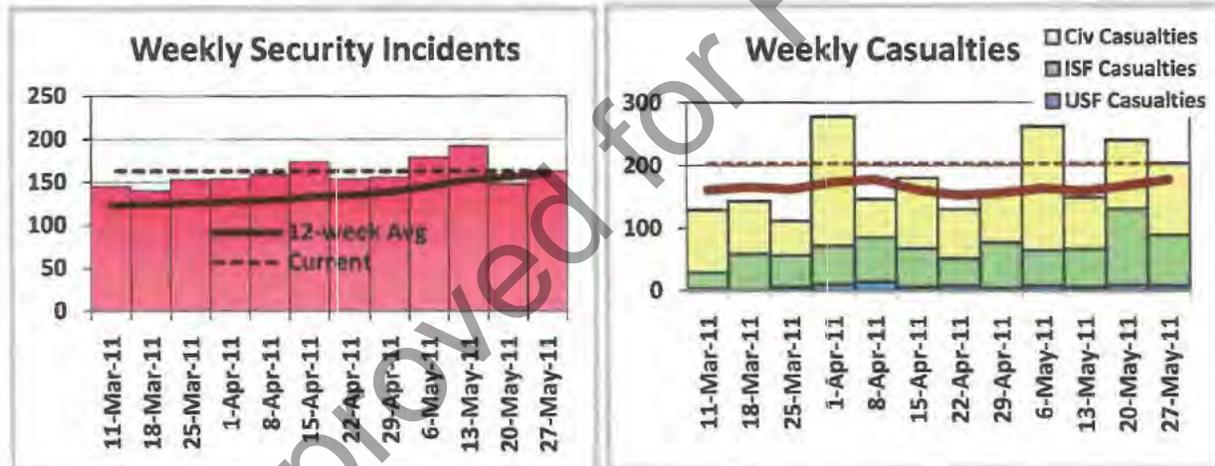
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In an interview with BBC Arabic, Sadr confirmed his earlier threat to reactivate the Mahdi Militia if U.S. Forces do not depart by the end of 2011. He also admitted publicly that PDB, part of Sadr's organization, is carrying out attacks on USF. Prime Minister Maliki informed the Ambassador and me that he is concerned about Sadr's admission of violence and is considering the legal ramifications of such statements.

Kuwait's recent move to begin construction of the Mubarak port has drawn the ire of Iraqi politicians, who claim the port will restrict Iraq's access to sea lanes, negatively impact the operation of Iraq's al-Faw port in Umm Qasr, and threaten Iraq's economic development. While some politicians are stirring up popular resentment and calling for United Nations action, the Iraqi ministry of foreign affairs indicated it will raise the issue at the next meeting of the Iraq-Kuwait joint bilateral commission.

**Security**

During the reporting period, there were 160 security incidents, an increase from the previous week and in line with the 12-week average of 160. The number of casualties was 203 (37 killed, 166 wounded), a decrease from last week but above the 12-week average of 178. Attacks targeting USF increased from 35 to 39. Two U.S. service members were killed in action; six were wounded in action.



On 22 May AQI conducted 18 coordinated attacks in predominately Shia neighborhoods of Baghdad, resulting in 14 killed and 63 wounded. The attacks consisted of magnetically attached IEDs (MAIEDs), vehicle-borne IEDs, and IEDs. As with last week's attack in Kirkuk, first responders were targeted. AQI was likely motivated by a desire to provoke a response from Shia political or militant groups in order incite sectarian unrest. Previous reporting indicated AQI's intent to conduct operations in Baghdad; therefore, we do not assess the attacks were in retaliation for the death of Usama bin-Laden.

We continue planning for operations in the south that will protect our forces, set the conditions for our withdrawal, and enable the ISF to maintain control of the southern provinces. We will work closely with our GOI and ISF counterparts to address current challenges using both lethal and nonlethal means. Counterterrorism operations will target

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and conducting indirect fire (IDF) and IED attacks against USF. We will augment these efforts with focused training to increase the capability and professionalism of our ISF partners and with increased USF-I route and area security operations. We will also conduct coordinated engagements with GOI officials at all levels (including provincial governments) to ensure they understand the detrimental impact the SEGs will have on Iraq's long-term prosperity.

We are working closely with the ISF as they reenergize their efforts to impede the flow of lethal accelerants to violent extremist organizations. As a result, we have seen a marked increase in the discovery of weapons caches. One such discovery occurred on 25 May when the Iraqi Army found a substantial cache in Baghdad. The cache was well hidden and contained a considerable amount of lethal aid, including 27 rockets, 49



explosively formed penetrators (EFPs), 6 MAIEDs, 30 ammunition canisters, and extensive IED-making materials. We assess this cache belongs to a SEG and that its discovery will disrupt attacks targeting U.S. and Iraqi forces in the Baghdad area.

On 26 May, Ali al-Lami, the executive director of the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC), was gunned down while riding in his car in downtown Baghdad, making him the latest victim in a string of assassination attempts targeting GOI officials. The AJC is responsible for vetting political candidates for ties to the outlawed Ba'ath Party. We assess Asaib al-Haq (AAH) conducted the attack. Al-Lami was a controversial figure and had many enemies, both Shia and Sunni. We addressed his assassination with the Prime Minister, who was unsympathetic, stating that al-Lami "had a lot of blood on his hands."

U.S. and Iraqi CT forces conducted 37 operations during the reporting period, resulting in the detention of 48 extremists. Nine of these operations targeted Shia extremists and resulted in the apprehension of a senior leader of the AAH network in Karkh involved in IED and EFP attacks on USF and attempts to assassinate ISF personnel. Also apprehended were multiple SEG operatives responsible for IED and IDF attacks targeting US and Iraqi forces. Twenty-eight CT operations targeted Sunni extremists, responsible for assassination attempts and IED and IDF attacks. The detention of the AQI economic emir for Mosul, responsible for extortion and financial activities supporting AQI operations, will provide valuable intelligence on the extortion activities providing the primary funding stream for AQI operations in Mosul. Our joint CT forces continue to successfully target extremists involved in international terrorist operations. One of these extremists was a senior-level AQI operative involved in international trafficking. Three were implicated in an international terrorist scheme to smuggle operatives into Europe to

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conduct attacks and one was a key player in AQI international trafficking. These operations likely disrupted planned AQ attacks in Europe.

The Senior Working Group (SWG) continues to make significant progress on Combined Security Mechanism issues. In its most recent meeting, the SWG addressed equipping the Golden Lion battalion, which is advised by USF and comprised of members of the Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, and Kurdish Peshmerga. After completing training at the Kirkuk Training Center in June, the Golden Lions will operate exclusively inside the Combined Security Area unless otherwise authorized by the SWG. The SWG also discussed the transition of two Combined Checkpoints in Ninawa Province to bilateral operations. The transition has been approved and will begin on 1 June. USF-I will monitor the transition to ensure it progresses smoothly. Transition of additional checkpoints will be discussed at the next meeting, scheduled for mid-June.

### **ISF Development**

The Prime Minister recently signed a letter requesting a two-year extension of NATO Training Mission-Iraq (NTM-I), currently due to expire at the end of 2011. The USF-I Deputy Commanding General for Advising and Training (dual-hatted as the commander of NTM-I), LTG Mike Ferriter, was in Brussels to discuss the importance of the mission and its potential extension. While there, he delivered Maliki's letter to NATO's Assistant Secretary General (ASG) for Operations Martin Howard. In the letter, Maliki called for the creation of a joint committee to address potential training sites, support requirements, and cost-sharing. We will continue to facilitate the relationship between Iraq and NATO and will encourage the Iraqis to demonstrate their commitment through sufficient cost sharing.

### **Transition**

The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) will reach initial operating capability on 1 June and is on track to be fully operational by 1 October. Our success thus far is due to the collaborative efforts of USF-I and U.S. Embassy-Baghdad personnel. Our teams have conducted multiple rehearsals of concept drills, comprehensive site surveys, and site synchronization drills. In addition, there are a number of interagency working groups operating concurrently to facilitate progress on land use agreements, oversee construction and the delivery of equipment, fill permanent positions, and complete other tasks required to stand up the OSC-I mission.

We look forward to a visit from Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence Vickers next week. In addition, NATO ASG Howard will be in Iraq to discuss the extension of NTM-I with the Ambassador and me, as well as with several GOI and ISF officials.

Respectfully,

