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USF-I Weekly Assessment 26 June – 2 July 2011

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

Congratulations on assuming your new position as Secretary of Defense. The USF-I team is looking forward to your visit to Iraq later this month.

There was no movement on government formation last week and little substantive discussion on U.S. Forces (USF) remaining past 2011. This was due mainly to the continued absence of two critical decision makers, Dr. Ayad Allawi and Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani. President Jalal Talabani indicated his intent to hold a second meeting of the political blocs within the next several days. During our engagements with key leaders, we are emphasizing the importance of constructive dialogue and encouraging all bloc leaders to attend the meeting in order to move forward on these critical matters.

The overall security situation improved last week, with the number of incidents and casualties falling well below average. However, security in the southern provinces continued to deteriorate due to [1.4b] extremist group (SEG) activity. SEGs have declared their intent to target USF in order to claim credit for driving "the occupier" out of Iraq. This effort is supported by an increase in [1.4b, 1.4d] [1.4b, 1.4d] which has resulted in more accurate and lethal attacks. On 29 June [1.4b] [1.4b] launched three improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAM) at one of our partnered bases in Wasit Province, killing three U.S. soldiers and wounding seven.

Although there has recently been some willingness to target SEGs, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) are constrained by political concerns as well as the lack of appointed security ministers. These constraints have prevented them from fulfilling their responsibilities in accordance with the 2008 Security Agreement. Consequently, we are executing unilateral counterterrorism (CT) operations and conducting patrols that will counter the threat of improvised explosive device (IED) and indirect fire (IDF) attacks. In order to conduct these operations, we must divert resources currently devoted to our advise, train, and assist mission. This diversion is necessary to protect our forces and set the conditions for our withdrawal through southern Iraq later this year.

Political

President Talabani did not hold a second meeting of the political blocs this week to discuss government formation and a post-2011 security agreement due to the continued unavailability of Allawi and Barzani. President Talabani indicated his intent to hold the meeting within the next week. Many of the blocs have expressed a desire to review the assessment of the ISF's capabilities and gaps to inform their decision; we have encouraged Prime Minister Maliki to share the assessment with them.

There has been controversy surrounding recent comments by Council of Representative Speaker Usama Nujaifi during his recent trip to the United States. Nujaifi remarked that

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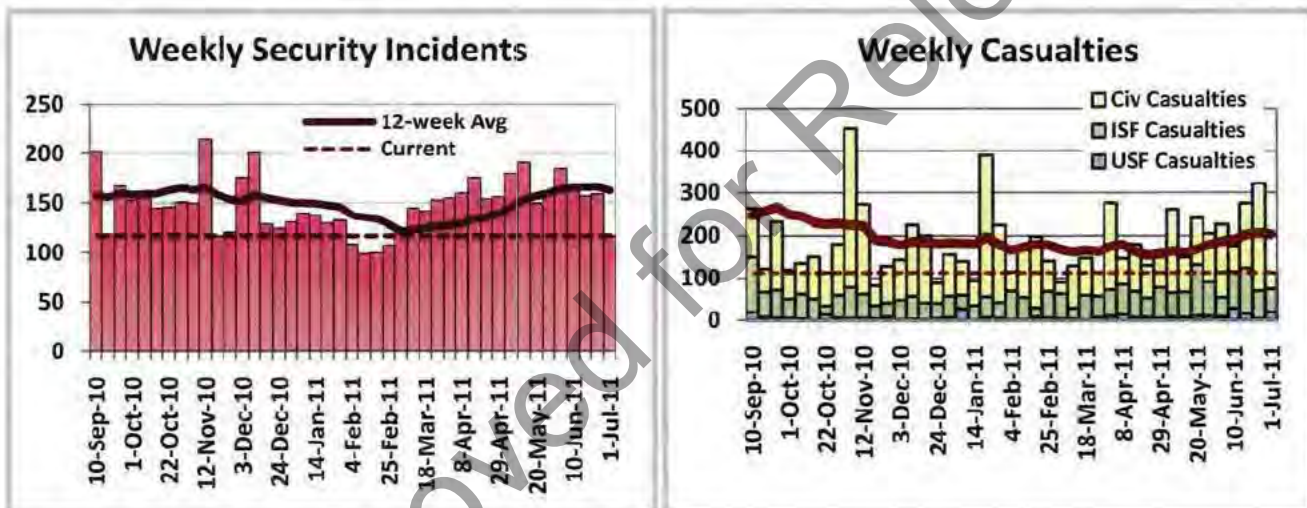
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Sunni disillusionment with the current political situation could lead some to call for the creation of an autonomous Sunni region. A number of Nujaifi's political opponents have characterized his remarks as counter to his position as a national figure and called for his ouster. However, we assess Speaker Nujaifi was simply highlighting growing Sunni frustration with the lack of progress on government formation initiatives and that he was not advocating the creation of a Sunni region.

Security

During the reporting period, there were 117 security incidents, a decrease from the previous week and below the 12-week average of 162. The average daily attack rate was 13. The number of casualties was 112 (37 killed, 75 wounded), a significant decrease from last week and below the 12-week average of 205. Although attacks targeting USF decreased from 32 to 24, five U.S. service members were killed in action and 13 were wounded in action.



There were 659 security incidents during the month of June, a decrease from the previous month and just above the 12-month average of 653. Casualties for the month totaled 1054 (231 killed, 823 wounded), higher than May and above the 12-month average of 873. The number of attacks targeting USF decreased from 181 to 143, which is in line with the 12-month average. Due to an increase in lethal attacks by SEGs, however, 14 service members were killed in action and 46 were wounded in action.

On 29 June, three IRAMs impacted Forward Operating Base (FOB) Shocker, a joint Iraqi-U.S. base in Wasit Province, killing three U.S. soldiers and wounding seven.

1.4b claimed responsibility for the attack, which took place two days before the base was scheduled for transfer to the Iraqis. 1.4b operatives utilized a dump truck as a mobile weapons launcher. FOB Shocker is located in the vicinity of an active quarry, which prevented detection of the vehicle prior to the attack. The IRAMs impacted the American side of the installation, demonstrating precision similar to the 6 June attack on another joint base, FOB Loyalty. FOB Shocker was last targeted two years ago,

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indicating SEGs may be targeting U.S. bases within days of closure in order to boost the perception that they are responsible for driving USF out of Iraq.

The attack on FOB Shocker is the latest in a string of attacks executed by the three main Shia extremist groups: 1.4b Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), and Muqtada al-Sadr's Promised Day Brigade. These groups have overtly expressed their intent to inflict U.S. casualties and are following through with frequent and progressively lethal attacks enabled by an increase in 1.4b, 1.4d We assess this trend will intensify as we conduct our withdrawal through southern Iraq.

In addition to support from 1.4b SEGs are exploiting a more permissive operating environment that enables them carry out attacks. The ISF are generally reluctant to execute operations targeting SEG networks due to perceived political pressures, including the lack of defense and security ministers. Last week's operation in Maysan Province to stem the flow of illegal weapons into Iraq was a positive step; however, the operation was limited in scope, resulting in negligible disruption to SEG networks and the recovery of minor weapons caches. In addition, the recent increase in SEG targeting by Iraqi CT forces is encouraging, but has fallen short of what is necessary for adequate force protection.

In order to address this shortfall, we will continue to focus our efforts on disrupting IRAM, IDF, and explosively formed penetrator (EFP) attacks, since these weapons provide extremists the greatest opportunity for high casualty-producing attacks. We will accomplish this through additional unilateral operations such as counter-IED/IDF patrols and CT operations targeting SEG networks. To accomplish these objectives, we are reallocating resources from activities such as the collective training initiative Tadreeb al-Shamil and other training efforts. I will inform the Prime Minister of this shift in USF-I priorities and continue to demand the GOI's assistance. However, I will continue to conduct unilateral operations that will protect our forces, acknowledging the potential impact these actions might have on our strategic relationship with the GOI.

Sadrist politicians continue their efforts to intimidate government officials in the southern provinces, warning them against cooperation with U.S. personnel. The Basrah Provincial Council, aggressively pushed by Sadrists members, recently passed a resolution prohibiting the movement of USF in the province. The resolution is nonbinding; however, a provincial reconstruction team, escorted by USF, was prevented from entering the provincial government building last week. I sent a message to the commander of the Basrah Operations Command, informing him this action was unacceptable and that our forces will continue to operate in accordance with the Security Agreement. I also engaged Prime Minister Maliki on the matter. He expressed outrage regarding the developments in Basrah and stated his intent to replace the chair of the Provincial Council.

During the reporting period, U.S. and Iraqi counterterrorism (CT) forces conducted 33 operations resulting in the detention of 49 extremists. Detainees include a number of AAH operatives accused of conducting attacks against USF as well as multiple AQI

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operatives involved in assassination attempts and IED attacks. U.S. Special Forces conducted unilateral operations resulting in the detention of an AAH rocket technician and lethal aid facilitator involved in IDF attacks in Basrah and an AAH cell leader responsible for IDF and EFP attacks against USF in Nasiriyah.

USF-I and ISF senior leadership held a joint security meeting this week to discuss the transition of responsibility for internal security to police (TRISP) initiative. Iraq's National Security Council approved the formation of a committee to oversee TRISP, which will be chaired by Falih al-Fayad, Prime Minister Maliki's National Security Advisor.

Subcommittees will be formed to conduct assessments of each province's readiness to transfer control of internal security to police forces.

ISF Development

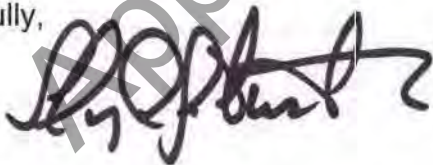
GOI disbursed payment of \$300,000 to the NATO Training Mission-Iraq Trust Fund as a contribution to the overall NATO Training Trust Fund. The contribution was initially approved on 15 Dec 10. The payment signifies a positive step by the GOI to strengthen future training relationships between Iraq and our NATO allies.

Transition

The Sons of Iraq (SOI) program remains an essential part of national reconciliation in Iraq. USF-I and Embassy personnel are working with the GOI to facilitate the transition of SOI members to suitable government positions within the ISF and civil ministries. The GOI has made notable progress on the development and execution of the SOI Intelligence Plan, which would entail the use of SOI as intelligence collectors within the ISF. The Directorate General for Intelligence and Security believes that they will finish screening and selecting SOI leaders for use as intelligence sources and recruiters by the end of July. Once they complete the selections, the GOI can complete the SOI transition plans.

I will be attending the opening ceremony for the U.S. Consulate in Basrah on Tuesday. Deputy Secretary of State Nides, Denis McDonough, and Tony Blinken will visit Iraq next week.

Respectfully,



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