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USF-I Weekly Assessment 17-23 July 2011

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

There has been a significant level of activity preceding the third meeting between political bloc leaders. The meeting is scheduled to take place early this week and will be hosted by President Talabani. Ambassador Jeffrey and I met with numerous GOI officials and urged them to compromise on a nomination for minister of defense (MOD), to make a timely decision on whether or not the GOI wants to pursue a new U.S-Iraqi security agreement, and to demonstrate that the GOI is committed to addressing the threat of [REDACTED] 1.4b

The security situation remains stable. The number of security incidents and casualties improved over the last two weeks; attacks against USF decreased. We assess this decrease was due to a number of factors: recent religious holidays, increased pressure on the networks through partnered and unilateral counterterrorism (CT) operations, our heightened force protection measures, terrain denial operations, and additional actions we have taken to demonstrate our ability to protect our forces. Initial indications are that our actions are having an impact on the networks; however, we assess they will adjust their tactics accordingly. In addition, we assess that [REDACTED] 1.4b intent has not changed; it will continue to provide direction and support to enable continued attacks against our forces.

Political

President Talabani will host the third meeting of political bloc leaders early next week. Since the last meeting on 9 July, bloc representatives have met a number of times to discuss outstanding government formation issues. During that time, the Ambassador and I engaged numerous leaders to impress upon them that progress at this meeting is critical to the success of the current government and in determining the future security relationship between the U.S. and Iraq.

During meetings with Prime Minister Maliki, President Talabani, and Dr. Allawi, we discussed the GOI's current position on a new security agreement with the United States, and urged them to move forward with their decision in a timely manner. We informed them that the USG needs to see substantive progress on the following issues as a result of this meeting: reasonable movement on the appointment of a MOD, a clear indication of the GOI's willingness to take action against [REDACTED] 1.4b militants, and an agreement between the blocs to formally begin negotiations on a post-2011 USF presence that is approved by the Council of Representatives (COR).

Prime Minister Maliki has publicly insisted that a new security agreement can be accomplished within the Council of Ministers and does not require approval of the COR. This insistence is largely driven by his belief that this course of action would involve significant political risk. However, in private meetings, he supports COR approval and

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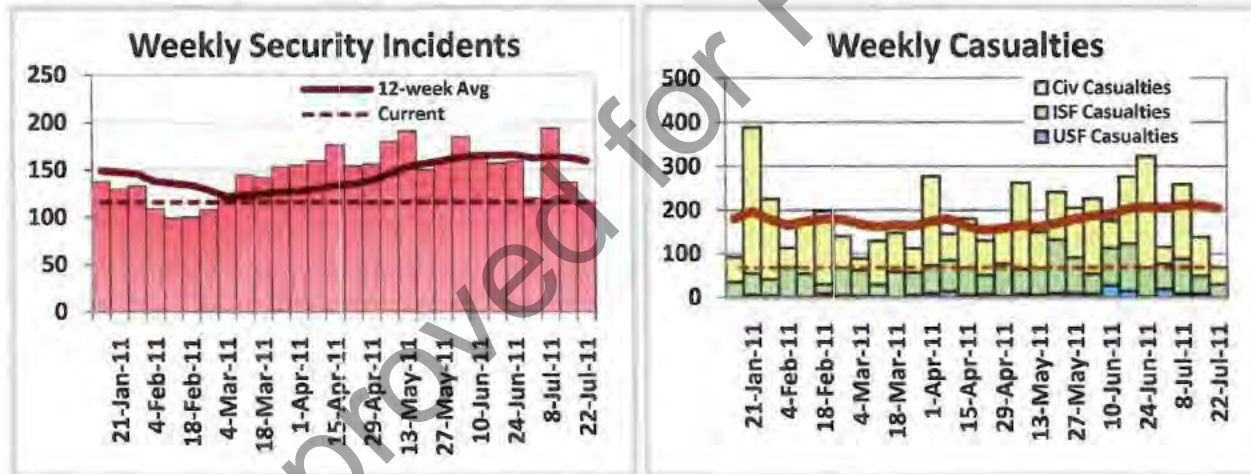
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acknowledges it is necessary since Iraqi law requires that any agreement including a provision for privileges and immunities be approved by the COR. These privileges and immunities are critical and must be included in any agreement if U.S. Forces are to remain in Iraq after 2011.

President Talabani informed Ambassador Jeffrey and me I that he made contact with KRG President Barzani; both agreed that they needed to intervene in order to break the impasse between Maliki and Allawi, which has been a significant impediment to finalizing government formation. Barzani met with Allawi and urged him to be more flexible. Allawi responded that he would be amenable to the appointment of a current Iraqiyya minister to serve on an interim basis.

Security

During the reporting period, there were 116 security incidents, a decrease from the previous week and below the 12-week average of 159. The number of casualties was 81 (21 killed, 60 wounded), a decrease from last week and below the 12-week average of 204. The number of attacks against USF decreased from 37 to 29. There were no U.S. service members killed or wounded in action.



Despite the fact that they have not conducted a successful high casualty-producing attack within the past two weeks, AQI remains a threat. We assess they have been in a reset phase, but continue to plan for attacks on high-profile targets such as provincial government buildings.

Attacks against USF declined for the second consecutive week. We do not assess that this recent lull indicates a decline in the willingness of 1.4b to target our forces. We believe there are a number of factors contributing to the recent decrease in extremist activity. First, there have been two recent religious commemorations consisting of days-long pilgrimages to Shia holy sites. This likely resulted in an enhanced security posture by the ISF and a general decrease in 1.4b activity. Second, our recent increase in unilateral operations has placed pressure on extremist networks, disrupting their pattern of life and inhibiting their freedom of movement. Third, our enhanced force protection

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measures have likely hindered their ability to conduct attacks. We remain vigilant, however, fully aware that as we adjust our force protection activities, [1.4b] will observe and adjust their tactics accordingly. Finally, there have been recent indications that senior GOI and ISF leaders may be willing to go after [1.4b]

Soon after my conversation with Prime Minister Maliki last week regarding deteriorating security conditions in the South, he directed the commander of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC) to conduct a second operation in Maysan Province to interdict the flow of lethal accelerants, uncover weapons caches, and disrupt [1.4b] networks. The operation began on 23 July and will continue for approximately one week. I spoke to the IGFC commander, General Ali Gheidan, and encouraged him to use the plan created for the first operation, which took place in late June. The plan was not fully implemented, resulting in marginal success. USF-I will provide ISR and intelligence support to the operation. In addition, USF-I personnel assisted in the planning process, and the refinement of targets. We have also indicated our willingness to partner with Iraqi forces, if requested.



Iraqi and U.S. Army personnel planning operations in Maysan Province

We continue to pressure enemy networks through unilateral CT operations, focusing our efforts on [1.4b]. We conducted four unilateral operations this week, resulting in the detention of two [1.4b] including a member of an Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) cell operating in Babil Province and an AAH leader in Nasiriyah who conducted indirect fire (IDF) and IED attacks against USF and maintained weapons caches. We have linked this individual to an IDF attack on one of our bases in the southern province of Dhi Qar on 16 June. We continue to gain valuable intelligence during interrogation of these detainees, giving us further insight into the [1.4b] networks.

Partnered U.S. and Iraqi CT forces conducted 44 operations, resulting in the detention of 18 extremists. Detainees include a senior leader of an AQI cell responsible for vehicle-borne IED attacks, kidnappings, and assassination of ISF in Kirkuk. Joint CT forces also detained the leader of an AQI cell in Mosul responsible for carrying out multiple attacks against ISF checkpoints. They also detained an Ansar al-Islam leader whose cell targeted ISF and USF and conducted assassinations and kidnappings. [1.4b] detainees include a [1.4b] member who stored weapons in the Al Kut area and a Promised Day Brigade cell leader involved in IDF and IED attacks in Basrah.

Based on an assessment of current and future threats to U.S. personnel in Iraq, I have decided to resume security-based detention operations. Iraqi Security Forces are increasingly unwilling to engage the [1.4b] and many judicial officials are reluctant to issue warrants or accept evidence due to corruption or intimidation. Consequently, there is a

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high probability that those detained during our unilateral CT operations will be released, increasing the threat to our forces. We will ensure we conduct these operations judiciously and that all detainees are treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention.

1.4a, 1.4g

The reaction to our unilateral operations, including the recent show of force, has been somewhat muted. We believe many Iraqi officials (and members of the public) tacitly approve of our actions, but political pressure and fear of retribution prevents them from speaking out in support of our actions against [REDACTED] 1.4b

There have been recent reports of [REDACTED] 1.4b military operations targeting [REDACTED] 1.4b "Free Life Party of Kurdistan" (PJAK) rebels in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR). We can confirm there has been artillery fire against [REDACTED] 1.4b PJAK rebels in Iraq and small scale raids. [REDACTED] 1.4b has routinely conducted artillery strikes against PJAK targets since 2007. We assess [REDACTED] 1.4b is unlikely to escalate attacks beyond limited cross border artillery and small scale raids. The GOI sent an eight-member delegation from the COR Security and Defense Committee to the IKR to investigate the attacks. The delegation's initial assessment was that the [REDACTED] 1.4b, 1.4d

1.4b, 1.4d

ISF Development

On 18 Jul 11, 32 Iraqi Air Force officer English Language Training (ELT) students graduated from the train-the-trainer (T3) program, 28 of whom received Defense Language Institute instructor certification. The graduation ceremony marked the end of the six week program to train replacement instructors, which enables the Iraqi Air Force Training School to continue T3 instruction following the departure of the contract instructors on 21 July.

The NATO Secretary General approved the extension of the NTM-I mission on 22 July. In the letter, NATO formally requested that Iraq make a contribution to the NATO Trust Fund. The GOI has already agreed to cost sharing in principle and will now negotiate a final agreement. This positive development is a promising indicator of Iraq's long-term relationship with our NATO allies.

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Transition

Since 9 July, 196 of 206 detainees in U.S. custody at Camp Cropper have been transferred to GOI custody. Of the remaining ten, seven were delayed for administrative reasons and should be transferred by the end of the week. The final three will not be transferred at this time per USG request.

We continue to conduct a number of joint sessions with our partners at U.S. Embassy-Baghdad. Both USF-I and the Embassy have recently experienced turnover in senior-level personnel. To continue the momentum we have achieved, we held a senior leader forum this week to enable both teams to stay in synch as we head into a significant period of transition.

Respectfully,



Approved for Release

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