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USF-I Weekly Assessment 31 July – 6 August 2011

USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

Mr. Secretary, Chairman, Jim:

On 2 August, political bloc leaders held an historic meeting in which they reached consensus on a number of contentious issues. First, virtually all present agreed to enter negotiations with the United States on the continued presence of U.S. Forces (USF). Second, although the leaders did not agree on specific security ministry candidates, they established clear guidelines that will facilitate the selection process going forward. They plan to have the matter resolved within a couple of weeks. Third, in order to address power sharing issues outlined in the Irbil Agreement, bloc leaders agreed to submit legislation to the Council of Representatives (COR) to establish the National Council for Higher Policy (NCHP). Lastly, all agreed that the COR would form a committee to review the current distribution of senior leadership positions in the ministries of defense and interior to ensure they are distributed equitably amongst the blocs. All in all, the meeting was clearly an indication that the Government of Iraq (GOI) desires an enduring security relationship with the United States.

Security remains stable; the number of security incidents decreased for the fourth consecutive week. There was only one attack against USF in the South. As I mentioned in previous reports, I believe the low level of [1.4b] activity can be attributed to multiple factors. The pressure we have placed on [1.4b] networks is having a disruptive effect on their ability to conduct attacks, especially the detention of key leaders of Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) and [1.4b]. Another factor is the recent ISF operation in Maysan Province, which has further demonstrated the GOI's willingness to go after [1.4b]. These efforts may have caused these groups and their [1.4b] to pause while they consider our actions and determine their response. We assess this pause will not last; therefore, we will continue to target [1.4b] networks while making force protection a top priority.

Political

Leaders of the political blocs met on 2 August, resulting in agreement on a number of critical issues. All parties, with the exception of the Sadrists (who abstained), authorized negotiations with the United States on a post-2011 USF presence. While the discussion centered on trainers, the leaders clearly acknowledged the need for assistance on operational matters such as air sovereignty, intelligence support, counterterrorism operations, and support to the Combined Security Mechanism. Public statements following the meeting reflect a mutual desire to move forward. Overall, the outcome of this meeting was a clear demonstration of the GOI's desire for an enduring security partnership with the United States.

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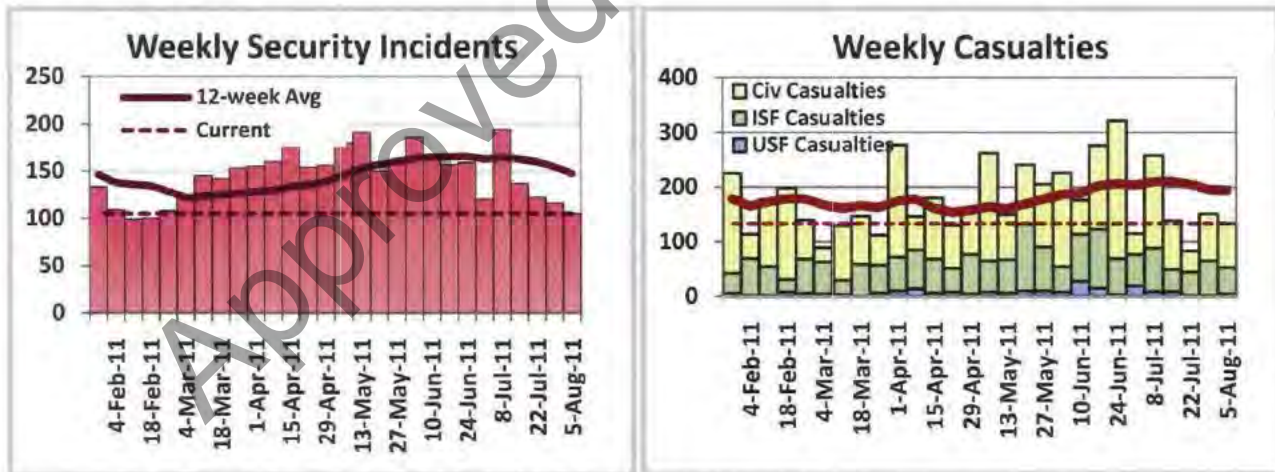
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In addition to agreeing to enter negotiations on a follow-on security agreement, the bloc leaders addressed outstanding power sharing issues, particularly the NCHP. They agreed to submit legislation establishing the council to the COR; President Talabani informed the Ambassador and me that this would take place in the near future. He is working with State of Law and Iraqiyya to reach consensus on the provisions of the bill before it is introduced.

The leaders also determined the way ahead for appointing security ministers, outlining agreed-upon qualification criteria, and defining a process that would result in a list of candidates being submitted within two weeks. The leaders refined the provisions of the Irbil Agreement, stipulating that Iraqiyya will submit nominations for minister of defense and State of Law will nominate candidates to head the ministry of interior. Allawi and Maliki further agreed that both candidates would be independents and not be beholden to either party. Although security ministers were not appointed on 2 August, we assess a more clearly defined selection process is a noteworthy step forward. We will continue to actively engage the bloc leaders on these critical nominations to encourage the process to stay on track.

Lastly, bloc leaders agreed to form a committee in Parliament that will review MOI and MOD senior personnel to validate their qualifications and ensure the positions are equitably distributed among the blocs. This issue was raised in response to concerns stemming from the recent moves to decrease the size of the cabinet.

Security



During the reporting period, there were 105 security incidents, a decrease from the previous week and below the 12-week average of 148. The number of casualties was 133 (33 killed, 100 wounded), a decrease from last week and below the 12-week average of 194. The number of attacks against USF increased from 25 to 30 but remained below the 12-week average of 35. Three U.S. service members were wounded in action.

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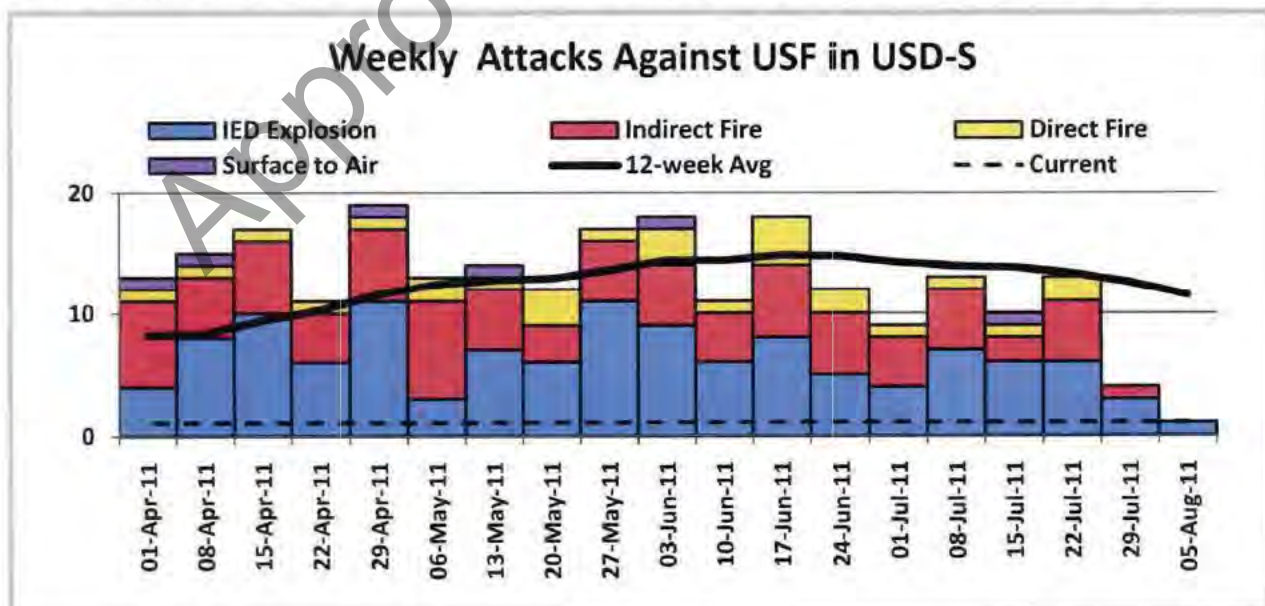
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For the month of July, there were 616 security incidents, a decrease from the previous month and below the 12-month average of 654. Casualties for the month totaled 658 (175 killed, 483 wounded), lower than June and below the 12-month average of 841. The number of attacks targeting USF in July decreased from 143 to 141, remaining in line with the 12-month average of 142. Four U.S. service members were killed in action and 16 were wounded in action.

As expected, there was an increase in Sunni insurgent group activity coinciding with the start of Ramadan last week. AQI conducted IED attacks in Ramadi and Baghdad on 3 and 5 August, respectively, resulting in 24 casualties. On 2 August, AQI attempted to conduct a complex attack targeting three Christian churches in Kirkuk. Only one of three vehicle-borne IEDs detonated, resulting in injuries to 16 civilians; the others were discovered and disabled by Iraqi Security Forces.

Sunni insurgent groups also increased attacks targeting USF. We assess Jaysh Rijal Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) was responsible for four IDF attacks on FOB Warrior in Tamim Province. AQI was likely responsible for two IDF attacks targeting Joint Base Balad. These attacks were ineffective and resulted in no casualties. AQI and JRTN each conducted an RKG-3 attack against USF in the North, one of which resulted in three USF wounded in action.

Conversely, [1.4b] group activity was low, especially in the South (see below). As I mentioned in previous reports, I believe this is due to a combination of factors. At the tactical level, the increased pressure on [1.4b] networks has disrupted their ability to plan and conduct attacks. This pressure has come not just from our unilateral and partnered operations but also from independent efforts of the Iraqis. Further, our security-based detentions have been instrumental in keeping numerous militants from “slipping through the cracks” of the Iraqi judicial system. Many of those we’ve detained have been more forthcoming once they realize they will not be released within a matter of days.



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The ISF's recent 10-day operation in Maysan Province concluded on 1 August, resulting in the detention of over 70 low-level detainees and the discovery of several minor weapons caches. While the operation may only have a minimal impact on the ability of

1.4b groups to conduct attacks, other aspects of the operation demonstrate the GOI's resolve to address the growing 1.4b threat. Prime Minister Maliki sent a committee of senior ISF leaders from Baghdad to Maysan Province to evaluate and report on ISF effectiveness. The committee's review resulted in the GOI gaining greater insight on the degradation of security in the South. Based on the recommendation of the committee, the Prime Minister is considering leadership changes to ISF units in the Province to combat unwillingness of locally-based forces to confront

1.4b Further, he has indicated his intention to fire the Maysan provincial chief of police, who has a history of facilitating the flow of lethal aid and allowing 1.4b to operate with impunity in the province. Finally, Maliki advisor Falih al-Fayyad facilitated the dispatch of a high-level investigative delegation to expedite detainee prosecutions.

U.S. and Iraqi Special Forces conducted numerous counterterrorism (CT) operations that resulted in the detention of several violent extremists. Working with our Iraqi partners, we detained a longtime 1.4b cell leader who was involved in improvised rocket-assisted munitions (IRAM) attacks against USF, a 1.4b IDF cell leader operating in Basrah, an AAH weapons facilitator, and an AAH cell leader who was involved in numerous IDF attacks in Maysan Province and worked with 1.4b

1.4b, 1.4d
facilitator in Basrah responsible for modification of vehicles for use as mobile IRAM launch platforms. Joint CT forces also detained numerous AQI operatives, including a number of financiers responsible for facilitating illicit funds for AQI operations, as well as AQI operatives involved in assassinations, kidnappings, and IED attacks.

ISF Development

Over 60 Iraqi military personnel recently graduated from the J2-sponsored Intelligence Partnership Advanced Analysis course. Attendees included members of various Iraqi intelligence agencies and members of the ISF. The materials used for this course will be disseminated throughout the MOD as part of a training program for newly assigned intelligence personnel. Thus far, there have been a total of 300 graduates from over 20 organizations and units who will form the foundation of an enduring professional Iraqi Intelligence instructor corps and serve as a cornerstone for a lasting U.S. – Iraqi intelligence partnership.

July was a significant month for the delivery of Foreign Military Sales (FMS) equipment to the Iraqi Security Forces. In July, 12 M1A1 tanks were delivered to Iraq for de-processing and subsequent issue to the Iraqi Army. The ISF have procured 140 tanks through the FMS program; 123 tanks have been delivered and 85 have been issued to the Iraqi Army. The balance is projected to be delivered by the end of 2012. Fifty-six

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M113 Armored Personnel Carriers, 10 M88A1 armored recovery vehicles, and 29 heavy equipment transporters were also received. These deliveries will improve the tactical and operational mobility of the Iraqi Army. Finally, 14 M198 towed howitzers were delivered, increasing the capacity for long-range fires. These systems will improve the ISF's foundational capability to respond to external threats.

Transition

We are proceeding with a number of transitions that will facilitate our final withdrawal at the end of the year. Ongoing site transition activities remain on schedule; we are now operating from 47 bases. We are making tremendous headway in our work with our Embassy partners to address several open issues, such as postal support, EOD support, and resourcing of explosive forensics capability.

Another transition is our three-phased command and control (C2) plan. Phase I is currently underway. As we prepare to close Victory Base Complex, we are establishing C2 nodes at Al Asad Air Base in Anbar Province, FOB Union III/New Embassy Compound (NEC) in downtown Baghdad, COB Adder in the South, and Camp Buehring in Kuwait. To support this effort, we are relocating equipment, materiel, and personnel to these locations in order to posture for the next phase and our withdrawal from Iraq.

We reached a milestone when the last of 22 Combined Checkpoints transitioned to ISF-KSF bilateral control on 31 July. Although USF withdrew from the checkpoints, we continue to provide overwatch and provide assistance if required. We will do so until our withdrawal from the North this fall. In addition, we continue to work in the Combined Coordination Centers (CCC) in Ninawa, Kirkuk, and Diyala. The Senior Working Group (SWG), comprised of leaders from USF-I, the Embassy, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the GOI, will stay engaged to follow the progress of the CCPs as well as other components of the Combined Security Mechanism. The SWG recently approved the concept of a Regional Combined Coordination Center (R-CCC). The R-CCC will provide a conduit for the three provincial CCCs to communicate with the SWG to facilitate arbitration of any disputes between Arab and Kurdish security forces.

My thanks to the Chairman and General Mattis for their travel to Iraq last week. I appreciate their support as we enter negotiations with the government of Iraq that will define the nature of the strategic relationship between our two countries.

Next weekend, a congressional delegation led by Congressman John Culberson (House Appropriations Committee) will visit Iraq.

Respectfully



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