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## USF-I Weekly Assessment 25 September – 1 October 2011

### USF-I COMMANDER'S WEEKLY ASSESSMENT

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

We are reaching a decisive point with regard to negotiations on a post-2011 U.S. Force (USF) training presence. President Talabani returned from abroad and will convene a meeting of political bloc leaders this week to address this issue.

I have met with senior GOI officials throughout the week and underscored the importance of having military leaders at the meeting to brief existing gaps in ISF capabilities. However, Prime Minister Maliki is reluctant, fearing this would increase political pressure on his government. He also continues to vacillate on submitting the issue to the Council of Representatives (COR) for approval despite assurances from Speaker Nujaifi that the initiative will likely pass and that it will not lead to a vote of no confidence in Maliki's government. We will stay actively engaged to keep things moving forward as we draw closer to the COR's adjournment date of 14 October.

The number of security incidents remained below average, however, the number of casualties more than doubled due to three AQI signature attacks that resulted in over 160 casualties. We believe AQI continues to rebuild its financial network, which has enabled attacks intended to delegitimize the Iraqi government and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). We will continue to work with the ISF to target AQI's financial operations.

Attacks against USF increased, driven once again by attacks in northern Iraq by Sunni insurgent groups. One of these attacks resulted in the death of a U.S. Soldier when a rocket impacted in the living area of COS Warrior in Kirkuk. 1.4b  
groups remain in an operational freeze.

#### Political

I spoke to President Talabani, who said he will convene a meeting of political bloc leaders the first week of October. It is unclear at this time whether Iraqi military leadership will present an assessment of ISF capabilities. We will continue to reach out to key leaders prior to the meeting and press for timely action before the COR recesses on 14 October.

Prime Minister Maliki continues to balance his desire for a post-2011 U.S. training presence with concerns about his political viability. He remains worried that his political opponents will use COR action on this issue as leverage to generate a vote of no confidence in his government. He believes the issue of privileges and immunities will be highly contentious and that he will pay a political price if complete immunity is granted.

We do not assess that a threat to the Maliki-led government is credible and have shared this assessment with the Prime Minister. Due to 1.4b pressure on the Sadrists to support Maliki, an alliance between the Sadrist Trend and Iraqiyya is unlikely at this time. Further, we do not believe the Kurds would support a move that would result in the fall of Maliki's government.

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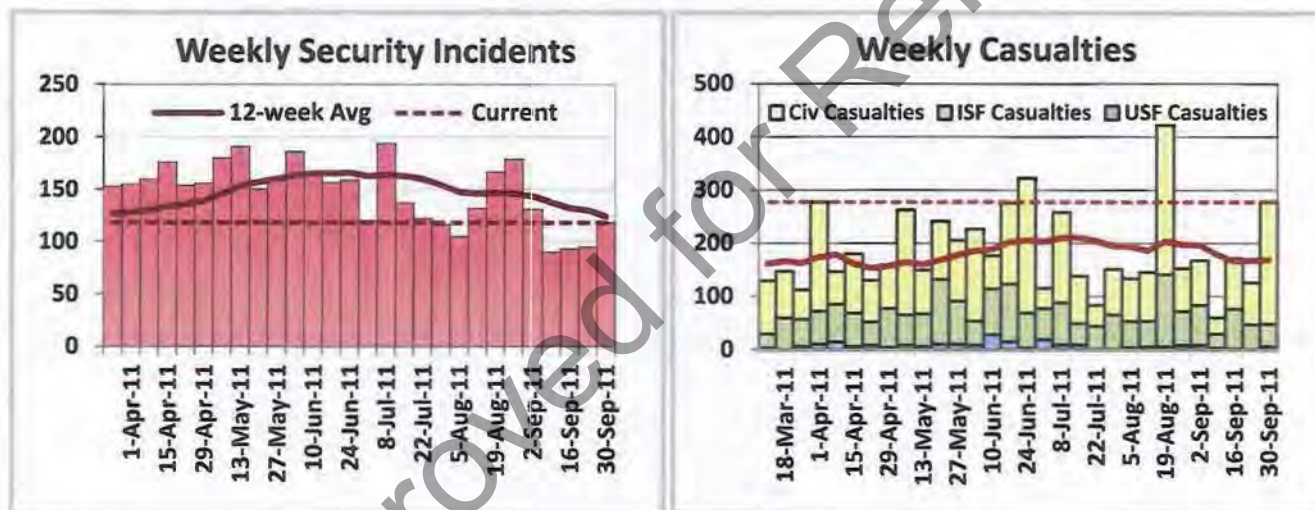
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During a meeting with COR Speaker Nujaifi, he shared his belief that a follow-on training agreement is in Iraq's best interest and that there is sufficient support for the measure in Parliament. Nujaifi requested that I convey his support of the agreement to the Prime Minister and asked me to reassure him that it would not be used against him politically. He said he will personally follow up on the matter with Maliki. I believe the Speaker's support is genuine and that his involvement will be instrumental in moving the agreement through the COR.

### Security

During the reporting period, there were 119 security incidents, an increase from the previous week (94) and just below the 12-week average of 124. The number of casualties was 279 (49 killed, 230 wounded), higher than last week (125) and well above the 12-week average of 169. The number of attacks against USF rose from 19 to 24 but remained below the 12-week average of 29. One U.S. service member was killed in action and four were wounded in action.



Three attacks accounted for 60 percent of the week's casualties. On 25 September, AQI conducted a complex attack near an IP checkpoint in Karbala. The attack consisted of two IEDs and two vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIED) and resulted in 9 killed and 40 wounded. On 29 September, an AQI suicide operative detonated a VBIED near a bank in Kirkuk, killing 4 and wounding 74. On 30 September, 4 were killed and 37 injured when AQI detonated a VBIED at a Shia funeral in Hillah.

These attacks demonstrate AQI's capability to conduct high-casualty producing attacks in its attempt to undermine public confidence in ISF capabilities and incite sectarian conflict. We assess that AQI is rebuilding its extortion network in Mosul. This network is responsible for funding the majority of AQI operations throughout Iraq. We are working with the ISF to continue developing targeting information to enable operations that will disrupt AQI financiers and extortion operative activities.

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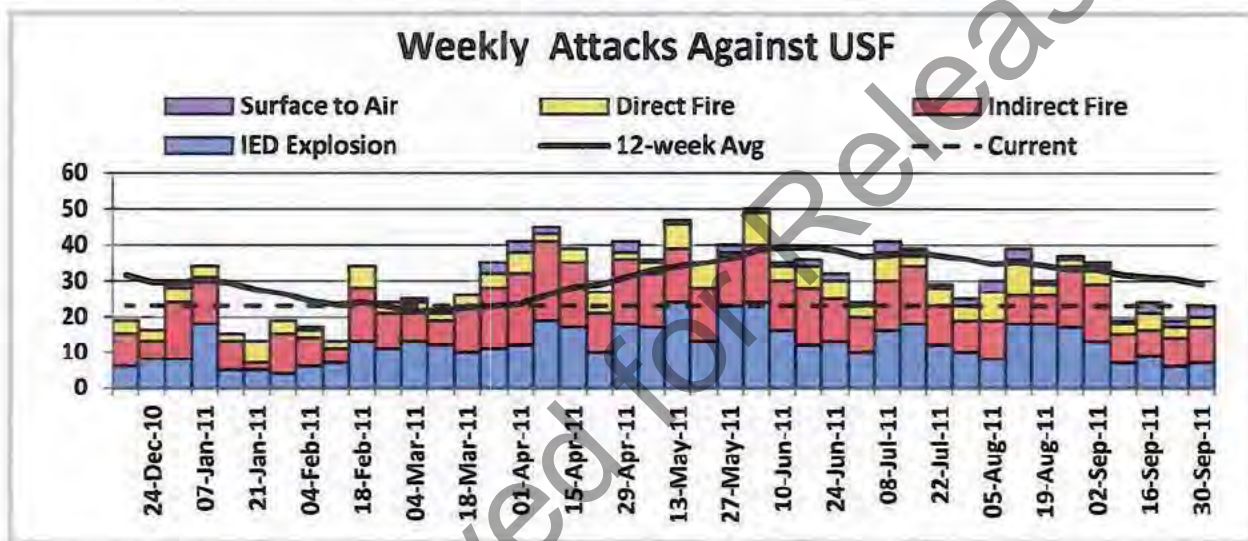


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The [1.4b] operational pause continues; however, some [1.4b] cells, particularly those belonging to AAH, may be conducting a limited number of unsanctioned attacks in spite of the directive from [1.4b]. During my meeting with the Prime Minister, I assured him that a resumption of attacks by [1.4b] after the distinct pause would clearly support the contention that [1.4b] is behind these attacks and would result in a strong response by the United States.

Attacks against USF increased slightly during the reporting period (see below). The majority of attacks were conducted by Sunni insurgents in the North. On 29 September, an indirect fire attack on COS Warrior in Kirkuk killed one U.S. Soldier and wounded four (not seriously). We assess Jaysh Rijal Tariq al-Naqshabandi (JRTN) conducted this attack based on the munitions employed and the group's history of operating in this area.



Partnered counterterrorism (CT) operations this reporting period resulted in the detention of multiple AQI operatives responsible for assassinations, kidnappings, and IED/VBIED attacks. Joint U.S. – Iraqi CT forces also apprehended a member of AAH who was directly involved in recent attacks against USF and has ties to senior AAH leadership.

The Senior Working Group (SWG) continues to set the conditions for USF withdrawal from the Combined Security Area in northern Iraq. This week, SWG members continued discussion on personnel and training issues in the new Regional Combined Coordination Center. The SWG-appointed trilateral committee I mentioned last week is making incremental progress in devising long-term solutions for current disputes in Diyala Province and will be prepared to make recommendations to the High Level Committee later this month.

### ISF Development

The first iteration of M1A1 Collective Training concluded on 28 September with the first tank company graduating at the Besmaya Combat Training Center. The training culminated with a successful platoon movement to contact and live fire. This is a

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small, but significant, step towards developing the foundational external defense capability of the ISF. We continue to work with them on a collective training strategy that will enable 41 battalions to progress from unit training to combined arms training and eventually to joint training, which we project will take three to five years to complete.

**Transition**

The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) achieved full operational capability on 1 October due to tremendous cooperation between USF-I, OSC-I, the Department of State, and U.S. Embassy-Baghdad. This cooperation enabled the careful management of the resources required to support OSC-I operations. For example, the team proactively managed the timely obligation of funds to execute overhead cover projects in order to meet all force protection requirements. We will continue our efforts to ensure that OSC-I will be set up for success when USF-I departs.

The USF-I reposture is proceeding in accordance with the plan as we continue to transfer bases to the GOI and transition enduring sites to OSC-I and U.S. Mission-Iraq. During the last week, we successfully transferred seven bases. USF-I now operates from 31 locations, 10 of which will ultimately serve as enduring sites. In the next 30 days, we plan to transfer 16 sites, including four large bases.

Respectfully,



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