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MNF Iraq Update

2 March 2007

As briefed by GEN Petraeus

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MNFI Update

- Further initial impressions
 - Bottom line
 - Sectarian nature of conflict
 - Prime Minister
- Securing the Population – Baghdad and Beyond
 - Operation Fardh al Qanoon
 - Iraqi Security Forces
 - Coalition Forces
 - Operations outside Baghdad
- Miscellaneous initiatives

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Impressions – Bottom Line

- Bottom line is unchanged: It will take months, not days or weeks to see the effects of Operation Fardh al Qanoon.
- We are just getting the additional troops on the ground – US and Iraqi – as well as adjusting the deployment of the forces to one that fosters living with and securing the population and the mindset of the Iraqis that we'll stay in the neighborhoods and not leave.
- Events are mildly encouraging, but there are few significant trends yet.
- Sectarian Murders have decreased by roughly 50% over the past month, sectarian displacement seems to have halted – with small number of families have returned to their homes, but it is too early to call these a trend.
- Car bombs were at an all time high in February, reflecting Sunni extremist attempts to incite additional sectarian violence. Although the pace of the first 2-week period slowed in the second 2-week period. We will obviously go after EFPs.
- The critical question remains: Can Sunnis and Shi'a reconcile once given political breathing space?

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Impressions – Sectarian Nature (1 of 1)

- Sectarian nature of conflict continues
 - Baghdad sectarian murders are down significantly.
 - This decrease in sectarian violence is a result of several factors: first, our aggressive operations against Shi'a extremists over the past two months (700 JAM in detention – and we conducted raids into Sadr City again this week); second, Coalition/Iraqi outreach, and third, we believe guidance from Shi'a militia leadership, specifically Sadr himself, to either cooperate with the security plan or go to ground.
 - At the same time, Sunni extremists have been trying to reignite the sectarian violence by conducting more high profile attacks against Shi'a populations. In fact, February had the highest number of VBIED events in the last 12 months (77 in Feb, 72 in Jan, 64 in Oct, and 62 last March – the highest four months)

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Impressions – Sectarian Nature (2 of 2)

- Polling data from 20 February highlights the fact that reconciliation will be difficult:
 - Question asked: How much confidence do you have in the Government of Iraq to improve the situation?
 - Predominately Sunni Provinces: 4% are confident
 - Predominately Shi'a Provinces: 75% are confident
 - Predominately Kurdish Provinces: 71% are confident
 - Baghdad: 63% are confident (reflects Shi'a majority)
 - Numbers for Sunni and Shi'a provinces and Baghdad have been essentially constant over past 6 months; Kurds decreased slightly.
- But Sunni outreach is beginning to have some effect
 - Some moderate Sunnis are recognizing reality of their future.
 - Sunni leaders in some key areas are turning against AQI.
- Key, we believe, is even-handed destruction of extremist cells and leaders
 - Prevent AQI/ Sunni extremist provocation of Shi'a.
 - Bring to justice Shi'a (JAM) extremists.

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Impressions – Prime Minister and Cabinet

- The Prime Minister is committed to the security plan, but he underestimates the complexity of military operations and is quick to make generalizations based on indicators of early success.
- He wants to be seen, at least, as in charge (ISOF example). Perception of being in charge is a key dynamic. For the ISF Bde, e.g., the issue is less one of who gives it missions than that of the PM not being surprised by learning what they are doing from, say, the press. He is making some tough decisions (b)(6) National Police officer; we'll see with MG Mehdi)
- The Prime Minister is relying more on a "kitchen-cabinet" that lacks the institutional capacity of the ministries (even though theirs aren't great).
 - PM seeking to consolidate control of intelligence and security apparatus.
 - The question is whether this is "just" the typical Iraqi solution to problems or a desire to further Shi'a dominance.
 - Most likely it's a bit of both.
 - Another meeting with him tomorrow and then taking him to Ramadi on 13 March to allow him to meet with the Provincial leaders and sheiks.
- The MOI and MOD are reasonably solid leaders but their ministries still lack sufficient capacity.
- Other ministries even more nascent in development – Oil, Finance...

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Securing the Population – Baghdad (1 of 2)

- Operation Fardh al Qanoon is in its beginning stages.
- Iraqi Security Forces are flowing in, though not without some concerns over deployment strengths and discipline issues.
 - Approximately 3,800 ISF have arrived in Baghdad – including one element flown in from the north by the Iraqi Air Force in Iraqi C-130s.
 - The first five of 9 battalions that arrived were only at 74% strength on average with one at 120%. We have engaged the Minister of Defense to get the troop strengths up and have a plan by the end of March.
 - The most recent two Iraqi battalions that have arrived were above 90% strength.
 - An additional two Iraqi battalions are arriving now and are currently at 101% and 71%, though not all its soliders have shown up yet, but the leaders are committed to both being at 100%.
- 18 of 39 (46%) Joint Security Stations open. The first one for Sadr City will open on March 5th.
- The Baghdad Operational Command is developing reasonably well under the leadership of LTG Aboud – who has to date been impressive by leading from the front. It was operational as of yesterday and technically in charge, though it has, e.g., only one planner still and is limited in capacity.
- There are certainly still discipline concerns with the ISF members ranging from not wearing kevlar and vests up to contributions to sectarian displacement and we're working such issues with the ISF leadership who are getting out and about.
- There are some indicators of markets re-opening (Adamiyah visit).

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Securing the Population – Baghdad (2 of 2)

- US Forces are expanding their footprint in Baghdad as additional forces arrive for Operation Fardh al Qanoon.
- We just got the second Brigade on the ground, and it is beginning to enter its areas in South Baghdad. It will be fully operational in the southern Baghdad sector of Rasheed on March 15th.
- We're going to get about one more brigade a month for the next three months and be largely in place by the end of May, early June. It's much too early to tell how long we'll need to maintain the additional forces beyond that time.
- We'll also be getting some help in Anbar from an extra two battalions of Marines, which will arrive around the end of the month. To get to the 4,000 extra troop in Anbar that the President mentioned will take replacement of the MEU on the ground and we're working that with CENTCOM.
- Related to US force flow, the 1.4b are considering adding an entire brigade of 3,400 to the 1.4a soldiers they already have here. It's supposed to be a one-time shot, but we'll be glad to take them to free up US forces for additional operations. We are sorting out where they will go.
- Again, bottom line, it will take time to get all our forces on the ground and used to living with their host populations to provide the level of security we want.
- In the meantime, as I discussed previously, we expect high profile attacks on the Shi'a population and on Iraqi and Coalition forces to continue at the current level or perhaps even increase, though we have destroyed two large VBIED factories in the past two weeks and uncovered several large caches. The Shi'a militia leaders will be able to restrain their forces, though individual revenge killings will continue.

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Securing the Population – Beyond Baghdad

West – still the insurgent heartland, but positive signs

- Anbar Sheiks – fed up with Al Qaeda in Iraq; trying to harness their energies
- Hit – has flipped and local police are gaining confidence
- Ramadi – heavy engagement on Feb 21st, killed 35 AIF Iraqi police stood and fought there and in Hit.
- Fallujah – some concerns, but generally moving in the right direction. Iraqi-only engagement killed dozens of insurgents.

North – northern & northeastern belts of Baghdad still troublesome and major concerns

- Diyala and Salah ad Din Provinces are tough areas we'll keep squeezing, but we cannot dominate the area until all forces are on the ground.
- EFP cache discovered just north of Baghdad Feb 24th with likely 1.4b connection
- Baqubah/Muqdadiah/Baladriz – serious concerns of Sunni persecution and Al Qaeda activities
- Kirkuk – accepting risk in Kirkuk, though not worrisome over time
- Mosul – holding their own with some good Iraqi leaders hanging tough in face of increased attacks on ISF- to include a multiple VBIED attack on a police station, that was immediately reopened across the street.

South – much tough work ahead in southern belts of Baghdad

- Mahmudiyah – breaking up IED and VBIED cells
- Diwaniyah – internal Shi'a problems; local commander ready to take on the JAM. PM will direct that operation in mid-March after the ongoing Aba'een celebration concludes.
- Najaf – Heaven's Cult member tried to get to Sistani, but reasonably calm

Southeast – generally moving in the right direction

- Also internal Shi'a conflict; urging the Brits to keep a lid on it. Provided an ISOF element to kill/capture select JAM leaders. We are awaiting triggers for two key targets now.

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Miscellaneous Initiatives

- Rule of Law Green Zone
 - Plan to create this on track. Interagency is working the people for it and we believe we have the skids greased.
 - 1 Apr IOC- looking to hold hearings on CPT Ali (Shi'a) and market bomber (Sunni) for immediate impact
- Foreign Military Sales (FMS)
 - For DoD support to military activities of MoD and MoI
 - MoD deposited \$1.55 bil in Bank of New York
 - MoI deposited \$169 mil for a total of \$1.72 bil
- Foreign Assistance Act Section 607 authorities
 - Need FMS-like authority for non-military purchases by Iraq with their money
 - Will assist other Iraqi ministries for example expanding a power generation station or contracting for it.
 - Requires concerted interagency effort for prompt resolution
- My debut with the press corps will be on Thursday, 8 March. "The battle of Baghdad has been joined."