

STATEMENT

For

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BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND INVESTIGATIONS

On

IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

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Good Morning Chairman Meehan, Ranking Member Akin, and Honorable Members of the Subcommittee.

Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak with you, answer your questions, and share my thoughts on the state of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) after three years of service in Iraq. Let me first say that I'm absolutely grateful for the opportunity to spend some time on our wonderful American soil. I left the Pentagon on the 10th of Sept 2001 and except for a few weeks of leave here and there and two opportunities to testify in front of this body, I have not been home since. I have spent nearly two years in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the senior advisor to the Saudi Arabian National Guard, and I have spent almost three years in Iraq, first for 13 months as the Division Commander of 1st Armored Division in control of Baghdad, and most recently for 22 months as Commander of the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. I arrived back in the United States yesterday and after a few weeks leave, I will report to US Central Command as Deputy Commanding General.

My intent today is to speak frankly with you about my perspective on the challenges we face in developing Iraq's security forces. Let me begin with a brief update on where we are now and how we got here with regard to the Iraqi Security Forces. Following that, I will be glad to take your questions.

The Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, or MNSTC-I, in coordination with Coalition Forces, NATO, and the Government of Iraq's Ministries of Defense and Interior, develops security forces along three lines of operation: generating units and individual replacements, developing institutional systems and processes to support the fielded forces, and professionalizing the force and its leaders. We achieved our initial target for Iraqi Security Forces generation of 134,700 Objective Counter-Insurgency Forces (Military) and 188,300 Objective Civil Security Forces (Police) in December 2006. However, based on changes in the security environment in the latter half of 2006, the two security ministers in consultation with MNSTC-I adjusted 2007 end-strength goals for both the Iraqi Army and Police. I will discuss this in detail later in this statement. We are now working to develop an Iraqi Military of just over 190,000 and Iraqi Police Forces of approximately 195,000. We are on track to achieve these force levels by the end of this year. Currently, we have trained and equipped 154,000 Military Forces and 194,000 Police Forces. It's important to note that we are simultaneously building both new units and training individual replacements. Annual attrition is approximately 15-18% in the Army and 20-22% in the Police. MNSTC-I has a comprehensive four-phase plan to Build, Enhance, Develop, and Transition the Iraqi Security Forces to the Government of Iraq's control as soon as possible. As you know, such phases are useful concepts in developing plans, but they are rarely cleanly separated and never entirely sequential in execution. Planning phases such as these almost always overlap one another as progress is made and efficiencies are exploited in any given phase. Stated another way, we work in multiple phases simultaneously.

Let me summarize the goals of each phase. Phase I (BUILD), ensures the initial Iraqi Security Forces are organized, trained, equipped and based. Phase II (ENHANCE) makes the generated forces better with a focus on added capabilities including armor protection and increased weaponry and advanced training to prepare them for full operational control. Phase III (DEVELOP), ties the tactical formations to a developed institutional architecture and sets the conditions for their transition to self-reliance. Phase

IV (TRANSITION), based on a common understanding by both sides—Government of Iraq and Government of the United States—of our long-term security relationship, transition of internal security responsibility occurs while we also assist Iraq begin to prepare to defend itself against external threats.

We've learned many important lessons and made the necessary adaptations along the way.

We've learned that the development of security forces is analogous to a three-legged stool, if you will. The first leg is a standard curriculum of training, so that every soldier and every unit gets the same skill sets. The second leg is embedded transition teams. The third leg is partnered units. And the distinction between the two is very important. A partnered unit will provide instruction and education and expertise by mentoring and role-modeling, but that is only one facet of the partnered unit's broader mission. An embedded transition team, in contrast, is dedicated completely to the development of that Iraqi unit.

We've learned that transition is essentially a balancing act. On one side you have assimilation, and on the other side is dependency. Pass responsibility too soon and the system falters. Pass responsibility too late and the system becomes dependent on coalition support. Through 2005, the U.S. government was paying the bills for all Iraqi life support for all of the Iraqi security forces. Because we had helped them build their budget and knew they had the necessary funding, we made it a goal in 2006 to transition responsibility for Iraqi soldiers and policemen over to Iraqi control. It was painstaking and difficult work, but by the middle of 2006, the MoD and MoI had assumed control of all life support across the entire Iraqi army and police forces.

We learned the importance of developing both the tactical and institutional sectors of the military and police forces simultaneously. In Iraq today, soldiers and policemen are being paid by the central government. Their life support is being provided by the central government. The ministries of defense and interior are functioning institutions who feel themselves accountable for the security of the nation and for their security forces.

Challenges remain, but we should not underestimate the importance of having a coherent, accountable, and responsible Iraqi chain of command from individual soldier and policeman to the Ministers of Defense and Interior.

We've learned that the business practices of the Iraqi Government are horribly inefficient and ineffective and that there is no pool of skilled civil servants to overcome them in the near term. Among our goals in 2007 is to transition equipment, sustainment, and infrastructure expenditures to Iraqi responsibility. To do that in an environment of unskilled bureaucrats and bad business practices, we've convinced the Government of Iraq to reach out to us as their acquisition and procurement agents and to enter into our Foreign Military Sales program with the United States. Thus far, Iraqis have invested about \$1.7 billion into Foreign Military Sales. We anticipate that they will invest another \$1.6 billion this year.

Let me put that in perspective. 2007 is the first year that the government of Iraq will spend more on its security forces than the United States government, and they will out-spend us at a rate of 2 to 1. They are now spending more money on themselves than we're spending on them in the security sector. If the government feels itself accountable to the soldier and understands its responsibility to provide him resources, then the soldier,

in turn, is going to feel his loyalty toward the central government. We consider this an important measure of progress.

Both tactical and institutional performance is improving. They must now be tied together. The big challenge in 2008 will be finding an adequate number of leaders to lead this institution that is large and increasingly capable. We've been growing young second lieutenants through the military academies for about three years, but it's really difficult to grow majors, lieutenant colonels and brigadier generals. It simply can't be done overnight. So we've had to rely heavily on officer recalls and retraining programs. However, the pool of qualified recalls is beginning to thin out. Several generations of Iraqi leaders were culled out by the Saddam regime and the Iran-Iraq war, and many fine Iraqi military and police leaders have been killed and wounded in the on-going fight. We're working with both the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Interior to address this challenge.

The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have improved in their capability to assume a greater share of the responsibility for the security and stability of Iraq. My overall assessment is that many units, especially the Iraqi Army units, have become increasingly proficient and have demonstrated both their improved capability and resolve in battle. They continue to be hampered, however, by a lack of depth. Iraqi Army and Police units do not have tactical staying power or sufficient capability to surge forces locally. The ISF also have shortages of leaders from the tactical to the national level which I've already touched upon. In addition, their logistics infrastructure is immature which limits their ability to function effectively against a broad array of challenges, particularly when asked to deploy around the country.

In October 2006 the Iraqi Prime Minister determined that his security forces were insufficient in size and structure to support Iraq's security needs. He requested support for a 2007 growth plan of 24 battalions and an increase in endstrength of approximately 45,000. Additionally, he requested assistance in procuring additional specialized capabilities such as route clearance equipment and electronic countermeasures to meet the persistent challenges of terrorist threats.

He also decided at that time that the tactical combat battalions should be manned at 110%. This was to posture them to be able to handle some of the unique aspects of the force. For example, on average about 25% of the force is on leave at any one time—and they're not going on vacation. It may sound simple, but a significant portion of this is soldiers taking leave to physically take money home to their families in the absence of things like direct deposit and electronic banking. Another example is that seriously wounded soldiers are not moved off the unit rolls because there is no functioning retirement system in Iraq. Moving them off the rolls would impose incredible hardship on soldiers and families who have already made enormous sacrifices.

Within the past month, the Commanding General of MNF-I decided that the lessons of Operation Fardh Al Qanoon in Baghdad indicated the clear need to increase the manning levels of these combat battalions up to 120%-- or an additional 20,000 endstrength.

The ongoing 2007 growth plan addresses many but not all of the structural gaps in the Iraqi Security Forces. MNSTC-I's current assessment is that the Iraqi Security Forces will require growth in 2008 similar in scope to that of 2007 in order to ensure sufficient force to protect the population throughout Iraq; overmatch the enemy; provide depth

necessary to deploy forces around the country as the security situation dictates; and implement an annual retraining and reconstitution program.

The threats faced by the Government of Iraq have proven both resilient and adaptive. We have identified key capability gaps in the Iraqi Security Forces. MNSTC-I is working to improve the quantity and professionalism of ISF leaders, address the issues of logistics and sustainability, ensure combat overmatch, and provide Iraq's security leaders the ability to project power with sufficient rotational capability to meet the challenges facing them. Coalition forces currently cover these capability gaps. Failure to address these Iraqi security capability gaps will lock U.S. forces into tactical battlespace and greatly increase the risk to the ISF should the Coalition presence decline in the near future.

In reflecting on my time in Iraq, I think I can identify four key decisions that we made in the effort to build effective security institutions in Iraq. The first was the formation of MNSTC-I to professionalize and standardize the growth of Iraqi Security Forces. The second was the decision to go to embedded advisory teams vice just partnering units. The third occurred on the 1st of October 2005 when MNSTC-I assumed responsibility for developing Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior capacity and capability. The fourth and most recent was the recognition in late 2006 of an inability by the Iraqis to execute their budget and then successfully enrolling them into the United States Foreign Military Sales Program in order to assist them in growing the force and executing budgets.

I would like to close with some thoughts about the Iraqi leadership and the Iraqi people. The leaders of Iraq and their people are working in an incredibly challenging and dangerous environment. They risk their lives each day as they carry out the nation's business, and they live with the constant fear of having their families attacked. The people of Iraq demonstrate both the resolve and the resiliency to withstand the assaults of extremists and are committed to make a better life for themselves, their families and the nation of Iraq. The leaders and people of Iraq have not given up on themselves. We should not give up on them.

I again thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today. Now I am prepared to take your questions.