

STATEMENT OF

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COMMANDER

MULTI-NATIONAL SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ

BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

ON IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

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Chairman Skelton, Representative Hunter, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

I am delighted to have with me my lovely wife, Sharon, who has likewise been a steadfast supporter of our deployed troops and their families. Like you, she appreciates the impact our current pace of operations is having on our people ... and like you, she has worked hard over the last few years to try to minimize it. I'd like to thank her ... HERE ... for that effort and that support.

I also thank all of YOU for YOUR continued support of our men and women in uniform and for the repeated visits so many of you have made to the theater to see their good work firsthand. I'm sure I don't need to tell you how very much it means to them, to ALL of us who are trying so hard to get the Iraqi Security Forces into a position where they can defend themselves, their citizens and their new-found freedom. It is TOUGH work and slow-going, but it is -- if I may say so, sir -- the most SIGNIFICANT and rewarding work I have done in the Army. I am proud of it. My troops are proud of it. But most importantly, sir, the IRAQI'S are proud of it. They are proud of themselves, and they are committed -- to their own success. And we ARE meeting with some success, Mr. Chairman.

The Iraqi Security Forces are bigger and better than they have been at any time since the effort to establish them began. In just the last year, the Iraqi Army grew by 54,600 soldiers, the National Police has grown by 7500 with the addition of five battalions, one brigade headquarters and a training school, and the Iraqi Police now counts some 45,000 new police to their roll.

I attribute this to THREE things. FIRST is the opportunity provided by increased offensive operations--conventional SOF and ISF--and

the rejection of Al Qaeda and other extremists by much of the Iraqi population. More people WANT to serve. More people feel INVESTED in their own futures. Put simply, better security begets better security. SECOND is the concerted effort to consolidate the security functions of various ministries into the Ministries of Defense and Interior. And THIRD is the GOIs desire to grow the ISF to a size and capability needed to provide for their own security. As I mentioned, we have seen significant growth across the board. We are seeing the Iraqi's want to take more responsibility for the battlespace.

Indeed, I believe we will see the total I-S-F number may exceed 580,000 by the end of 2008, up from about 500,000 today. I believe that's just about right for a country of this size. This growth is also related to budget. Iraq's two security ministries' budget has grown about \$2B a year since 2005.

Mr. Chairman, the Iraqi's still have a lot of work to do, as do we. There are MANY challenges ahead. As I said, this is tough work. Force structure and capability still lack a certain maturity. The ISF have not yet achieved self reliance in all area of Logistics, maintenance and life support. Just this past December the Iraqi Ministry of Defense adopted what we refer to as self-sustaining life support. Further the JHQ and MOI have a level of visibility of their maintenance status that they did not have just 6 months ago. Positive signs, indeed, AND steps forward ...but the truth is that they simply cannot FIX, SUPPLY, ARM or FUEL themselves completely enough at this point.

The Iraqi's also remain reliant on the coalition for too many combat enablers -- intelligence, air support, engineer support, indirect fire support and the like.

Aggressive use of Foreign Military Sales is helping turn that around, but they must purchase helicopters, mortars, fixed-wing aircraft, artillery, ISR assets and levels of protected mobility and translate those purchases into complete self sufficient combat power.

Of course, such capability rests in large measure on sound leadership. Here, too, the Iraqi Security Forces are slowly improving adding 1,300 officers and 9,900 NCOs in the Iraqi Army in the last year. But while the numbers overall are up, as I indicated, there is a gap in mid-grade leadership positions, particularly at the non-commissioned officer and field grade officer levels. Developing these leaders not only takes training but time.

As we have observed in our own Army at various times over the last 20-30 years, such gaps in leadership represent a very real and very tangible "hole in proficiency" that cannot be easily filled and it will affect them for at least a decade.

Just one final word about perspective here, if I may. When I was in command out at Fort Lewis, I was tasked to grow -- three Stryker Brigades. I encountered FOUR main problems in doing so. It's HARD to produce leaders as fast as you stand up a unit. It's HARD to synchronize arrival of those leaders with soldiers. It's HARD to synchronize the training of those soldiers with the delivery of their equipment. And it's a WHOLE lot easier to build units than it is to build bases.

Sir, we are fighting those very same problems in Iraq today. And it should not surprise us, especially given Iraq is growing their security forces while at war, while forming a government, and while developing their security ministries.

But let me just tell you, sir, both the minister of interior, and the minister of defense are tackling them square-on.

One quick example: the U.S. Army over the last year grew by about 2.3 percent, some 11,000 soldiers. The Iraqi Army over that same year grew by 55 percent -- or, as I mentioned, nearly 55,000 soldiers...2 Divisions, 8 Brigades, and 36 Battalions in 2007.

As I said, sir, helping the ISF do this HAS BEEN and CONTINUES to be extraordinarily rewarding work -- the MOST rewarding of my career. I want to thank you and this committee -- on behalf of ALL the men and women in the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq-- for your support of that work in the past, and if I had any closing thought at all it would simply be to ask you to continue that support in the future, most especially by providing for the I-S-F fund into 2009 so we can assist the GoI completing their security forces, continuing to professionalize their leadership and training and setting the ground work for long-term US-Iraq security relationship.

It is money well-spent, Mr. Chairman. It is work worth doing.  
Thank you.