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HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

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BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

ON STATUS OF THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

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(STATEMENT)

Chairman Skelton, Ranking Member Hunter, Members of the Committee, I'd like to thank each of you for the opportunity to provide an update on the Iraqi Security Forces upon completion of my tour in Iraq.

I'd also like to thank the committee for your continued support of the men and women in uniform, for the trips many of you have made into the Iraq Theater of Operations, and for the difficult work you have done on our behalf. To see their Representatives with them in theater means a lot to our Soldiers and our Civilians. Everyone assisting the Iraqis in building their security forces and securing their freedom appreciates your support. Without it, this last year would not and could not have been the success it was.

The Iraqis are growingly confident in their security forces. Operations in Basrah, Sadr City, Mosul, and Amarah have been Iraqi initiated and Iraqi sustained. Certainly the Basrah operation was not ideally planned, resourced, or initially executed—and the Iraqis did need Coalition support. Equally certain, however, is this: the Basrah operation was tactically and strategically successful in the end and each one of these operations has been progressively better, each one helps in developing confidence and competence in the military and police forces, and each

one cements in their minds the kind of capabilities they must develop for themselves. They are committed to their own success.

While the Iraqis are achieving success, challenges remain. As I often said to my command in Baghdad, “progress doesn’t result in no problems, it results in new problems.” To summarize the main point of my testimony today as it was last January: success is mixed. The Iraqi Security Forces have increased significantly in both quantity and quality in the past 14 months, but that progress is, of course, not universal.

Nested within Ambassador Crocker’s and General Petraeus’ Joint Campaign Plan, MNSTC-I’s contribution to achieving local security has been in helping the Ministries of Defense and Interior produce aggressive growth of their Security Forces. We—MNSTC-I and our Iraqi partners—have defined “aggressive growth” as accelerating their counterinsurgency force: that is, both accelerating sufficient numbers of sufficiently trained divisions, brigades, and battalions in the Army, aircraft in the Air Force, and Special Operations units on the military side, and sufficient numbers of sufficiently trained Iraqi Police, National Police, and Border Police on the police side. “Aggressive growth” also included beginning the development of enablers. For the defense forces, these enablers include: Intelligence, Command and Control, Aviation and Combat

Service Support. For the interior forces the Iraqis began to develop their Facilities, Logistics, Leadership, Internal Affairs and Forensics.

The Iraqis have taken advantage of the security situation created by the offensive operations that they and the coalition forces began last spring and continue today.

Since June of 2007, the high point of violence in Iraq, the Iraqi Security Forces increased their size and capability. The total Iraqi Security Force grew from 444K in June 2007 to 566K in May of 2008, some 58,000 in the defense forces and 64,000 in the interior forces. Growth is not just numbers, however; important quality indicators are also up. Gains in the percentages of leaders in units, present for duty strength, air missions, naval patrols, and Operational Readiness ratings—all are trending in the positive direction. Allow me to put the growth of the Iraqi Security Force into perspective. The United States Army has grown 5 brigades from June of 2004-March 2008 or 45 months. The Sergeant Major of the Army said “*We’re growing units right now faster than we can build barracks and headquarters and motor pools.*” In the last 12 months the Iraqis have built eleven brigade headquarters, and 35 battalions ... and they have the same problems as the SMA described—not only in infrastructure, but also in training, equipping and growing leaders.

And, the confidence that the Iraqi citizens have in their own security forces has improved every month since November of 2007. When the National Police left Mosul, for example, the citizens of that city held a rally to show their gratitude.

As I said, however, challenges remain. The Iraqi maneuver forces are still reliant on coalition enablers. The training proficiency is basic. Leader shortages exist, and the distribution of leaders is uneven. Leader development and professionalization is budding, but still lagging. Although major reconciliation efforts are on-going, there are still pockets of sectarianism that will take time to reduce further. Last, the problems that accompany rapid growth, that any nation, including the United States, would face, are evident in Iraq.

To help ensure that we hold onto the successes that our Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, and Sailors—with their Iraqi partners—have fought to achieve, and continue quality improvements and professionalization of the Iraqi Security Forces, continued Coalition Military and Police Training Teams along with coalition force partnership units are necessary, as is continued Iraqi Security Force Funding.

The next major security objective in the Joint Campaign Plan is “sustainable security.” MNSTC-I’s contribution will have these elements: completing the counterinsurgency forces, accelerating the growth of the military and police enablers—as I mentioned earlier have already begun, and continuing the professionalization and quality improvements of the Iraqi Security Forces. The foundations for this shift are already laid.

Key to the development of the Iraqi security ministries’ capacity is budget execution. The Iraqis' two security ministries have executed about \$1.5-2 billion more each year since 2005. 2008 will be the third year in a row they will have executed more money in their Ministries of Defense and Interior than that of the Iraqi Security Force Fund. And we expect that to be the case in 2009. However, with all of the success with the increase in spending, the security ministries continue to under-execute their annual budgets. The Ministry of Interior improved its execution rate in 2007 by spending 89% and 2008 is continuing along that improved spending trajectory; the Ministry of Defense, however, only spent 75% of his 2007 allocation and continues to have difficulty executing his budget. Both ministries have requested supplemental funding from the government, and MNSTC-I’s advisors will do their best to help the Ministries execute these monies well.

Aggressive use of the Foreign Military Sales program is helping to equip the Iraqi Security Forces. Delivery of FMS purchased equipment remains satisfactory. Thank you for your support, and thanks too to the Secretary of Defense's Special Task Force on FMS. One year ago, FMS had delivered only about \$115 worth of equipment. Today, that total is over \$1.4B. This accelerated delivery has made an important, positive contribution to the Iraqi Security Force capability. Two problems remain, however. The first problem is processing times. Though the OSD Task Force has reduced the processing time in the US by about 30 days, the average time to transform a Letter of Request to a Letter of Offer and Acceptance is still 92 days. In Baghdad, the average time it takes to staff and accept a Letter of Offer and Acceptance in the Ministry of Defense is 66 days. Some cases get turned quickly, in a matter of days; however, many cases take 3-8 months—sometimes even more—before they are processed. We simply need to reduce the complexity of laws and regulations associated with FMS. The second problem is the lag time between the final Iraqi decision to purchase equipment via Foreign Military Sales and the delivery of that equipment. For example, as of today, the Iraqis have received over \$1.4B in equipment, but have ordered \$2.7B. From their perspective this gap is unsatisfactory. These two issues are part of the reasons the Iraqis seek to pursue more via direct contracting with other countries. Again I thank the OSD special

Task Force for continuing their focused efforts in these two important areas.

As I stated before, Iraq is growing an army while at war, while taking casualties, while taking losses, and while developing their own organizational processes in the security ministries. So we should not underestimate the difficulty of the task remaining. The successes of the past year plus can be reversed; progress can be stymied. The enemies of freedom and of a new Iraq are still very active. They are still capable, though in diminishing frequency, of conducting violent attacks on the innocent. They still seek to destabilize and de-legitimize the Government of Iraq. They want to reverse the gains of the past fifteen months. They have not given up, nor do I expect them to. They recognize that they have lost the initiative, but they still seek to regain it. Our assistance may change in organization and size over the coming months or years, but some form of partnership and assistance, consistent with strategic objectives is still necessary. The Iraqis know this; we should remember it too.

I'd like to thank you again, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Hunter and the committee on behalf of all of the men and women of Multi-National Transition Command - Iraq, for your support this past year. We have asked a great deal of these men and women and of their families,

and they have made enormous sacrifices. Our elected officials and fellow citizens do a tremendous job supporting our Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Civilians and their loved ones; we are all appreciative for that. The knowledge that their country appreciates its Warriors' sacrifices and those of their families bolsters our determination.

In my speech upon departing command of the 1<sup>st</sup> US Corps at Fort Lewis, I observed that the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines fighting in Iraq were 3-to-6 years old at the end of the Gulf War. I said then that our job was to finish this war in such a way that our National interests were protected and that we prevented the next generation of American children from completing what we had not. We are enroute to finishing this job; we are in a better position this year than last. Every American should take great pride in the men and women serving our Nation around the world. Their incredible courage and commitment to excellence are demonstrated daily. In less than two months time, I will be retired. Of my 37+ years of service to this Nation there was no greater honor than to serve beside them in this defining struggle of our generation. Thank you very much.