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Presenter: Commander, U.S. Army's 4th Infantry
Division Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno

Wednesday, June 18, 2003 - 10:00 a.m.
EDT

Maj. Gen. Odierno Videoteleconference from Baghdad

Staff: Okay, in our continuing series of briefings by military commanders of Operation Iraqi Freedom today, we'd like to introduce you to Major General Ray Odierno, the commander of the 4th Infantry Division, who joins us live from Iraq.

The 4th Infantry Division's 20,000 soldiers deployed later in the combat operations than other divisions, but all along, they represented a formidable combat force and played a pivotal role in the way this conflict was strategized and conducted. Today, their role is formidable in a different way as they work the front lines of the postwar stabilization process.

General Odierno will talk to us about the 4th ID's ongoing role in Iraq and about what lies ahead for his soldiers. General Odierno will have a brief statement, and after that, I'll facilitate questions and answers.

General?

Odierno: Thank you very much.

Good morning, ladies and gentleman of the Washington press corps. I appreciate the opportunity to talk with you today. And before I answer your questions, I'd like to take a few minutes to bring you up to date on Task Force Iron Horse operations here in Iraq.

First, I must tell you how proud and honored I am to lead these great soldiers under my task force. Our troops continue to do an amazing job under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions, working to provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Iraq, who, for the first time in over 30 years, are free of the oppressive tyranny from the previous regime. America can be very proud of her sons and daughters who are sacrificing so much to uphold the values of freedom and democracy we so often take for granted. Every day brings more progress, and while we have accomplished so much, much still remains to be done.

What we've achieved has come at a cost, and we honor those brave heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice to liberate the Iraqi people, and are deeply saddened by their passing. Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and loved ones. They will never be forgotten, and their bravery and sacrifice inspires us to continue with our mission.

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Right now, over 27,000 troops of Task Force Iron Horse stand vigilant throughout a sprawling area that encompasses three provinces in northeastern and central Iraq. Our area of responsibility stretches from just north of Baghdad to the Iranian border in the east, and stretches north to the oil fields north of Kirkuk and includes Taji, Tikrit, Samarra and Balad, and west to Lake Tharthar. This is an area comparable in size to the state of West Virginia.

Since Task Force Iron Horse arrived in the area of operations in late March, Iron Horse soldiers have conducted combat operations against the Iraqi army, paramilitary and Ba'ath Party forces, and simultaneously, we have conducted stability operations that have had a significant impact in reducing the suffering of free Iraqi citizens and set the initial conditions for the return to normalcy in Iraq.

Although major combat operations have concluded, our soldiers are involved in almost daily contact with noncompliant forces, former regime members and common criminals. To defeat these attacks and to continue to improve the security and stability within our area, the task force is conducting search and attack missions, presence patrols and raids to disarm, defeat and destroy hostile forces, as well as to capture the former regime members. These efforts have produced a stabilizing effect throughout the region and resulted in the capture of several top 55 "most wanted" individuals of the former regime within our AO.

We continue to conduct stability and support operations to provide for the long-term stability of Iraq. A critical step in this process was orchestrating the peaceful disarmament of the People's Mujahideen of Iran, MEK, which resulted in the consolidation of the PMOI's equipment and personnel, consisting of approximately 5,000 personnel and over 2,000 pieces of military equipment.

Last month the first interim provincial government selection process took place in the city of Kirkuk. The province has been divided by historical ethnic disputes for decades but was able to overcome its polarizing differences and begin the process of creating a democratic society and securing a bright future for their city. Three hundred delegates representing each ethnic and political group, religious leaders and businessmen representing the province selected the interim Kirkuk city council and in turn elected a Kurdish mayor, an Arabic deputy mayor and three assistant mayors to chair the offices of de-Ba'athification, government design, and resettlement and compensation.

As the political situation continues to stabilize throughout our area, we will facilitate the selection process to establish new interim provincial government in Ba'qubah and Samarra.

The task force has been working tirelessly to reestablish basic municipal services and systems to improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens. I'll highlight just a fraction of what our dedicated soldiers have accomplished. We have established a systematic and deliberate process to identify, prioritize and focus the task force efforts upon rebuilding the infrastructure, to include its judicial, educational, health care and municipal systems, as well as maximizing the economic potential of Iraq's natural resources.

Public security continues to be one of our top priorities. Establishing and maintaining a secure environment for the people of Iraq involves far more than just putting troops and police on the streets. Our ability to pay people to repair telecommunications systems, so people can receive important information through public service announcements, to receive and distribute fuel and food, create jobs, and to make sure water and power or sewage systems are operational are all key components in establishing and maintaining a more secure environment. We have made great strides in all of these areas.

In terms of security, we have focused on repairing facilities, hiring and training police officers, and procuring equipment. All police stations and prisons were significantly damaged and looted. We

have screened and hired over 4,000 police and continue to screen many other applicants. We've opened a provisional police academy at Ba'qubah, with a second one in development in Kirkuk. We've assessed police stations and identified equipment requirements in all major cities in our area. And we are conducting joint police patrols in every one of our cities.

The judicial system. Our mission here is to create a functioning judicial system, to fill the vacuum resulting from the removal of the former regime, which will ensure fundamental fairness for the people and future of Iraq. In our judicial system we have completed assessment of all courts. We have opened 15 courts with staff judge advocate military personnel monitoring proceedings. We've reviewed translated court records for due process and vetted former Ba'ath Party judges and removed them from participation.

In terms of economic aid, we have opened 37 of 43 banks, reviewing all bank records to ensure accuracy of accounts and salary and payroll payment procedures. Using Iraqi central bank and OCPA- approved funds, we have been paying salaries to police, government employees, hospital workers, teachers, power plant and water and sanitation workers, and also made emergency interim payments to pensioners throughout our area.

Payment for the local grain harvest has just begun. We have and continue to distribute food. There's no food shortage throughout our AOR. The World Food Program warehouses are restocked, and rationed distribution is ongoing.

In public works, our engineers have established miracles in restoring public utilities to all neglected, looted and damaged systems throughout the AOR. There is now more reliable and stable electricity than there has been in a long time, to include prior to the past regime. They have installed a 600-meter assault float bridge across the Tigris River and a 400-meter bridge in al Sadiyah. These crossing sites are critical for both civilian traffic, for commerce, and military traffic to enforce peace.

We have conducted water, power, sewer assessments throughout the major cities and restored water, power and basic sewer operations, some of which have been non-operational for several years. We've submitted preliminary reports to garner contracts and hire Iraqi workers to make the facilities fully functional and self-sustaining.

We've constructed a bypass around a damaged bridge pipeline, allowing residual oil to flow from (Baiji ?) refineries to Kirkuk, allowing the continued operations of that vital national industry. We've worked with leaders of the oil and gas production and distribution industries to mitigate critical fuel shortages.

In terms of public health, we've coordinated national health policy with the Iraqi Ministry of Health. We have 24 of 28 hospitals operational, fully operational, and 15 clinics that are open and stocked with appropriate drugs. We've conducted infrastructure repair and restored commercial power to three medical facilities that did not have it prior to this. We facilitated an immunization program, resulting in over 3,000 immunizations to date.

We have also put back into progress the Baiji refinery. It is now producing benzine at 4.7 million liters per day, and liquid propane gas at 187 tons per day. In Kirkuk, the (GOSPs ?) and the LPG plant, current production is at 516,000 barrels per day, and liquid propane gas at 500 tons per day.

Public education; 98 percent of all schools are reopen. Year-end examinations will be administered at the end of June, and teachers have been paid. We have established multiple projects to improve the schools' infrastructure, to include painting, refurbishing, the purchasing of new desks and several other materials.

The bottom line is that all services are equal to or better than what was here prior to the regime being removed.

I want to close by saying Task Force Iron Horse has, over the past week, conducted two major operations, Peninsula Strike, which was a combined air, ground and river patrol operation to isolate an area known as a stronghold for Saddam Hussein loyalists. We initially detained nearly 400 people, with over 60 confirmed as being members of the former Iraqi intelligence service, Saddam Fedayeen or Republican Guard leadership. Over the past three days, we have conducted Operation Desert Scorpion. Task Force Iron Horse has conducted over 50 raids on suspected terrorists, Ba'ath party loyalists and Fedayeen members. We currently have detained approximately 400 of these individuals, to include local leaders of some new fanatic groups forming, such as the New Return and the Snake Party. We have confiscated millions of dollars of dinar, hundreds of RPGs and launchers, and have significantly degraded their ability to coordinate attacks.

Just this morning, less than three or four hours ago, soldiers from 122 Infantry conducted two raids on separate farm houses outside of Tikrit, seizing 8.5 million U.S. dollars, 300 to 400 million Iraqi dinar, and English pounds and euros yet to be counted. In addition, we seized a large cache of jewels, gems, estimated over a million dollars of value. In addition, we confiscated late-model Russian-made night vision goggles, sniper rifles, uniforms and equipment of Saddam's personal guard. We detained 15 to 20 individuals associated with Saddam's special security forces.

And just before coming in here, we also conducted a cordon and stopped a vehicle with over \$800,000 of U.S. dollars in it that was trying to flee from that scene. In addition, we are currently inside of two other sites where we believe we have cordoned off and captured up to 30 additional Saddam Special Republican Guard forces.

We continue to work hard and I believe over the next three or four days, you will hear much more about the number of senior Iraqi individuals that we have detained here over the last couple days.

I've only scratched the surface of tremendous work being done every day by the brave men and women of Task Force Iron Horse. They are truly the best our nation has to offer.

And now, I'm willing to answer any questions you might have.

Staff: Okay, as you ask your questions, please make sure you give your name and the organization you work for.

Q: General, Charlie Aldinger with Reuters. In the raids on the farm houses today, you said you seized 300 to 400 million dollars in dinars. You mean, dinars equivalent to American dollars, in addition to 8.5 million U.S. dollars, right?

Odierno: Yeah, let me rephrase that. It's 8 million -- 8.5 million U.S. dollars, 300 to 400 million dinar. And there are also euros and crown sterling, which we have yet to finish counting.

Q: I see. Well, did you have to shoot your way into these farm houses? Was anybody wounded at all?

Odierno: There was no one wounded in this incident.

Q: Martha Raddatz from ABC News. Could you give us more information on the resistance you're facing? You're saying you're facing almost daily contact with paramilitaries, Fedayeen Saddam. How big a problem is this? If you can quantify it in any way about how much resistance you're getting; how many more people are out there who you believe are resisting? And also, if you could give us more detail about these new groups -- I believe you said Snake Party and New Return --

how they formed, and how big they are and where they are?

Odierno: We are seeing military activity throughout our zone. But I really qualify it as militarily insignificant. They are very small, they are very random, they are very ineffective. I believe there's three groups out there right now. Basically, there is a group of ex-Saddam Ba'ath Party loyalists. In addition, there are some Islamic fundamentalists. And then there are just some plain Iraqis who are poor and are being paid to attack U.S. forces. All of these attacks are uncoordinated. They are very ineffective and, in my mind, really do not have much effect on U.S. forces.

And if you are -- on a daily basis, you will see that 99 percent of the area is free, clear, and the citizens go about every day, doing their business, without interruption.

Q: If I could, the military insignificance -- I believe 11 soldiers have been killed in the last three weeks. So clearly they're having a rather profound effect.

And also, you talk about them not being organized, and yet you say they're just plain Iraqis who are being paid. Who's paying them, if they're not organized?

Odierno: My guess is, they're being paid by ex-Ba'ath Party loyalists, who are paying people to kill Americans.

And I want to make sure -- first, I want to comment on the 11 individuals that have been killed. I will never downplay Americans being killed in combat. It is a very significant sacrifice, especially for their families. And that is significant to an individual's family, and I would never say anything different from that.

But from a military perspective, it is insignificant. They're having no impact on the way we conduct business on a day-to-day basis in Iraq.

Q: Thank you.

Q: General, Tom Bowman with the Baltimore Sun. On the Special Republican Guard, through your interrogations of those folks you've captured, any sense of how many more are out there? I think the Republican Guard had -- Special Republican Guard had -- I don't know -- 20,000 to 25,000 members. Do you have any sense of how many more are out there? Are there thousands more? And do you have any sense of any higher-ups in the Special Republican Guard that are out there, helping these folks out?

Odierno: There are some. We don't know how many are left. There are some out there. I believe we reduced them significantly in numbers.

On these latest attacks, we are still interrogating the individuals, and I really do not want to divulge that. What I will say is, we're getting some very good information from them about several different levels of Ba'ath Party leaders that are still out there.

Q: General, Jim Mannion from Agence France-Presse. These attacks appear to have escalated or increased in number just in the past few weeks. Is that associated in any way with the decision to ban the Ba'ath Party and to disband the Army? And is there a risk with these raids of increasing opposition to the U.S. forces?

Odierno: I have a little different view of it. I think the raids that we're conducting, we have put a lot of pressure on them, and I think they're feeling the pressure. And I think we're having a significant effect on their ability, which is causing them to come out and maybe increase their attacks even though they have been ineffective. So I think they're desperate. I think they're becoming less and

less organized. The more money we seize, the more individuals we take into custody, we continue to really, I think, have an impact on the medium to senior level of the individuals that remain. So I think we are, in fact, having a significant impact on them. I think that's causing them, then, to come out and be a little more desperate in their attacks on U.S. forces.

Q: General, Matt Kelley with the Associated Press. Are you finding anything, with the documents or people that you're interrogating or finding in these raids, related to weapons of mass destruction?

Odierno: Again, I don't want to comment on that because we have not finished the complete review of the documents. So I don't want to say whether we have or have not. I will tell you that every time we capture documents, we review it thoroughly for any signs of weapons of mass destruction as well as any leadership targets. And that's what we're doing in this case. But I can't give you a specific answer because I have not gotten a readout yet on these documents that we've gotten over the last three days. A lot of them, again, have to be -- as you know, have to be translated before we can really get a close look at them.

Q: General Eric Schmitt with The New York Times. Can you say whether or not you've seen any signs of foreign fighters, either present or that are still coming into the country, that you've had to deal with? And secondly, the failure to so far capture or come up with Saddam Hussein's remains, to what extent has that been a rallying point, in your view, for these resistant fighters?

Odierno: First I would comment that we have -- my division cavalry squadron is along the Iran-Iraq border, and they've been there now for about 30 days. And since they've been there, I've seen a significant decrease in the ability of anybody transiting that border.

I cannot comment on the Syrian border, but my assessment here is we have shut the border down and there is a lot less individuals being able to come into Iraq, and we've done a much better -- we -- I think we've got control of that on both sides now.

In terms of Saddam Hussein, I think it really doesn't matter. The bottom line is he's no longer in power. I think everybody realizes that, and he's never going to come back to power. I think there's two things related to that. We have to make sure that people understand that coalition forces are going to be here until we have a safe and secure environment, and that the bottom line is Saddam Hussein or his sons will never take control of this country again. And that's the message we continually pass and we stand behind. I think both the secretary -- the secretary of Defense has been very clear about that, but that's where we're at on this, and we will continue along those same lines.

Q: General, Dave Moniz with USA Today. I'd be curious to know whether you've been surprised by the duration and the kinds of attacks that U.S. forces have seen in the last couple of months. Was this something that was anticipated, or have you been surprised by that at all?

Odierno: I am not surprised by it. I believe -- first off, we're dealing with people who have everything to lose and nothing to gain with us taking over this country by defeating the -- turning it over to a new Iraqi government. These are the people that were in charge; they had all the advantages. They got all the favors; everything was given to them. They had all the money, they had all the advantages. So they have everything to lose. So I am not surprised at all that they are still trying to have an effect on what we're trying to do and form a new Iraqi government. And -- but I truly believe that the effect they're having is minimal.

And in a lot of ways -- if you were here on a daily basis and you go down to these small towns, these bigger cities, if you go down Kirkuk, you're inside Tikrit, they are going about their business. Traffic has increased three-, fourfold every day, and it's a bustling town. They're going about their business.

And so the bottom line is, what we start, we've got to continue to put people back to work. We've got to develop jobs, and we're starting to do that. Mr. Bremer is working that extremely hard -- Ambassador Bremer. And I believe, as we continue to develop these jobs, we'll continue to increase the day-to-day plight of everyday Iraqis, which is what we're about here.

And I believe that they realize -- the people that were involved in the medium, the high levels of the Ba'ath Party realize they have absolutely nothing to gain. And I think that's why I always expected these attacks, and I will continue to expect them until we've significantly reduced them, which we do every day. And I've seen a significant difference over the last three weeks with the amount of attacks we've had, and I really see them becoming more and more desperate each day.

Q: General, Paul Courson with CNN. In the raids on the farmhouses this morning and the cash, can you kind of give us a picture of what you're seeing? Matter of fact, is there going to be any DOD video of that? Is it rooms full of stacked cash? And moreover, if you can kind of fix the location where these raids took place and comment on how this cash might have been distributed to those you say are being paid to attack U.S. troops.

Odierno: They -- both locations were -- one was just south of Tikrit, and the other one was just west of Tikrit.

What -- they were raids through -- we continue to get a lot of HUMINT sources, who are now coming to us more and more every day to let us know things that they know. And then we're able to action those sources. And once we do that, we go in, we cord off the area, and we go in there.

There were guards on these farmhouses. But when you go in with overwhelming combat power, they realize it is fruitless to defend themselves. And so they, for the most part, surrender.

There -- in one of the farmhouses there was a -- it was -- one of the individuals that was detained was a former bodyguard of Saddam Hussein. We know that for sure. And there was pictures of Saddam Hussein in the house, as well as a lot of Saddam Hussein paraphernalia and with all that money.

I believe what they do is they operate in cash, and they go around, and they're able -- they try to recruit individuals and will say, "If you kill Americans, we'll pay you so much money." And so they pay them in cash. And they have different kinds of cash to pay different kinds of people. And we have gotten that from other interrogations of -- that's why people have in fact tried to attack Americans. So we know that's how they operate.

And I believe, as long as we continue to get more HUMINT and are able to take down these large sums of money and take down some of the leaders who are, in fact, conducting the payments, we'll continue to be extremely successful.

Q: Yes, General, this is Vince Crawley with the Army Times Newspapers. Could you tell us a little bit more about these two new fanatic groups you described? It would seem that if they have names and a way to distinguish between them, that they are, in fact, organized to some extent. Are they street gangs, or paramilitaries or what?

Odierno: I believe it's along the line of street gangs right now. We have seen just very few in numbers. They are not very organized. It is just another name for the Ba'ath Party organization in a lot of cases; they're just renaming themselves, trying to reinvent themselves. And that's all it is. And they're just trying to rename themselves, come up with a different name, but it makes absolutely no difference. We deal with them the same and they have the same capability, which is limited right now.

Q: General, Richard Sisk, New York Daily News. Among the 700 individuals you have detained in recent operations, are any foreigners, Iranians, Syrians, among them? Are any al Qaeda or what you believe may be al Qaeda sympathizers?

Odierno: There have been a few detainees that were from Syria and Iran. In the operations we specifically conducted, we did not have any specific links back to al Qaeda in any of the individuals we took. Almost all of them had significant links back to the old regime, specifically, Saddam Fedayeen and the intelligence service of Iraq.

Q: Sir, this is Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. I wanted to go back to the question of U.S. casualties. You said that so far, the violence has been militarily insignificant, but you expect it to continue for a while as they become more and more desperate. Should the American public expect that in the next couple months, U.S. casualty rates will equal or possibly exceed those killed during the actual combat that President Bush said May 1st had pretty much finished?

Odierno: Sir, that's a very difficult question to answer. And I will never speculate on numbers of casualties that we might have. I believe they're going to reduce, but I can't guarantee that. Within Task Force Iron Horse we've had three soldiers killed in action during the time here, and about 23 wounded, so far, over the last 75 days. And I see it -- I believe there will be some attacks continued on U.S. forces, aimed at U.S. forces, aimed at trying to reduce the will of U.S. forces. That's not going to happen. And I believe that we have the techniques and procedures that will eliminate and -- help eliminate the capability of them continuing to conduct these attacks on U.S. soldiers.

Q: General, Nathan Hodge from Defense Week. I wanted to see if you could address soldiers' morale, particularly as we reach some of the worst weather of the summer months. Are soldiers outside of Division HQ starting to get hot meals? Are they getting the parts they need to fix broken vehicles? How are logistics holding up?

Odierno: Just before I came in here, I was just out on the Iran-Iraq border with 110 Calvary, my division calvary squad, where it's about 115 degrees out there right now in the hot sun. The soldiers are doing great. We're able to get them ice for cold drinks. Their equipment is fine. Our combat power is above 90 percent. Repair parts are flowing. So we're getting one, what we call T ration, which is a hot meal, a day to all our soldiers. We believe in the next two to three weeks we'll get what we call an A ration, which is a normally cooked meal, to each one of our soldiers.

The biggest complaint that our soldiers have is they're not able to call home as much as they'd like, and that's because of the -- the communications infrastructure in this country is non-existent. So we're working towards that, and we're working our morale call, where they get to call home about now once a week. They just started that in the last three to four days. Mail is getting better; it was slow at first, but now they're getting mail in about two weeks, which is pretty good.

So as long as they continue able to talk home once in a while and get mail from home, soldiers are very happy. Their morale is very high. They understand what they are doing. Every day they are out there dealing with the Iraqi citizens, they understand that this is the right thing to do, that this is the right thing for this country. Once you're in this country for a while, you realize this is absolutely the right thing to do. The poverty, the oppression that the people lived under, the way the money was wasted on palaces and on other extravagant things and not for the people was really amazing, as you're here for a while, and our soldiers see that, and they do care for the -- they have empathy for the people of Iraq. And they understand why they're here. And they understand they're going to make it a better place to live for the future generations of Iraqis. And if you talk to our soldiers, they will tell you that and they understand that.

Q: Sir, Martha Raddatz again from ABC. Can you talk a little bit about what effect the shootings of the American soldiers and, I believe, there were a couple of drive-by shootings in the last 24, 48 hours into courthouses, police stations, the mayor's office -- what effect is that having on the Iraqi

people and for them to come forward? And how do you counter that? And does that include paying them?

Odierno: First off, most of these attacks are occurring in the middle of the night when there's not a lot of citizens, at least in our -- in my AO, where there's not a lot of citizens around when it occurs. Most -- the majority of these attacks have been severely ineffective, where they really don't even come close to their target. For example, last night, we had a couple RPGs aimed at our civil military operations center in our towns, and they didn't come within 300 meters of where they were aiming.

The people understand -- all they care about are do they see coalition presence? When they see coalition presence, they understand that they will be protected. And they will continue to come forward as long as they realize that we action on the information that they give us and the fact that we will remain here, and they know that we will remain here with some presence until it's no longer necessary. That's all they ask for, and that's what we're doing.

Q: General, Eric Schmitt with the New York Times again. From your interrogations, have you determined whether there's a specific bounty that's been put out on American soldiers, that this cash is going toward?

And secondly, from your tours around the region that you're covering, what do you hear from the people, and particularly, the local leaders about their desire to have some political control within the coalition security umbrella? How eager are they to get some kind of Iraqi control, political control?

Odierno: I'll answer your last question first. The -- I had a significant aspect -- significant time in Kirkuk in electing that interim government, selecting the interim government that we put into place. And across the board, they are extremely anxious to take democracy on. They want to be involved in developing the future of their country.

And Kirkuk's an interesting example. Kirkuk has, as you know, the northern oil fields, which are significant. They have a significant water source and they have agriculture and they have people who want to work, and yet it's probably one of the poorest cities in all of Iraq. And they know that, and they want it to be a better city. And they see the future for them potentially as we move forward and develop a government.

So, yeah, they do want to have a say in their government, but my assessment has been they want coalition forces to guide them initially and then they want to take over at some time. And I think that's the way ahead we're doing. We are trying to guide them ahead in their new government until it's time for them to hold full elections and then take over. And I believe that's Ambassador Bremer's goal as he moves forward here at the national level.

They want a say in their future government, but they want also -- they want to know how do you do it. As an American, specifically, they'll ask you, "How is it done in the United States?" How does democracy work?" What can we do to make democracy work in our country?" How do we have a free market economy?" They ask those kind of questions all along.

And part of the process is an education process Their education systems here have never dealt with these issues. They have not been -- from primary -- the schools and universities do not teach these concepts. And so part of the thing we have to do is educate them. We have to work in education of the populace, what is available and capable for them to do as they move on to a free-market economy, potentially, and a democratic government.

Q: General, my second question just about the bounty, if there's a specific bounty on American

soldiers out there.

Odierno: I have not -- they have said on several occasions that they are paid a certain amount for shooting at American soldiers, but there's not been a specific amount that's been consistent across. So I'm unwilling to say it because I think a lot of times they exaggerate it very much when they tell us because they try to make an impression on their interrogators. But I will tell you, yes, they have put a bounty on shooting at American soldiers and trying to kill U.S. soldiers. Yes, there is, there is a bounty out there in some cases. I am not willing to comment on how much it is because I really don't know.

Q: General, this is Hunter Keeter from Defense Daily. I had a question about your technological capabilities. There's some of the best in the 4th Infantry Division anywhere in the Army. You're not applying those technologies, particularly in command and control, to full-on combat operations now, so could you expand a little bit on how they're helping you accomplish these operations other than war that you're now undertaking in addition to combat?

Odierno: They are successful whether you're in -- no matter where you are in the spectrum of combat. And in some of these -- and Operation Peninsula Strike was a very significant military operation.

And so our ability to track -- with our systems, I can track every tank, every Bradley, every Howitzer, and we know exactly where they are, wherever they go. And I have a capability to do that from my TOC.

And in fact, right before I came in here, I was watching as they continued the work on the farmhouse. I could see the icon from a couple Bradleys that were on that farmhouse, that they were still there. We also can track them at night, where they are going. So it makes it much easier for us to make sure we understand where our soldiers, how they coordinate their cordons, how they coordinate their final attacks during these raids.

In addition to that, it has to do with our intelligence and surveillance system. I have the tactical unmanned aerial vehicle that's with each one of my brigades. I'm the only unit the Army that has that now that's deployed, and that is very significant.

We're able to use that at night. It has color picture. It is extremely clear, and it helps us to track -- for example, in the operation I just told you about in the farmhouse, we had one individual who tried to get away on foot, got into a car. We tracked him by foot. On the TUAV we picked him up, and then we stopped him at a flash checkpoint that we're able to put in order to stop this vehicle. So there the technology worked incredibly well.

Also, our ability to see both -- all of the coalition forces helps us to do coordination as we coordinate between lines. So it is a success story.

Technology is significant. Technology allows us to better use our most precious asset, which is our soldiers, and it helps to safeguard our soldiers.

And I believe it does in fact have an incredible advantage for us here. Whether it's in high-end combat operations, which we were in when we initially got here, to now, where -- by the way, I really would like to make an additional comment. It's our soldiers today, I believe, are in the most difficult situation we could put soldiers in, in terms of decisions, because one minute they are in a fairly high level of combat, when they're -- when there's -- you have three or four RPGs and snipers, you action on them, you either detain them or kill them, and then 10 minutes later that same soldier is downtown, helping Iraqi civilians.

And our soldiers are able to handle that. They are trained in such way where they can handle that type of difference over a very quick period of time. It's an incredible feat that our soldiers are able to accomplish, and they make the right decision every time. They make the right decision every time, and they are put into very tough situations sometimes. In almost every case they make absolutely the right decision, and that's down to the lowest level of private on up to major general.

Q: General, Tom Bowman again, Baltimore Sun. Just to sort of encapsulate what we're talking about here, aren't we just basically seeing an increasing amount of guerrilla warfare here? And to follow up on Tony's point, aren't soldiers really in greater peril now, because you basically have to go root these folks out, as opposed to during the combat phase when you used a lot of heavy armor and airpower to knock off the organized groups?

Odierno: My only comment would be, I would not dignify with attack guerrilla warfare. This is not guerrilla warfare; it is not close to guerrilla warfare because it's not coordinated, it's not organized, and it's not led. The soldiers that are conducting these operations don't even have the willpower. We find that a majority of the time they'll fire a shot, and they'll drop the weapon and they'll give up right away. They do not have the will. And in most cases, I'm not sure they really believe in what they're doing.

And so, when I talk about organized guerrilla warfare, it's a very complex organization that plans very complex guerrilla operations. That is nowhere close to what we're seeing here in my AO.

Q: You told us you're seeing these folks as less and less organized; so you must see them as being organized. And also, if they're coming up with new names and payment systems, there must be some organization.

Odierno: But organization -- when I say organization, is organized in three- or four- or five-man groups. So they have three or four or five guys who get together and say, "Okay, we can organize a very low-level, very localized attack." We're not talking about not being organized. There is no simultaneous attacks on multiple levels that are being conducted, which I would call guerrilla operations. They are incapable of doing that. They don't have the leadership, they don't have weapon systems, and they don't have the willpower to do it.

Q: General, this is Michael Lang (sp) with the Asahi Shimbun. I was wondering if you could explain some remarks you made in your opening comments about the courts. Without a constitution in the country, under what rule of law are these individuals being tried? And are these military courts being held? And what role the American advisers play, if they are indeed civilian.

Odierno: They are not military courts. What this is, we reverted back -- and don't get me -- I'm not sure on the date -- the 1968 laws which was set up by the British when they were in here a long time ago and was prior to the Ba'ath party taking over. The laws -- and so their laws, which we reviewed, are very similar to the laws we have in the United States. So, for an interim basis, we're allowing them to do that to do very simple cases. For example, if you are -- dangerous driving, you know, things like that. I mean, so, they're able to prosecute those in the court system. If it's a military operation and it's an attack on U.S. soldiers, that is not handled in the Iraqi courts. That is handled through military channels. We're talking about civil crime here that we are handling. And they're using the old 1968 laws that they had, which upon review by all of our legal individuals, was a very sound law, very similar to British law. So, we're doing that on an interim basis until, at the national level, a constitution is written and a rule of law is established.

Q: Sir, this is Drew Brown with Knight-Ridder Newspapers. Could you characterize the level of support that you see these Saddam remnants getting from the Iraqi people?

Odierno: I see very little support from the Iraqi people. They -- there is no outward support. All

you see is a few individuals who are clearly involved with this on a daily basis that are the ones who are doing it. It is a handful -- I mean, compared to the millions of people in Iraq, it is a very select few, not very high in numbers. And obviously, I don't know the number, but it's not very high. There is no outward support at all for any of these operations that I have seen or any of my soldiers have seen.

Q: To follow up, if it's a handful, then why is it so difficult for U.S. forces, with all the technology we have and all the forces that we have over there -- why is it so difficult to track these guys down, ferret them out and deal with them?

Odierno: Well, first off, they're dressed in civilian clothes. They aren't in military uniforms; they aren't out there just openly saying, "I'm a military target." They are dressed as civilians; they try to hide as civilians; they try to use civilians to mask their movements. But what we're getting is -- from the Iraqi people -- is we're getting HUMINT reports. They give us HUMINT reports on where they are at. And so, they are helping us to track them down. And that's what we're using to track them down.

And again, "handful" is a bad term. That's a bad term. It's a small percentage is a better way to say it; a very small percentage. But we're slowly -- and you're saying it's hard to track them down. Every day, we're tracking several down. I mean, I would tell you again, today, we probably arrested more than 50. So every day, we are having a significant impact on, I believe, their ability to reorganize and then conduct any integrated and coordinated attacks.

Q: General, Bret Baier with Fox News Channel. Let's try this question a different way. If you could characterize for us how your troops are received by the Iraqi people on the streets. Before this war, we were told that once Saddam Hussein was gone and the people were liberated, there was an expectation that people would come out in broad support of the U.S. and coalition troops. How are your troops being received?

Odierno: They're being received in a very friendly manner. There are pockets, I will tell you, where we did Peninsula Strike and in that area they weren't real happy to see us when we went in there that day, and that's because, I believe, there's a lot of loyalists down there, Ba'ath Party loyalists. So there's pockets of areas where it's very clear that they were supported by the ex-regime, they depended on the ex-regime, so they're not real happy to see Americans.

But there's a lot of other places, when you drive down the streets people wave at you everywhere you go. Now, whether it's in Kirkuk, whether it's in Ba'qubah, whether it's in some parts of Tikrit, whether it's in Baiji, whether it's in Samarra, they're happy to see Americans. They're happy to see Americans out there on a daily basis.

They're happy to see us there in their markets as we drive through their markets. They're happy to see us down there because their markets are open again. They got electricity for the first time, in some cases, in a long time. They have more electricity. They have electricity 24 hours a day. They have water that -- we're starting to treat their water. The water treatment was horrible. The sanitation of the water here has been despicable for years. We're improved that. They're happy we've done that. People coming forward and giving us information on Ba'ath Party loyalists tells you how happy they are for us to be here.

But I do believe there is some sense that they are afraid that somebody could retaliate against them, and that's what we're working on eliminating right now. We're eliminating the fear.

Q: Say again, General. We missed your last.

Odierno: I said what we're working on now is, as we do these raids, is eliminating the fear of

recrimination that's always out there, from former Ba'ath Party loyalists. That's what we're in the process of eliminating now. And as that gets eliminated, you'll see the Iraqi people become -- be more open, I believe, in their support of U.S. soldiers. In most places, it's open now, but in all places it will become open.

Q: Paul Courson once again, from CNN.

Odierno: (Off mike) -- every day on the ground. I think most people are surprised in most areas how friendly they are to United States soldiers in our area of operation.

Q: General, I'm back to the farmhouses again to try and square a couple of things that have kind of transpired during this. You've got \$8.5 million, and you've got reports coming in, I guess, from individuals that, "Hey, there's these farm houses, there's this huge pile of money." Can you rule out that that money is not paying for a fairly well-funded, but ragtag civilian-looking army in the countryside there around Tikrit -- or was it Kirkuk.

Odierno: I could speculate that is for a lot of things. What I've found is some of the mid- to high-level Ba'ath party people like to have a lot of money around them so they can have the rather refined things, even though they're in hiding. So it could be for that, also. It could be that they are using it to pay some poor people to make attacks on U.S. soldiers. But again, I'm telling you, it's not significant; it has not been significant, so far.

I think I've got time for about two more questions.

Q: General, this is Tony Cappaccio again with Bloomberg News. Peninsula Strike, is this the type of raid or type of military action we should expect to see continue for the next -- indefinitely for the next four or five months? It seems like this is an example of that time-critical targeting you executed during the war and quick intelligence. Can you give us a feel for whether this is a template for the foreseeable future?

Odierno: I think it is. And that's what we've been executing over about the last eight days. Where we have very good intelligence, we execute it very quickly, we're able to take down some very lucrative targets and get some Ba'ath party loyalists, former regime supporters, removed from the scene. I do believe that's what we're doing, and we will continue to do that. I'm not sure if four or five months is the right time frame, but at least for the immediate future, that is exactly the type of operations that we are conducting.

And I said as I opened, we really conducted 56 of these operations in the last eight days, and that should tell you the amount of intelligence that we're getting from all over, from a lot of our intelligence systems that we have internal, but also from a lot of HUMINT sources that we have that are providing us the ability to do these raids. And out of the 56 raids, only six of them have come up dry -- which means that we didn't find anything we thought we'd find -- which is a significant high percentage success rate for us, which tells us we're getting very good information. And it tells us we're starting to have an effect on the remaining individuals that are trying to build a resistance.

I have time for one more question, if anybody's interested.

Q: General, this is Nathan Hodge again, from Defense Week. Quick question about the Mujahideen-e Khalq, the People's Mujahideen: Have they been fully disarmed? And if not, have they been allowed to hold on to any small arms? And what kind of materiel and weapons, heavy equipment, did you confiscate from them?

Odierno: They have been completely disarmed. We have taken all small arms and all heavy equipment. They had about 10,000 small arms, and they had about 2,200 pieces of equipment, to

include about 300 tanks, about 250 armored personnel carriers and about 250 artillery pieces. And we disarmed all of that equipment from them about 30 days ago.

Staff: Okay, General. Thank you for taking the time to talk to us in the Pentagon briefing studio today.

Odierno: Okay. Thank you. I appreciate your questions. Thank you very much.

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