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United States Department of Defense

## News Transcript

On the web: <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2003/tr20030723-0443.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711**Presenter:** Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, Commander, Coalition Ground Forces

Wednesday, July 23, 2003

### Lt. Gen. Sanchez Briefing on the Confirmation of the Deaths of Uday and Qusay Hussein

(Details of Raid Resulting in Death of Uday and Qusay Hussein in Mosul. Slides from this briefing are available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2003/g030723-D-6570C.html>.)

Sanchez: We've got a full house today. I'm glad to see you all here. I've got some important messages to relay to all of you, to all of our coalition partners, and most importantly to the Iraqi people.

Yesterday was a landmark day for the people and for the future of Iraq. Every single day we get closer to a secure and stable environment that will allow this country to flourish and assume its rightful place in the region and in the community of nations.

The military forces of Coalition Joint Task Force 7 and the security elements of Iraq, in support of the coalition provisional authority, are fighting every day to defeat former regime leaders, Baathist elements and other non-compliant forces.

These forces continue to disrupt the tremendous progress that is being made across the political, the economic and the security lines of operations. These



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forces have a single purpose in mind, and that is to re-establish the Saddam Hussein regime and its vicious dictatorial grip that they had on the Iraqi people.

Upon our arrival in Baghdad in late April, we found that most institutions and governing structures had disappeared along with the regime and the Iraqi army. It is truly amazing how far we have traveled together with the Iraqi people in just over 100 days since the start of the conflict.

In the area of political governing structures, we have re-established, at the neighborhood, city, province, national levels, governing bodies. In the major towns of Iraq, 28 of 31 councils have been established. In the security arena, nearly 24,000 Iraqi police are back on the job.

More than 8,700 facilities' protective services guards have been hired, and they're on the streets protecting the critical facilities of Iraq. More than 800 guards are on the job protecting the borders and beginning to take control of Iraq's borders with its neighbors.

More than 11,000 have expressed interest in enlisting for the new Iraqi army, with the first battalion of the new Iraqi army that will be civilian-controlled starting to train within 10 days.

The courts of this country are functioning. They're taking care of misdemeanors, conducting trials and sentencing misdemeanor crimes. And also we're beginning to set the conditions in order to be able to try felony cases in the near term.

In the area of public services, we are working to overcome 30 years of neglect and are faced with a fragile infrastructure that was oftentimes used as a weapon against the people. Electricity is on the verge of hitting the 4,000-megawatt target, which will put the country at about the pre-war levels.

Oil production is well on the way. The 1 million barrel-per-day mark has already been achieved and oil exports have begun.

Demonstrations are abundant throughout the country. What a wonderful thing it is to be free to speak our own minds. We have distributed more than \$26 million within the coalition forces for quick-impact humanitarian assistance projects. We've completed 31,000 projects.

So am I optimistic about the future of Iraq? You're absolutely right. I've said before that even without all the progress, even if we were living in darkness, just the mere fact that the Iraqi people are free of the terror imposed by the Saddam

Hussein regime is enough for all of us to be hopeful for the future.

But the war continues. Yesterday a Red Cross vehicle was attacked north of Al Hillah, killing one and wounding one Red Cross employee. In the last 48 hours we have had three soldiers killed while securing Iraq's new freedoms.

We continue to aggressively go after former regime loyalists. And in the past 48 hours, my forces have conducted over 4,300 patrols and 48 raids.

Now I will turn to one of those raids that we executed yesterday that led to the death of high-value targets number two and three, Uday and Qusay Hussein. Map, please.

First of all, to orient you to the map, at the center of the map is Baghdad on the left-hand side. Up in the north is Mosul. This is the town where we conducted the operation. The operation specifically was on the northeastern part of the city. And what you see on the lower right of that chart is the neighborhood with the red square around the house that was assaulted.

As you can see from the bottom right-hand side, this is a neighborhood that constrained us to some extent in the application of combat power.

The major forces that were involved -- first slide, please -- were elements of the 101st Airborne Division. We had an infantry company. We deployed OH-58D Kiowa attack helicopters. They come equipped with 2.75-inch rockets and machine guns. We had Humvees with TOW anti-tank systems, Humvees that were mounted with Mark-19 and 50-caliber machine guns. We also had our AH-64 Apache helicopters on station; however, we did not use this capability. And also we had the Air Force on station with A-10s ready to be employed should the need arise.

Also establishing the outer cordon, as you can see on the bottom of that slide, was the Iraqi police. They were also participating in coordination with our forces on the ground to complete the cordon.

What you see here is an outline of the house that we assaulted. You see it's a three-story home. And the actual target area was on the second floor, which was a fortified part of the house.

Next slide, please.

Here once again are the forces that were involved in the operation. Next slide.

The first phase of the operation was what we called setting the conditions for us to conduct the assault. The previous night, on the 21st, we had had an Iraqi citizen walk in and give us information that Uday and Qusay might be located at this residence. Over the course of the night we planned our operation, and we had all the conditions set in order for us to initiate our assault by 1000 hours yesterday morning.

The 101st Airborne Division had anti-tank platoons and weapon squads in place. They had established a cordon to ensure that we had isolated the area, and we commenced the operation with an interpreter using a bull horn in order to attempt to urge the targets, which we were confident were in there -- we knew some folks were in there -- in what we call cordon-and-knock operation.

What we have gone to is this cordon-and-knock versus cordon-and- search. What we will do is we will cordon an area, go up to the door, knock on the door, and ask to see if personnel that we are after are located in that specific house. In this case, we used the bullhorn, and we did not get a response, and 10 minutes later, at 1010 hours, we began to enter the building.

Immediately upon entering the building, shots were fired. We immediately determined that the targeted individuals were barricaded in the fortified portion of the building, which was the second floor, and they started engaging with small arms. We believe they were AK- 47s.

On the initial exchange of gunfire, we had three coalition soldiers wounded on the stairs as we attempted to get up to the second floor, and we had one coalition soldier that was wounded outside of the building. At this point, our forces withdrew.

The coalition forces requested additional assets, to include a ground quick-reaction force and heavy weaponry, given that we knew that we had a fortified site that we were going to have to assault. Within five minutes, we had called in medevac to take care of our wounded soldiers, and we determined at that point -- the leaders on the ground determined that it was appropriate for us to prep the objective prior to reentry.

For the next couple of hours while we lined up the right resources on the ground, we were taking this at a fairly measured pace. We knew that we had the area surrounded and there was no rush -- or no reason for us to rush to failure.

We received sporadic gunfire for a while, and at 1045 hours, we began the prep

with significant Mark 19 grenade launchers . We fired a couple of AT-4 rockets at the house and also used humvee-mounted 50- caliber machine-gun fire to attempt to neutralize the threat.

At 1122 hours, the Second Brigade Combat Team began movement of additional ground forces that included an additional antitank platoon to reinforce the elements that were already on the ground.

At 1145, during this period the commander had decided that he wanted to bring additional assets, and we began to deploy our OH-58 Delta helicopters with their rocket systems, 2.75-inch rockets and 50- caliber machine guns to once again continue to prep on the target.

At 1150 hours, we had added an antitank platoon, we had a PsyOps team on the ground, and all were on station ready for us to continue the assault.

At 1155, the Kiowas completed their preparatory fires. At this point, the commander decided that he would make a second attempt to get inside of the house.

At 1200 hours, we attempted to reenter the house. Once again we received fire from the second floor as we attempted to move, after we had secured the first floor, to move up to the reinforced part of the building. Once again we opted to withdraw.

At this point, we knew that we had a barricaded site at the top of the stairs and the elements, the subjects, were fairly well barricaded on that second floor. We decided to continue the preparatory fires.

At 1300 hours, we continued the preparation using our 50-caliber machine guns, using our Mark-19s, and at this point we began to employ humvee-mounted TOW missiles. We fired 10 TOW missiles into the house. During this period, we considered employing our Apache helicopters and A-10s to come in and finish the preparation and the neutralization of the target; however, the decision was made not to employ the air power because of the high risk of collateral damage, given the neighborhood density that we were faced with.

At the end of this preparation, we believe that it is likely that the TOW missile attack was what wound up killing three of the adults.

Twenty-one minutes later, at 1321 hours, we entered the building for the third time. At this point, we received no fire as we moved up the stairs. As we got up

to the second floor, the assaulting elements continued to receive fire, and they killed the remaining individual that was in the second floor.

At this point, the enemy had been eliminated and the building was cleared in its entirety. We completed securing the building at about 1400 hours yesterday afternoon.

Once we cleared the building, we found we had four bodies that were extracted, and the bodies were evacuated and moved for positive evacuation.

Immediately after this, the 101st Airborne moved task-force neighborhood elements, engineer elements, into the area along with civil affairs assets. in order to be able to clean up and begin the repair of the area in that community.

At this point we continued to secure and exploit and assess the site.

Here on the right, you see a picture of the Airborne soldiers firing their TOW missiles at the building.

Next slide.

And this shows you some of the destructive capability of those missiles and the end state of the building once we completed securing of the site.

Next.

We removed the bodies. We brought them to Bayap, where we then proceeded to work on identification. We believe that we have positive identification and that we in fact have Uday and Qusay.

The identification was done through multiple means. We had senior former regime members do visual identification of the body. We had four individuals that independently verified that we had both of Saddam Hussein's sons. We also compared x-rays and verified that the injuries on one of the bodies were consistent with the injuries that had been suffered by this individual during a previous assassination attempt.

Also, we used dental records to identify the bodies. And for Uday, the match was 90 percent, and this was limited only because injuries to the teeth made a perfect match impossible. For Qusay, the dental match was a 100 percent certainty.

Autopsies will follow, but we have no doubt that we have the bodies of Uday and

Qusay.

In closing, I must reiterate that the war continues. We remain focused on the objective that America and the coalition has put before us: that is, defeat terrorism, defeat the Saddam Hussein regime, ensure that they never come back into power, and ensure the freedom of the Iraqi people. We will not falter and we will not fail.

And oh, by the way, this morning we picked up number 11.

I will now take your questions.

Q: Ibrahim Hayat (ph), Al-Hayat, LDC. I would like to ask you, don't you regret the fact that you couldn't get Uday and Qusay alive? It would have been probably the source of a lot of information could have got from them both. Also, wasn't a failure in a way, because you didn't use commandos to come and surprise them both? You conducted operation in a very traditional way. How would you describe it? All this attack preparation was only to surround five, probably four people who were armed with light weapons. And also, what about the child of Qusay?

Sanchez: First of all, we have confirmation that we've got Uday and Qusay Hussein, and we've got two other bodies that we're continuing the identification process on them.

On whether this was a failure, absolutely not. I would never consider this a failure. Our mission is to find, kill or capture. In this case, we had an enemy that was defending, it was barricaded, and we had to take the measures that were necessary in order to neutralize the target. When you look at the possibilities of what you may have gained or what you may have lost, that would be pure speculation on my part at this point.

Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you, sir. Congratulations for your attack, and may God always help you in this (hard ?) work. More thanks for you.

Sanchez: Thank you.

Q: My first question is about the owner of this home. Who is belong to home? And do you take an idea to discussion, by yourself or the responsible (the ?) attack, to take discussion with Uday or Qusay before the attack to get themselves

out, or really you are going to do the attack? And it's what we needed in all of Iraq. Thank you.

Sanchez: Okay, sir. As I understood it, you had two questions.

The owner of the home, at this point, the 101st is on the ground with follow-up operations in order to take care of the problem that resulted from the conduct of the operation and the destruction that we had to execute in getting to a successful conclusion.

In terms of the discussions, as I stated, we did make an attempt with interpreter and with bull horns to try to attempt to get a surrender from the personnel that were in the house. And what we got back was return fire. And therefore, we had to execute in the fashion that we did.

Yes, sir?

Q: General --

Q: Yes, Jeffrey Kaufman, ABC News. Sir --

Sanchez: Hold on just a second. It was right here first.

Q: Thank you very much.

Sanchez: Jeffrey, I'll come back to you in a second.

Q: Thank you. General, I'd like to try and see if you could address more of the first question which we had from our colleague up front. The Americans are specialists in surrounding places, keeping people in them, holding up for a week, if necessary, to make them surrender. These guys only had, it appears, AK-47s, and you had immense amount of firepower. Surely, the possibility of the immense amount of information they could have given coalition forces, not to mention the trials that they could have been put on for war crimes, held out a much greater possibility of victory for you if you could have surrounded that house and just sat there until they came out, even if they were prepared to keep shooting.

Sanchez: Sir, that is speculation.

Next slide (sic).



Q: No, sir, it's an operational question. Surely you must have considered this much more seriously than you suggested.

Sanchez: Yes, it was considered, and we chose the course of action that we took.

Q: Why, sir?

Sanchez: Next slide -- or, next question, please.

Q: Richard Engel from NBC News. How are you going to convince the Iraqi people that you have, in fact, killed Uday and Qusay. We still haven't seen the bodies yet. Thank you.

Sanchez: Okay. In due time, we will provide that to you. As I stated, we had former regime members that positively identified the body. Those are members that are in the custody of the United States at this point, and they had access to the bodies and all of them verified that we had the two sons. And also, as I stated, we used medical records and death records to corroborate what we've got.

Q: I meant how are you going to convince the Iraqis, though? Are you going to show the Iraqis in the newspapers, or on the radio or on local television, anything that would prove to them --

Sanchez: That is our next step, and that is working within the Department of Defense, and we will provide follow-on information over the course of the coming days as we complete the autopsies and we complete the site exploitation.

Yes, sir?

Q: General Sanchez, Alexei Barrionuevo with the Wall Street Journal. Just as a follow-up to that question, though, in a sense, with all these former regime members in the deck of cards that you've now detained, when are you going to show for the average Iraqi person that you actually have them and, you know, bring them out in shackles; you know, have a video camera in the detention center where you have them; something that will show the average Iraqi that has these strange doubts about whether you really are detaining these people that in fact you have?

Sanchez: Right. We've got that under discussion at this point in time with decisions to be made on the way ahead with the detainees whom we have. No policy decision has been made at this point.

Yes, sir?

Q: (In Arabic.)

Sanchez: As far as personal effects, as I stated, site exploitation is ongoing right now. We will continue the site exploitation in order to gather what else may be available in the site.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: Just a second.

Go ahead.

Q: (In Arabic.)

Sanchez: Sir, at this point, we have positive identification of the two sons of Saddam Hussein, and we continue to work on getting conclusive identification on the other two.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: Could you use your mike, sir, please?

Q: General, can you provide any details about the role of -- (off mike) -- both in gathering intelligence -- (off mike)?

Sanchez: Sir, what I can tell you: this was a joint operation that we conducted by elements of the coalition. The intelligence that we gathered was from a walk-in source. That's what led us to the site.

Yes, sir?

Q: (In Arabic.)

Sanchez: Sir, that is exactly what we hope for. The death of Uday and Qusay, I believe, is definitely going to be a turning point for the resistance and the

subversive elements that we're encountering. But we're -- our mission is not complete. We still have other elements and individuals on the high-value target list that we continue to focus on, the mid-level leadership that is still out there conducting operations against our forces, and we will not relent. We will continue to focus until we've accomplished our mission.

Yes, sir? In the back.

Q: (Name inaudible) -- from the Iraqi Media Network. The Iraqi street --

Staff: Can you hear me?

Sanchez: Oh, I got it.

(Pause.)

Q: Alaf Hayat (ph) from the Iraqi Media Network. In the street, the people still want to have a positive approval, not just word that you captured Uday and Qusay. But the bigger question is, what about the money Qusay looted from the central bank? How are you going to follow up on all the money they took out before the fall of Baghdad?

Sanchez: I'm sorry, sir, you're going to have to restate the question, because I thought you were speaking in Arabic, and that's what I was getting out of here. (Laughter.) So you'll have to excuse me.

Q: Okay. Again, Alaf Hayat (ph) from the Iraqi Media Network. The people in the street still want to have a positive approval that Uday and Qusay have been really killed and that -- one person told me that they are like cats, with seven lives. So the doubts are still in the street.

My second question is, what about -- Qusay looted the central bank and the money he took away with him? What is your strategy to recapture and retake all the money they had?

Sanchez: Sir, first of all, on the cat with nine lives, we are certain that we have Qusay and Uday. We will continue with the exploitation of the site. We will continue with the autopsies on the bodies to get final, conclusive evidence. I will await further guidance on the next step to take on how we're going to prove to the Iraqi people that we in fact have these two men.

In terms of the money, at this point there are elements that are focused on

ensuring that all the money that was looted by the Saddam Hussein regime is brought back to the people of Iraq.

Yes, ma'am?

Staff: Sir, we've got time for two more.

Sanchez: Yes, ma'am?

Q: Iraqi journalist. I want to ask you -- my English is not good, but do you know -- the problem is not Uday and Qusay now, the problem is Saddam Hussein.

Sanchez: Yes, ma'am, absolutely agree with you that the ultimate objective is Saddam Hussein. And as I've stated before, we maintain the focus on all the high-value targets and we will not fail.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Laurie Goering of the Chicago Tribune. I understand that there's still some cordon around Mosul today, or parts of it, and that you're looking for additional high-value targets there. Does that include Saddam, or is that this number 11 that you mentioned early on?

Sanchez: We did pick up number 11 today, and we do have a cordon still around the site that we had to assault to pick up number 2 and number 3. That is still continuing because we're not complete with that site yet.

Q: And number 11 is within Mosul?

Sanchez: I can't answer that question at this point.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Neela Bannerji (ph) from the New York Times. I wanted to find out, first of all, if you had any thoughts about the Saddam tape that is out today that apparently was made about three days ago.

And secondly, earlier you said that the option to surround the house and wait out the individuals in the house was considered and rejected. Could you explain to us why? Thank you.

Sanchez: The tape, I can't answer the question on the tape because I haven't heard or seen the tape at this point.

And the commanders on the ground made the decision to go ahead and execute and accomplish their mission of finding, fixing, killing or capturing. That was a decision the commander on the ground made, and that was the right decision.

Yes, sir?

Q: James Hiatt (sp) of the Times. What will happen to the bodies that you've recovered, after they've been subjected to an autopsy? Where will they be buried?

Sanchez: That's a decision that is yet to be made on final disposition of the remains.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Hi. I'm Gina Wilkinson (sp) with ABC Australia. I want to get back to that point of proving to Iraqis. All the Iraqis that I've spoken to today have said they won't accept anything less than pictures proving that Uday and Qusay are dead. However, during the war the U.S. was quite strong on opposing photos or images of dead soldiers being shown on TV. So do you find yourself in a quandary about how to prove to Iraqis that the two men are dead? And do you rule out using pictures, or are you still considering that?

Sanchez: We have not ruled out any options at this point, ma'am. And I don't find myself in any quandary. I am a soldier.

Yes?

Q: Guy Raz, National Public Radio. General, can you describe, discuss the role that Abed Hamid Mahmoud, number 4 on the most-wanted list, played in identifying these bodies or giving information to coalition forces on the whereabouts of these men?

Sanchez: I can confirm that he was one of the individuals that independently identified the bodies.

Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you. I just wanted to know, did you find any clues or hints or any other elements which showed that Saddam Hussein was in that house or no?

Sanchez: At this point we continue to exploit the site, sir. And what we found there is not something that I could reveal.

Yes, sir?

Q: Gregor Meier (ph) from German Press Agency. Who, exactly, was the commander on the ground? And how does it come that a question of such wide implication, to get probably the former leaders for trial, is left to a small commander on the ground?

Sanchez: Sir, the commander on the ground made a decision based on the conditions that he was facing. And I am in no position to question his decisions. He made the right decisions to accomplish the mission that had been assigned to him. And as I've stated on multiple occasions now, that was to kill or capture.

Staff: Sir, last question.

Sanchez: No, you already asked a question. Ma'am?

Q: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: Got to give somebody else a chance.

Q: Gail Gablythe (ph), Voice of America. How has this attack brought the coalition closer to, what, detaining, capturing Saddam Hussein?

Sanchez: How has it? I think -- how has it brought us closer? I'm not sure that I can measure and give you a measure there. But I will tell you that our focus is unequivocal. We know what our targets are; as I've mentioned in my previous press conferences before, that we remain focused in accomplishing those tasks. And I'll tell you one more time that we will not fail. The Saddam Hussein regime will never come back into power. The coalition has made that statement over and over again, that we will ensure the freedom of the Iraqi people. That is our purpose and that's what will in the end be accomplished.

Yes, sir? Right here.

Q: (The question is not in English.)

Sanchez: I'm sorry, I forgot. (Pause.)

There were a lot of civilians on the ground, but no one was hurt. We know of no collateral damage that occurred as a result of the operation. We were -- as I stated, we made decisions on the ground that prevented the employment of combat power that would create collateral damage. So there was no collateral damage that we are aware of at this point.

And I'm sorry, I'm going to have to cut it at this point because I have a couple of other commitments with some other elements of the press.

Okay, thank you all very much. We will, in due time here in the coming days, provide you additional information on this raid. Thank you all very much. Have a great day.

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