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Public contact: <http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html> or +1 (703) 428-0711**Presenter:** Maj. Gen. Ray Odierno, commander, U. S. Army's 4th Infantry Division

Friday, July 25, 2003

Videoteleconference from Iraq with Maj. Gen. Odierno

(Also participating was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs Mr. Bryan Whitman.)

Whitman: I have about two minutes, but I see that the general is there, and we are short on time today, so let's go ahead and get started. And I'm sure a few folks will join us.

General, thank you again for joining us this morning. I will reintroduce you here to folks that I think know you from your last time. But this is Major General Ray Odierno. He is the 4th Infantry division commander, and he joins us today from Tikrit. He will discuss Task Force Ironhorse operations and ways in which they are contributing greatly to the security environment in Iraq. He has exactly 25 minutes before he does have another commitment.

So, General, thank you for taking the time, and let me turn it over to you right now.

Odierno: Okay, well thank you very much. And I want to say good morning to all the ladies and gentlemen of the Washington press corps and our audience listening back in Central Texas. I appreciate the opportunity to have a chance to talk with you today. And before I answer your questions, I'd like to say a few



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things about ongoing operations here in Iraq.

First, I want to tell you how proud I am and honored I am to lead these great soldiers of this task force. Our troops continue to do a terrific job under difficult, sometimes dangerous conditions, working to provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Iraq.

America can be very proud of her sons and daughters who are sacrificing so much to establish a free society for citizens who have been brutally oppressed for over 30 years. We've accomplished a tremendous amount in the past 30 days. Every day brings more progress towards setting the conditions for self-determination for the Iraqi people.

But our significant achievements have not come without a cost, and we honor our brave heroes who have made the ultimate sacrifice to liberate the Iraqi people, and are deeply saddened by their passing. We also wish our best wishes back to those soldiers who are recovering back in the United States with injuries that they've gotten since they've been in combat here in Iraq. They will never be forgotten, and our thoughts and prayers are with their families and all their loved ones.

The 27,000 soldiers of the 4th Infantry Division in Task Force Ironhorse remain committed and focused on the mission as we continue to stabilize and repair the infrastructure of our area of responsibility in northeastern and central Iraq.

I'll quickly just go over our AOR again. It starts just north of Baghdad, stretches to the oil fields north of Kirkuk from the Iranian border west to Lake Tharthar and includes the cities of Baiji, Tikrit, Samarra, Baqubah, Balad and Kirkuk.

Although attacks against us have significantly decreased over the past month, our soldiers are involved in almost daily contact with noncompliant forces, former regime members and common criminals. To defeat these attacks and continue to improve the security and stability within our area, the task force is conducting search and attack missions, presence patrols and a series of aggressive operations to disarm, defeat and destroy hostile forces, as well as to capture former regime members. These efforts have been highly successful, producing a stabilizing effect throughout the region, and resulted in the capture of several senior leaders of the former Iraqi military, Fedayeen, Ba'ath Party and some huge, large weapons caches.

In the past 30 days, we've conducted two major assaults against noncompliant forces, Operation Sidewinder and Ivy Serpent. Ivy Serpent, the fourth in a series

of these operations, concluded last week, resulting in 52 mid-level Ba'athists loyalists captured. In one raid alone, the 4th Infantry Division seized over 100,000 U.S. dollars and 38 million dinars suspected of being used to finance attacks on coalition soldiers, over 250 AK-47s, over 1,000 RPG rounds, 3,000 mortar rounds, 2,700 pounds of C-4 explosives and 2,500 blasting caps.

The second phase of Ivy Serpent, which is ongoing, is stability and support operations throughout the area. This includes projects to repair banks, police stations, schools, health clinics, hospitals, water treatment plants, courthouses and telecommunications sites. The task force has been working tirelessly to reestablish basic municipal services and systems to improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens and to provide for the long-term stability of Iraq. We have completed 354 projects and an additional 592 are in progress.

These projects are spread throughout various areas of civil services, including transportation, commerce, education, public works, health and human services, justice, communications and utilities. For instance, we have rebuilt 11 schools, and 35 more are currently under renovation. Twenty-seven hospitals and 174 health clinics have been repaired and are open, and five water treatment plants in major cities are undergoing repairs right now.

We are working together jointly with Iraqis and coalition forces in conducting patrols and improving the infrastructure. The task force has almost \$7 million approved funding for these improvement projects. Early this month, we facilitated the first interim provincial government selection process for the Diyala Province, which encompasses Baqubah, Jalula, out all the way to the Iran-Iraq border. Previously controlled by the government in Baghdad, this is the first time in Diyala's history the people of the province had a voice in choosing their leadership.

Public security continues to be one of our top priorities. Every day, more trained and equipped local police join our soldiers in patrolling their cities. Our first class of Iraqi border police graduated this month, and recruiting has begun for the new Iraqi army. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps is being established, and we will have two battalions stood up in the task force area of operations. These battalions will be ethnically representative of the areas from which they come, and offers Iraqis the opportunity to provide service to their country and assist in the establishment of a new Iraq that is free from the oppression of the former regime.

I'd like to take a final moment to address the issue of our deployment timeline. As we said prior to our deployment, we are committed to completing the mission the president has given us, and we are proud to see this task through to

completion. Undoing 35 years of repression and tyranny will not be quick or easy, but it is the right thing to do. In support of this long-term effort, I believe the division will be here about a year. If conditions are met that allow our forces to return sooner, it might not be that long. But all of our soldiers and family members are planning on being here for a year, and we all understand the commitment that we must have in order to accomplish the mission.

The road ahead will be challenging, but our soldiers are professionals. They will persevere and complete this continuing mission with the same motivation and dedication they have displayed from the beginning of this operation.

Soldiering is a profession unlike any other. We call upon our soldiers to make great sacrifices. It means doing jobs that others can't and won't do, and going to places others fear to go. Soldiers put themselves in danger to help people they don't even know. Our soldiers will not let up the relentless pressure on the enemy and are focused on the mission at hand. However, we can't do it alone, and I'm extremely proud of the unwavering support we have received from all of the families and friends of Task Force Ironhorse. They are true heroes whose continuing support allow us to maintain this focus. I'd like to personally thank our families for all the sacrifices they endure during deployments, and all they have done and their continuous support of all our soldiers and leaders since we've been deployed. And I know we will count on their continuous support.

That concludes my remarks, and I'd answer any questions at this time.

Q: General, Eric Schmitt with the New York Times. What's been the effect of your region in the last few days since the deaths of the two Hussein sons? What impact has it seen in your area?

Odierno: I will just comment that I believe most of the operations are really decentralized, so I've seen, actually, no impact. It's been about the same. We've seen no increase or no decrease; we've seen about the same amount of activity. And I think that has to do with it -- it was not organized up to the top, but is a very decentralized organized effort.

But we've had some great successes. What we continue to see is Iraqis coming forward to us with information, and that has been going on now in significant numbers for the last two to three weeks, and that's what we've really seen the difference.

Q: Yes, General, this is Vince Crawley with the Army Times newspapers. You said you've had a decrease in attacks over the past month. Could you characterize

that, you know, a 10, 20, 50 percent decrease? And what do you attribute that to? Is it temporary?

Odierno: I think we've had an overall decrease. When we count the number of attacks, whether it be small arms, RPGs, IEDs, mortar attacks, it's been cut about 50 percent from June to July. What I would comment on, though, is some of them have become more sophisticated, so some of the attacks we have received have been more sophisticated, specifically IEDs, which they continue to get a little bit more sophisticated with. They have not been coordinated in any way. They still continue to be uncoordinated, but they have become a bit more sophisticated. But the attacks have been reduced in half. I think that's due to the pressure that we've put on them. And in fact, I believe we've taken out some of the mid-level leaders that helped to organize them locally.

Q: General, Nick Childs from the BBC. You say you've seen no impact as a result of the Mosul operation. And I guess also your force protection levels are pretty high. But could you say whether you have taken any precautions or changed your posture alert status in any way to guard against at least the possibility that there might be an increase in retaliation attacks at some point?

Odierno: We always keep a very high state of alert. And we have not increased our security, but our security is extremely high on a constant basis, and our soldiers are used to operating in that environment. What I would say is -- to comment on that -- I think there will be more of a long-term effect. It's very important that this operation occurred and that we have shown them that no one of the old regime's going to survive. And I think it's going to have a long-term effect. It will take a little bit of time. Might take months, might take weeks, might take three months, four months, but it's going to have an effect overall on the overall outcome. But I have seen no immediate impact based on the specific attacks.

And we are ready for any attacks. I believe -- we expect potentially an increase in some asymmetric threats. For example, one thing we've talked about the last few days is maybe an increase in car bombing, suicide bombers, et cetera. We've had that discussion with all our soldiers and commanders. That's how I see it occurring.

What we've found is they are going after softer targets because they know they are unsuccessful against military targets. So they are going after softer targets and they're becoming more and more what we call asymmetric threats or what we consider to be more of a terrorist-type activity, with the increased number of IEDs we see. And so the next step, in my mind, would be something like car

bombs or suicide bombers, and we have had some discussion and prepared for that.

Q: General, this is Will Dunham with Reuters. Could you go back and describe as best you can the nature of the resistance you're facing, in terms of who is leading it, what kind of command structure do you see? And could you go back and describe further any other areas of increasing organization or sophistication? And also, could you describe for us what you meant by the softer targets, give specific examples?

Odierno: Sure. What I would say -- how they're organized is very locally. It is not -- we see no organization in the attacks themselves. But we do believe there's somewhat of an organization at a very local level where there's a guy who has money, there's somebody who's responsible for caching weapons, and there's a guy who pays individuals to do attacks on American soldiers. But we think that's at a very local level. We don't think it's tied together at a national level.

And then, the only other -- the sophistication we've seen, again, is that they've become a little more ingenious with their use of these IEDs, these individual explosive devices. They tend to be more remote now, remote controlled. They're a bit bigger than they were when they started. I don't think -- my -- the theory potentially is I think they have a couple experts that they spread around the country. But I do not think it's any organized effort. I think it's just some specific experts in an area that are doing these IEDs. We have not had a number of IEDs that, for example, we've seen in other places in Iraq up in this area, which is somewhat surprising, being the center of the Sunni triangle here. But we have not seen it up here.

Soft targets I'm discussing is they're doing a lot more Iraqi-on- Iraqi attacks. For example, we have civil military centers that are downtown. They like to shoot RPGs at those civil military centers. They like to shoot RPGs at some -- for example, we helped to renovate a governor's building downtown. They like to shoot some RPGs at those buildings. They want to -- they look for white-skinned vehicles to attack. But we tend to see more of the civilian targets now, and we've also seen them do some Iraqi-on-Iraqi attacks, maybe because they're cooperating with the United States. And we see this more as a desperation move. And I think in a way, it's backfiring, because we've found when they do this, it's causing more Iraqis to come in and give us information. And I'm not sure that's a good way for them to go about doing business. So, that's what I mean by soft targets.

Q: General, this is James Cullum from the Talk Radio News Service. I have two questions. To your knowledge, what is the average range of an IED remote

device? In other words, how far away does an attacker need to be to push the button, so to speak?

Also, are you still seeing sabotages by guerrilla groups on electrical lines or similar systems? And to what degree are these hindering your programs to put Iraq back on its feet?

Odierno: What we found is our analysis of the remote controlled IEDs, it's somewhere between 300 and 500 meters. So we try to adapt to that based on that. So it's about 300 to 500 meters is what we've seen. Now, also we've seen them use long wires which is a bit longer. That would be maybe a thousand to 2,000 meters away when they actually connect them, it's not remotely detonated. But remotely detonated is somewhere between 300 and 500 meters from the target.

What was your second question?

Q: My second question was on sabotages on electrical lines or similar systems, and to what degree are these hindering your programs? Are you still seeing guerrilla groups blowing up power lines, messing with water systems, and how are these hindering your progress?

Odierno: There's two -- in areas we have the Kirkuk oil fields and we have the Baiji refinery, which is the major input of oil and refining of oil in northern Iraq, in my zone. We have not had anything occur on any of the -- on the oil lines for about 30 days now. About 30 days ago we had AK-47 shots into one of the oil lines, that was repaired right away. We have not seen anything since then.

What we've seen on power lines, we have not seen any sabotage; what we have seen is some looting. What they do is they take the power lines to sell the copper. But we have taken measures to stop that, and we have made some great progress in the last two or three weeks.

About two weeks ago -- about three weeks ago, when we had -- when the power lines were taken down in another area outside of my area, it did affect the amount of power that was being given to everyone. That has since been fixed, and now we're starting to increase the power, and that has to do with the oil getting to the refinery, the power plants working. And there's also a major power plant at Baiji along with the refinery. And we've had uninterrupted power now for about two weeks, and we continue to improve that. So I see that we're making some progress.

We've also made agreements with the local individuals, specifically some of the

sheiks and local Iraqis, to help us protect the wire lines, and that has helped significantly, and I think that has had something to do with the sabotage going down, along with our patrolling that we do along these power lines.

Q: General, Thelma LaBrecht with Associated Press Broadcast. I wanted to follow up on two previous questions, one from Eric Schmitt about the impact of the photos. You had said you expect to see Iraqis coming forward with more information and that's where you really expect to see the difference. Have you seen that yet as a result of the photos, or are you just anticipating that? And I have a second question.

Odierno: Okay. We have seen it. Let me give you an example. Over the last 24 hours, we have had people come in and we've actually gone to five separate cache sites. We've detained, killed or wounded over 60 Iraqi subversives. And let me give you a specific example.

Last night we had an Iraqi walk in to one of my brigade headquarters and say, "I know where there's a cache of weapons." He gave us the grid. He said, "There's a house, and then 200 meters from that house, there is a container buried under the ground." So we sent our patrol out there. We thought we'd have some individuals there. There were no individuals, but we went into the house, we went 200 meters, we used mine detectors, we dug up, and we found a container. Inside this container was the following: 10 AK-47s, 34 RPG launchers, 150 RPG rounds, 80,000 feet of det cord, 45,000 sticks of dynamite, 11 IEDs, 33 SA-7 launchers, and 28 submachine guns.

In addition, we had an informant come in -- that happened near Samarra, the town of Samarra, east and south of Samarra, where we've had a couple IED attacks. And we believe now this might have been where they were getting some of that equipment to build IEDs.

Let me give you a second example. Second example is that we had somebody come into Tikrit, the 1st Brigade, and give us -- informant give us a tip to conduct a raid on a house south of Tikrit, which we conducted last night. Based on the informant south of Tikrit, we detained 13 individuals. Somewhere between five and 10 of those -- we're still sorting through it -- are believed to be Saddam Hussein's personal security detachment. And we're still working through that.

Those are the kind of tips that we're getting. So they are increasing. They are coming in. And it's because they feel confident we will action on it. The one thing that came of that, they know we will action on intel that we get specifically,

and the best example was with Uday and Qusay, the way we acted on those. They understand that we will act if they provide us the information.

I'll take your second question now, or if you have something else.

Q: The second was another follow-up. You mentioned that you had seen the resistance cut in half. I wondered why, why you think that is.

Odierno: I think it's because they haven't been very successful. We've detained an awful lot of people. We've probably, over the last 30 days, we've detained over 1,000 individuals in my AO. And so, I think we've taken a lot of the middle managers. So, they had to cut down the number of attacks. They also realized that some of the things they were doing were ineffective. So, what they have now done is gone to very specific attacks, and they've cut the level down on them because of, I believe, we were cutting into the number of people that were available to make those attacks.

However -- the one "however" I will make is they are becoming a bit more sophisticated, even though there's a lesser number, as I talked about before. But I think that's why. And I think we'll continue to see the level go down. What we have to do is then try to reduce the sophistication before it gets more than it is now.

Q: Thanks. This is Steve Trimble with Aerospace Daily. I have an equipment question. Some of the Marines that came back had some concerns about the performance of the Javelin anti-tank weapon. And I was wondering if you know of or have seen any Army assessment on the performance of that weapon?

Odierno: I have not seen an Army assessment, but I will give you my assessment. All of my infantry battalions have the Javelin, and it has been very successful for us. So, we have seen something very different than what the Marines said.

Now, I will caveat that by saying we had some major combat in the middle of April for about eight days that we used the Javelins, and they were successful. We probably didn't have -- we didn't use them, probably, the number of times the Marines had used them. But we had had them and been training on them for a while, and we found them to be pretty effective.

So, we have to work our way through that, because the Marines have said that. So, we're going to have to work with them and find out why they had problems with it, and maybe there were some conditions that made it that way. But we're going to have to have that discussion, because we have not had the same

problems.

Q: General, this is Alex Belida from Voice of America. Being located where you were can you bring us up to date your involvement has had in tracking down tips or hunting -- taking up action in the hunt for Saddam Hussein, specifically. I noticed you made a reference to some incident involving his personal security detachment.

Odierno: We -- first off, we concentrate on two things. We concentrate on the mid-level Ba'athists, because we believe that's who's operating in our area of operation. But clearly, we work with all the other organizations that are here working this issue and trying to hunt down any of the top 55 or higher black list individuals. And we are involved in collecting intelligence. The most valuable intelligence that's here is HUMINT. So, we are very much involved in developing HUMINT information to track down HVT Number One, as we call him, and any other HVT. And I think we have very aggressively done this, and I believe because of it, they are moving around very quickly, they are very unsettled, and they're not living a very good life right now, because we are constantly on their trail -- not only us, but a lot of other people who are working this issue.

Whitman: We want to be respectful of your time. I think we have time for one more.

Q: General, Mack Kelley from the Associated Press. Could you elaborate anymore, please, on the capture of the men believed to be part of Saddam's security detail? Does that mean you're closing in on him? How close were these people to Saddam? Were they possibly with him during some of the time that he's been in hiding after the fall of Baghdad?

Odierno: Well, we picked them up this morning, so we're still working through the intelligence with them, and we're really interrogating them now. So I don't have any specific answers to your questions in terms of have they been with him recently.

What we do know is we continue to police-up individuals that have a relationship with him. We've made a series of raids over the last three weeks that have picked up several individuals, to include, as you know, one of the high HVTs that were involved in -- his personal bodyguard and really his security adviser that was picked up in this area. And so we have -- we've also had some -- we've also talked to one of his ex-wives that was in the area, one of his wives -- I don't know if they call them ex-wives; one of his wives in the area. And so we have talked to

several people in this area. And so I believe that we continue to tighten the noose, and I believe that we continue to gain more and more information about where he might be.

Whitman: General, on behalf of everybody here, we want to thank you again for taking the time this morning. And we wish you the best, and hope that you will join us again very soon.

Odierno: Thank you very much.

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