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Presenter: Major General Charles H. Swannack, Jr., Commander, 82nd Airborne Division

Tuesday, November 18, 2003

Army Maj. Gen. Swannack Jr., Live Video Tele-conference from Baghdad

STAFF: Good afternoon. Appreciate your patience. I'd like to take just a moment to welcome you and describe how we'll proceed today.

We have the distinct honor to have present with us today Major General Charles H. Swannack, Jr. Most of you probably know General Swannack already. He's the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division. He'll be first providing some prepared comments with regard to the western district of CJTF 7, and then be available to answer questions.

For general information today, we'd like to just invite you to recognize that General Swannack is an operational commander, he's not a policy guy or a politician. So we invite you to confine your comments to operational elements with regard to the 82nd and the western district. We'd appreciate that.

At this time, I would like to also remind you to tone-off your devices such as your cell phones and others. And at the end -- we expect this briefing to last approximately 30 minutes, and at which time I will say last question.

Okay, it's my distinct honor here to introduce you to General Swannack.

Thank you.

GEN. SWANNACK: "As-Salaam aleikum" and good evening to the Baghdad press corps. It's really good to be here and see some of the friends I've had out to the West and visiting us. I invite any of you at any time to come out to Ar Ramadi to see us and find out firsthand what's going on out there in Al Anbar province.

My name is Major General Chuck Swannack, as said, commanding general of the 82nd Airborne Division. And I intend to go ahead and conduct a press conference here about every month, to go ahead and share with you the progress being made out to the West. I intend to make some opening comments, and then I'm going to go ahead and turn it to you to ask some questions.

Before I get started, though, I'd like to go ahead and talk about the initial slide here. And if you notice something up there, that we are serving in Al Anbar province, the double-A. And that's the patch that we wear on our shoulders in the 82nd Airborne Division. We're called the "All Americans" because when the 82nd Airborne Division was formed back in 1917 for World War II, it was found that 82nd was comprised of a soldier from every state in the Union. And so I think it's a little bit fate that we're serving out in Al Anbar province. But we're very proud of the division that we serve in, but also very proud to be working out in Al Anbar province with some great Iraqis out there.

Let me have the first slide, please.

A little bit about Al Anbar province and the battle space that we operate in. If you look at this slide, what you'll see is that we extend all the way from south of Baghdad, in towns like Iskandariyah and Mahmudiya (sp), directly to the south, all the way out 530 kilometers to the borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. And this battle space is about 410 kilometers north to south, or it's about the size of the state of Wyoming. Has some chief towns associated with it, most closest, and probably some that you want to ask me some questions about -- Fallujah, then it goes to Habbaniya, generally tracing the Euphrates River to the west, and then Ar Ramadi, and then up towards Husaybah, which is on the Syrian border. Matter of fact, it's a very important border port of entry. Down to the south, 850 kilometers of border with the three countries. Farthest south is the border crossing port called Tanif (sp) in southern Syria, then Tribil (sp) at Jordan, and then RR, that we've just started occupying on the Saudi Arabian border.

It's about a million and a half people, mostly in the population centers between here and Ar Ramadi, and mostly Sunni in ethnic background.

Next slide, please. What I'd like to tell you upfront about Al Anbar province is that the government is operating day to day by Iraqis out there; very successfully, the government is being run by Iraqis. Governor Burgess and the departments out there are very successful in the day-to-day operations. They have a budget; they're using the budget as provided by the ministries in conducting the business there.

There are some areas that need to be improved, as you can see from this slide. Specifically in the area of immigration and customs, we're standing up a border police that will fix that. The emergency services and fire, as an example; they need hoses for their fire trucks. So there are slight degradations in some of the essential services and services provided by the government, however, these are being rectified through expenditures, coalition expenditures and Iraqi expenditures.

Next slide.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the security situation, which is probably prevalent mostly on your minds, but also on my mind on a daily basis. And this is a good news story here. The 82nd Airborne Division arrived about 60 days ago. We assumed control of the battle space on the 19th of September. Day by day, we saw, initially after arriving, not much action, as I think the enemy was trying to figure out who we were, who are the new folks on the block. Shortly thereafter, we started having the increasing attacks that we had every day, from in the teens to in the 20s, and then most recently, two weeks ago, somewhere overall 35, which for us was about nine or 10, upwards of 15 attacks a day.

The interesting thing to see in terms of the security situation out in Al Anbar province right now is the fact that the attacks being made on us are very much ineffective. If you see the blue bar out there, you can see how just about every day now -- because I think we're being successful in attacking the enemy that's trying to kill us and wound us, we're making them much more ineffective. I think we've taken out a lot of very good high-value targets, high-value targets on the 82nd Airborne Division's list, on the brigades that work for us list on a daily basis, and we're making progress in that.

And so the good news story is that we're getting -- we're taking the fight to the enemy and we're making progress.

Also, look at the size of the -- number of IEDs that are discovered on a daily basis. We had a steep learning curve to figure out exactly how these individuals employing improvised explosive devices against us, and I believe we can identify just about 50-50 now, 50 percent, one out of two we identify an IED.

And the next slide, please.

The other good side of the security situation is the cooperation, the popular support we're getting out in Al Anbar province. This kind of shows you over time, since we've been there, the increase now in tips from the populace, tips from individuals who are tired of the violence in their town telling the police the location of an IED, the location of where an individual is making an IED, the location of where SA-7 missiles are in a cache, or other caches, as you can see up here in the pictures. More and more, we're paying out rewards, as you can see, to Iraqi individuals that come forth with this knowledge. So, I believe we're achieving success in terms of garnering popular support to end this insurgency here.

Next slide.

Overall, our security architecture is improving day by day. And if I had to tell you the one thing that I need to do on a daily basis here is grow the Iraqi capacity for security. And that's in a couple of areas.

First of all, you see here, we are generating Iraqi Civil Defense Corps units out in Al Anbar province. We'll ultimately achieve six battalions with two brigade headquarters out to the west. That's about 5,400 Civil Defense Corps military personnel.

We have right now about 6,400 individuals in the police force. However, a majority of these police, about 50 percent, have not been sufficiently trained. So we're running an Al Anbar Security College, a three-week training course, to train the police and improve their skills, plus on-the-job training once they go back to work their policing function.

Border patrol; we're starting our first course out near Nukhayb, just north of RR, in training border police. And we'll go ahead and generate up to 1,428 border policemen.

And the Facility Protective Services. We have more than enough Facility Protective Service personnel right now. And what's going to happen is, when we transfer these individuals over to the ministries in the middle of December, we will go ahead roll some of those into the ICDC and into the future policed ranks. The police will ultimately end up -- be 6,400. As we go through that process, we'll go ahead and retire some -- some that cannot read and write. We'll go ahead dismiss them and replace them with individuals from the FPS.

So we'll continue to grow daily the security architecture out in Al Anbar province.

Next slide.

The other thing that I have to work very, very hard on every day is drying up the unemployment ranks. In towns like Fallujah, there's upwards of 60 to 70 percent unemployed right now. Unemployed in the vein of -- that's probably 30 percent that do not have jobs of any sort and another 30 percent that have some kind of job, make pay; more often than not, it's either through smuggling, it's through attacking us they earn an income. And so what we have to do is create jobs, so they have legitimate work to do that they get paid for, as opposed to being available for some of the former regime loyalists who approach them and get them to go ahead and carry out the attack on Americans.

We've created almost 9,000 jobs in Al Anbar Province in the last two months.

Let me show the next slide.

And this is some of the areas -- we're going to continue to grow jobs in Al Anbar and reduce the unemployment levels.

Superphosphate plant out in al Qaim. It's going to go ahead, and when we get it up to full capacity, about 3,000 jobs, up from 400 currently.

The brick factory that we're going to go ahead and open up next week -- it's got one furnace

working right now. Next week it'll have three furnaces. And you'll see it boosts three times, then, in the employment structure.

I talked about ICDC and the border police.

Right now, in terms of captured enemy equipment consolidation methodology we're using, there's lots of ammunition supply points throughout Al Anbar Province. And as we go about collecting these munitions and consolidated these munitions, we're using right now a total of 600 Iraqi workers and 100 trucks from the Al Anbar truckers' union. Additionally, you'll see that we're trying to sign a contract in the next couple days with the Al Anbar truckers' union, to go ahead and use them to go ahead and transport our supplies throughout the battle space from our -- one forward operating base to another forward operating base.

And through construction and restoration of Iraqi facilities, we're going to have probably the biggest impact of increasing to about 3,000 jobs. Right now we're restoring mosques throughout Al Anbar Province. About 315 of the 700 mosques in the area, we're refurbishing those. We're improving the sewer systems and cleaning that out. Health clinics, schools, we've done a lot of work in. And those construction projects will increase significantly the jobs in the Al Anbar Province. And that's our biggest effort, to go ahead and create a more secure environment.

I believe the security growth that we'll have of somewheres around about 6,000 jobs in the security apparatus, plus these 12,000 jobs, that will go ahead and create an environment where there won't be that many youths out on the streets for former regime loyalists to go ahead and hire to attack Americans. They'll also see the positive benefit to a new Iraq.

So let me have the last slide here.

So where we are on a glide path now to the future in Iraqization. I talked to you about governance. We're doing a great job. We're on the glide path to go ahead and get the security situation under control. We are infusing jobs into the society to reduce the unemployment numbers. And the one bright spot is that essential services out there in Al Anbar are better now than they were during the -- prior to the war.

So with that, let me go ahead and answer any questions that you might have for me on any subject. Right here in the middle, in front.

Q Thank you very much. In Arabic, please. (In Arabic.)

GEN. SWANNACK: Okay. Two very good questions.

First of all, regarding the borders. The borders have been very porous over the previous months. However, since the 82nd Airborne Division has been in Al Anbar Province, we've increased three-fold the amount of soldiers performing the missions. That's three times the capacity of what was there before in the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment. So we have postured along the border right now elements of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment that's shutting down the borders.

In terms of the fighters that we find as we prosecute the fight against the enemy, in just about 90 percent of the cases they are former regime loyalists, Wahhabist Iraqis. The other 10 percent -- and thus far, we've -- I think our numbers are we've found and captured about 13 foreign fighters and killed seven foreign fighters. So you see the difference in who it is we're fighting. What I'm trying to tell you is, in reference to your question, we are not finding foreign fighters coming across the borders in significant numbers to do the fighting; we're finding mostly former regime loyalists doing that.

Secondarily, you asked about the increase in the attacks on friendly forces. Yes, there was a steady growth, and I tried to show you how that's turned around in terms of attacks, being effective attacks. We're receiving less attacks right now, over the last two weeks, in Al Anbar province, and less -- even less effective attacks.

Example. The enemy might use an RPG to go ahead and try to fire into the compound that we occupy, and it's way off the mark; doesn't even come close. IEDs that are put out on the side of the road that come nowhere close to attacking a convoy, ineffective. And their mortar fires, additionally, very, very ineffective.

So, I believe we're taking a chunk, huge chunk out of the organization of this insurgency, the capabilities of this insurgency, through our attacks, very surgical, precision attacks to take out targets. The populace is now telling us where those targets are located, and we can go ahead and prosecute the fight against them and take them out through cordon and searches. We're very successful in that.

So, I believe I can show you evidence in Al Anbar province that the attacks are going down. As a matter of fact, in the last 24 hours, before I left the headquarters, we had one attack; yesterday we had nine attacks total, of which one was an effective attack.

Okay. Yes, back here.

Q Jeff Wilkinson with Knight Ridder Newspapers. Do your countermeasures include destroying the homes of suspected insurgent fighters? And under what circumstances would that occur?

GEN. SWANNACK: We try to take away the capability of the enemy. If it's a safe house, it's a house that's been identified and used by enemy elements to produce IEDs, yes, we do go ahead and prosecute the fight against that house. We did that down near Mahmudiya the other day, where six individuals who had participated in an attack on U.S. forces were identified to have made the IEDs, kept their weapons, were actually found to be in this house. We apprehended them and detained them, removed all the family members out of the house, and we destroyed the house.

Yes? Follow-up.

Q In the past two days, the 4ID has destroyed 15 homes as part of their operations. Sometimes it's just suspects that they are seeking, and the families won't turn them over. Does your methods go to that level? And can you give me any idea how many homes perhaps have been destroyed in your area of responsibility?

GEN. SWANNACK: I can't speak specifically about what's going on with the 4th Infantry Division. General Odierno would have to answer that question.

But we've used fires from U.S. Air Force aircraft on three occasions: one against a home that was identified as being utilized by these six individuals in fighting against us; the other two cases were buildings that were being used to supply caches, to maintain caches of weapons. And we had secondary explosions come out of these buildings.

I'd like to tell you up front, though, in the case of the house that was being occupied, we removed all the individuals, family members, out of that house; removed all the livestock from around the house; stopped the traffic from out in front of the house when we prosecuted the fight, to minimize collateral damage. We did the same effort up there taking out the two caches that we bombed, one in Husaibah (sp) and one in the vicinity of Fallujah.

Over here.

Q Thank you, Major General. My name is Tanaka (sp), from -- Japanese NHK TV correspondent. Relating to helicopters, Chinook, shot down on November 2nd, last night there was a statement on Lebanese TV of the group called Mohammed Army. What is your reaction to this statement, and who is Mohammed Army, according to you? Thank you.

GEN. SWANNACK: I've heard reports the Mohammed Army, Wahhabis, background -- I don't

know much more about them, but we have several leads on the individuals who supposedly perpetrated the attack on the Chinook helicopter. We are systematically getting tips on who did that, and we'll go ahead and find them. No question in my mind that we will ultimately track them down and find them. And so we're going to go ahead and do that.

Back here in the back.

Q (Name inaudible) from the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten. General, in Fallujah, you will hear any number of complaints from the local population, including senior tribal leaders and other town elders, about random shooting by American troops in response to attacks by insurgents, about very heavy-handed searches of houses and citizens, and about a general arrogance and lack of respect for local customs. How do you respond to that?

GEN. SWANNACK: Well, first of all, I'll tell you that we're dealing with paratroopers in Fallujah, very disciplined, very combat-ready and well trained. And in every case, they know how to utilize the rules of engagement and conduct their business. They have received cultural awareness training.

Now, when we go ahead and conduct coordinate searches, we set the environment and then go ahead and selectively go inside the houses to check out the various houses. We try to do this in every case with Iraqi police. The Iraqi police are there to be our cultural support in terms of how we handle and search males, how we, if we need to, detain women. Matter of fact, if any women are detained through our operations, I, the commanding general, have withheld that I make the determination whether or not we retain -- or detain any women.

Now, the other side of the coin is this that I have to tell you about. In Fallujah, Fallujah is an interesting town, very much tribal oriented, very much religious oriented. In our operations in Fallujah, historically we have had the enemy mingle in civilian clothes with civilians, which makes it much more difficult. They have subjected their own people to attacks with RPGs and IEDs trying to attack us. And so I have a very, very surgical capability in the way we do and do coordinate searches.

And oh, by the way, every trooper in the 82nd Airborne Division has what's called close combat optics, and those allow you to go ahead and put the dot where you want to shoot somebody. If you want to shoot them in the arm and they pull the trigger, that's where the round goes. If you want to shoot to kill, you can do that also. Our troopers are very, very well trained to go ahead and use this close combat optics system. And when we aim at something, that's what we hit.

Yes, over here?

Q (In Arabic.)

GEN. SWANNACK: A very good question about the future of the Iraqi army and the ability to go ahead and incorporate trained individuals and officers, general officers, potentially in the future Iraqi army. I'm meeting on Thursday with former officers from the 12th Brigade, that was headquartered out in Ramadi. You may remember this brigade as the brigade that capitulated during the war to the 3rd of the 7th Cav, the 3rd Infantry Division unit, that went out to Ar Ramadi and accepted the capitulation of this organization. They had about 1,500 soldiers that went back to their homes after the capitulation. So here's a prime example of having officers that we can utilize in the new Iraqi army and soldiers that are trained and we can utilize in the new Iraqi army, and that's what our program is. I'm meeting with the general officers to attempt to go ahead and sign them up for either the civil defense corps, temporarily, and then move them into the new Iraqi army, and I also use the consultation services of these former general officers to benefit the 82nd Airborne Division as we put together the civil defense corps and also the new Iraqi army.

Right back there in the back. Yes, you sir.

Q (Off mike.)

GEN. SWANNACK: Right behind you, yes.

Q General, Alan -- (inaudible) -- CBS News. Could you tell us a bit more about these reports that you plan to pull all your troops back in Ramadi by early in the new year?

GEN. SWANNACK: Yes, I'd be glad to talk about that. I met with a reporter the other day and talked to him about the situation in Al- Ambar province specifically, town by town. Some towns are a little bit more hostile towards coalition forces. Other towns, the police are working very well; the facility protective services are working well; they're working well with us. And Ar Ramadi is just one situation. Ar Ramadi, the police are working in concert with us; the police are doing a very credible job. We still need to continue training on them, but I believe our joint operations with the police in Ar Ramadi between now and around the 1st of January will allow us to move to a second stage in regards to security for Ar Ramadi, the town, and that is where American forces step back, pull some joint patrols with the Iraqi police, but allow the police to go ahead and do the major functions. Should something get out of hand, we'll be in radio communication with them, and we'll be able to go ahead and assist them. But it's more so they're taking the lead, we're taking a back-up, and that's a positive step for Iraqi-ization, and that's where we want to go. Ar Ramadi is getting very close to being -- having the conditions to go ahead and conduct this kind-of-like transition around the 1st of January, I assume.

Yes. Lady in the back.

Q General Swannack -- (inaudible) -- with Voice of America. I asked this question to General Kimmitt last night, and I didn't really quite get an answer from him. The question I asked was that, a few days ago, you had done also another interview in which you said that Saddam Hussein might have laid -- planted the seeds of a guerrilla war before he fled. And a few days later after that, General Abizaid basically said that's probably not the case. I'm just wondering, from your perspective, what made you say that? And what is your opinion on that now?

GEN. SWANNACK: Okay, very good. First of all, I have the utmost confidence and trust in General Abizaid, and he's the right individual to be leading our forces in this fight, the global war on terrorism. As a matter of fact, as he said, I am -- we are personal friends.

But, to answer your question -- and I will answer your question -- it's a moot point in that how we got to where we are today. I say that because General Abizaid and I see exactly today how we're supposed to fight the current enemy. How we got here, he's got a perception, I've got an idea, an assessment, and probably military analysts down the road will figure this all out.

But, to answer your question where I came to the assessment that I have. You may not know this, but the 82nd Airborne Division fought north as part of the element to go ahead and secure the 3rd Infantry Division's lines of communication, along with the 101st, we were there. We came through towns like As Samawa, moved north to Ad Diwaniyah (?), Al Hillah, Karbala. I was amazed at the amount of arms and ammunition stockpiled in homes, in not completely built homes, just sitting there, that we collected up. I didn't think much of it. When I listened on TACSAT to Major General Buff Blount in coming into Baghdad and finding these brand new constructed homes, not occupied, full of mines and RPGs and AK-47s, I thought it odd. I thought that possibly these were left for the Saddam Fedayeen to go ahead and attack us.

But what happened? Republican Guards pretty much withered away. Some fought the 3rd Infantry Division; others just walked away. Saddam Fedayeen, some attacked us and some also went away. And so that's when I started thinking that, well, when this insurgency started up and the attacks started increasing; oh, by the way, the attacks are more sophisticated that we received recently, from trained individuals possibly involved with the IIS or the Republican Guards, that's where I came with my assessment: There might have been a branch plan. Maybe Saddam didn't figure it out, but one of his lieutenants, subordinates did, that should there be a quick fall or an ultimate fall of Iraq, that there would be an insurgency and possibly an ability to go ahead and continue this war on a lower scale, low-

intensity conflict scheme. That's where I came up with my assessment.

Again, I respect General Abizaid. And it's a moot point how we got here, but we're fighting the same enemy and we're going to win this fight, no question in my mind.

Over here, sir?

Q (In Arabic.)

GEN. SWANNACK: Well, I will tell you that we will not stay here one day more than we're needed, but we're not going to leave any day sooner than we're required. And so if Fallujah police provide the capacity to maintain security, if Fallujah does not harbor enemy personnel that want to attack coalition forces or destabilize or disrupt ongoing governmental events, then I am ready to step back and let the Fallujah police take on and control Fallujah, the security apparatus in Fallujah. Similarly, when the border police demonstrate the capacity to secure the borders of Iraq with Syria, with Jordan and with Saudi Arabia, we will be ready to step back.

And I envision this, of letting -- of training and developing that capacity of security forces, jointly training them on the job, stepping back and checking them that they are capable of doing the job, and then stepping back even further to allow them to do the job and we're the backup, backup in the cities and outside the cities, that we can respond into the cities, or regionally at some point in time, or maybe ultimately outside the country, as necessary.

So that's how I see it. But they have to develop the capacity, they have to show the capability before we're ready to do that and acquiesce to their demands.

Over here.

Q Steve Cabbie (sp) from AFP. You mentioned the importance of the tribes in Fallujah. I understand in recent days and weeks, there have been a string of meetings between the U.S. military and tribal chiefs in Fallujah. I wonder whether they've had any impact on the reduction in the number of effective attacks, and also, what had been said to the tribal chiefs to bring that about.

GEN. SWANNACK: What was said by General Abizaid and myself in the meeting with tribal sheikhs the other day was that our patience is wearing very thin on the attacks of coalition forces in Fallujah and in Al Anbar Province, and that we're not going to tolerate it. And I believe that message was carried back to the tribal members by the sheikhs and that's why we have seen a reduction in the amount of attacks on coalition forces in Fallujah. Fallujah has become quite quiet.

The good news is Fallujah has become quite quiet in recent days, and I believe it's because they have decided to take control of their destiny. That's another thing General Abizaid and I spoke of, taking control of your destiny in the new Iraq, because there will not be resumption of the old regime. We're moving on to a new Iraq. They can either be part of it or they can fight it. And in fighting it, they'll lose, because we will take them out and we will prevail.

Yes, back here.

Q General, the president of the United States has been on the record saying Iraq has become the forefront of fighting international terrorism. Supposedly, most of these terrorists are operating from your area, but you're saying you haven't seen any of them. Do you see any contradiction between White House statements and what you see on the ground?

GEN. SWANNACK: No, I don't see any contradiction. I think they're operating to some degree within the country, some of them probably in Al Anbar Province. I think that we are all committed to rooting out these terrorists here in Iraq, here in the Middle East, throughout the world, rather than having to fight them on American soil. And that's exactly what the president wants to do, and that's exactly what he's directed us to do, and that's what we'll do.

Over here, yes.

Q Hi -- (inaudible) -- from the Wall Street Journal. Obviously a big part of what you're trying to do as far as job creation and the like is winning the hearts and minds of Iraqis in your province. Those same Iraqis are seeing news reports, reading articles about the increasing use of heavy weaponry in Baghdad and Tikrit and Abu Ghraib. Doesn't it make it harder to try to win the hearts of an Iraqi in your area of operations when they're seeing warplanes and attack helicopters and tanks again being used in civilian areas?

GEN. SWANNACK: I think it demonstrates or resolve. You said it, this is war. And we're going to prosecute the war not holding one hand behind our back. When we identify positively an enemy target, we're going to go ahead and take it out with every means we have available. I like to remember what Viscount Slim said during the Burma campaign. He said, "Use a sledgehammer to crush a walnut." And that's exactly what we will do. We will use force, overwhelming combat power when it's necessary.

In a similar vein, what's so interesting about American soldiers and paratroopers is that at one moment, they're a warrior; the next moment, they're the most compassionate individual on the face of the Earth, handing out chocolate and candy to kids; water to townspeople; providing humanitarian rations. I remember down in As Samawa, the first thing we did after the fight in As Samawa was we put a ROPU in the water, the Euphrates River, and produced potable water and handed it out to the populace.

So, yes, we're going to go ahead and take the fight to the enemy using everything in our arsenal necessary to go ahead and win this fight. And on the same side, we're going to be as compassionate as we can -- minimize collateral damage during a fight, but be as compassionate as we can to go ahead and show the Iraqi people that we are not fighting them. We're fighting the former regime loyalists, the foreign fighters, the extremists that want to go ahead and attack us and disrupt and destabilize what's trying to go on here.

Yes, you had a question in the front right here.

Q Could you talk a little bit more about the 12th Brigade and what you would hope to get out of them? Do you see them coming back in their entirety, and officers as well as lower-level soldiers, because there's been a -- as you know, the military was released at the -- in late May, and I'm just wondering how that fits with the former policy or if this is a sort of gradual relooking at that in a specific place.

GEN. SWANNACK: No, this is no policy change. The 12th Brigade will not come back as the 12th Brigade. But elements of it, which are very useful in terms of the leadership that was in the 12th Brigade, the talented soldiers and noncommissioned officers in the 12th Brigade, there is utility for them in the future, either in the civil defense corps or the new Iraqi army. So the 12th Brigade will not come back, but we want to use the talent in that former brigade in the new structure of the Iraqi army or security forces.

Over here. You've had your hand up for a while, sir.

Q (In Arabic.)

GEN. SWANNACK: Okay. First, regarding Fallujah, Fallujah will be turned over to Iraqis when the conditions present themselves for security, for governance, for essential services in the economy; that they can go ahead and run a democratic, secure and stable Fallujah.

I don't know when that's going to be. I don't. I cannot tell you a time line when that's going to happen. It's all about generating the police capacity; the Civil Defense Corps, which -- we're going to have two battalions located in vicinity of Fallujah, in Kharma (sp), in Saqliweah (sp), that area. It's

going to be those events, successful events, that allow us to go ahead and step back and turn over the security situation to Fallujah.

I have to tell you, though, that in recent weeks, the integration and the teamwork between coalition forces and the police in Fallujah has been tremendous -- strong improvement in Fallujah.

And so we're on a glide path to do that. I can't tell you exactly the date or the time that -- when that'll happen. It's more event-driven than it is time-driven.

Right here.

Q Anthony Shadid with The Washington Post. General, you had mentioned that there was -- I think I recall the number as 13 foreign fighters apprehended and seven killed. What is that time period? And do you have an estimate on how many may have passed through? I'm just trying to get a sense of how much a threat they might pose in Al Anbar.

GEN. SWANNACK: I think it's difficult for me to go ahead and answer that. I say that because we've only been here for the last 60 days.

And we relieved the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which was responsible for the battle space I described to you and showed you before -- huge battle space. They have about 7,000. The force that I have -- we have here now is about 20,000 individuals. And so, by virtue of that, since we've gotten here and repositioned the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment along the border, I believe we've shut down the flow of foreign fighters into the country. Probably some come through. You know, this region of the world and across those borders for 2,000 years there's been smuggling. And I assume there's continued to be smuggling, and with the smugglers come some foreign fighters.

So, we're going to go ahead and continue to work that. I think we've been successful. We identified six foreign fighters at the border the other day. We tried to go ahead and apprehend them. One of them pulled a knife on us, and we shot him. That individual died. And we secured and detained the other five. But that's an example of how we're trying to secure the borders of Iraq with the neighbors. So, I think we're doing a lot better job at it right now. But again, I want to underscore, we're finding mostly that the attacks on coalition forces are from former regime loyalists and Iraqis, not foreign fighters.

Right over here.

Q Charles Cliver (sp) with the Financial Times. General, do you have any formal channels of communication with the guerrillas at all? I mean, do you have any -- do they have any way to transmit any political demands to you? Do you have any sense that they might be able to participate in a provisional government or something like that?

GEN. SWANNACK: We do not have any communication with enemy elements at all. We do get tips on enemy elements. We do detain and apprehend enemy elements, and we go ahead and interrogate them; some more successfully, get information from them. But in no regards do we have the ability to cut deals or work that piece. That's not really the function of the coalition forces in that regard.

I can take probably two more questions.

Right here.

Q Mike Dorning (sp), the Chicago Tribune. Just on two separate, related topics that have already been raised. You mentioned that in Ramadi you felt like probably by January 1st things would be well enough in hand that things could mostly be left to the Iraqi police, and the troops would largely be withdrawn from the streets. Are there any other areas in the province where you feel like that will happen sooner? Do you have a date you can give us?

MORE

And secondly, on another topic that's been raised, on the stepped-up campaign, more aggressive, forceful campaign with the enemy, can you tell us what the thinking was in starting that at this point in time and give us your assessment of how effective this shift in tactics has been so far?

GEN. SWANNACK: First question, I really can't identify any other towns. The standout for me is Ar Ramadi. As an example, the other day in Kaldea, a group from Kaldea came forth and said they were tired of the violence in Kaldea; "We want to take over control, and we will stop attacks on coalition forces." So I'm starting to see more of those come along. We're not there yet in Fallujah; we're not there yet in Husaybah; Hit might be pretty soon; I'm not so sure about Arutba (ph), out in the far west. But we're looking at that and working that hard. And I think we'll see a lot more of these towns come forth and try to go ahead and say, "We want to go ahead and stop the violence and move on with securing and governing them ourselves."

The second piece of that is the use of the weapon systems we're using right now. I think it demonstrates, with the recent attacks, whether they be on a CH-47 Chinook or on the helicopters or the vehicle-borne IEDs, that our resolve is strong and we're not going to tolerate that. Every case, every time we utilize a weapon system, we go through a very deliberate process trying to figure out what's the best system to use. And I think that as commanders, we might have been a little bit reluctant previously to use aerial gunships, AC-130 or U.S. Air Force aircraft and precision-guided munitions. Now there's no holds barred on what we used. We use what necessary capabilities and combat power that we need to use to go ahead and take the fight to the enemy and also minimize collateral damage.

One last question. Back right there. Sir.

Q Peter Grasso (sp) from the BBC. I just want to ask two questions. First of all, the reference to the question over whether Saddam Hussein or remnants of his regime may have been preparing for a guerrilla war. The key implication of that is it implies some level of organization, some command structure, some kind of preparation that gives the resistance movement some kind of form and structure that you're fighting against. Are you detecting that kind of form and structure? Is that what drew you to that conclusion in the first place?

And secondly, do you see that fighting a guerrilla insurgency using those kinds of weapons that you just spoke about -- heavy weapons, artillery, gunships, and so on -- is that necessarily the appropriate way of doing this? Because in other conflicts like this, often that seems to be counterproductive.

GEN. SWANNACK: Two good questions to close on.

First of all, on the architecture running the insurgency right now, I would guess, based upon -- or my assessment is that there is some loose architecture on a regional basis directing some of the attacks; decentralized execution of the attacks, but some loosely organized command and control structure that provides capabilities and direction.

I don't have any evidence to suggest that other than my instincts and seeing some things that have happened. Four (VB ?) IEDs in Baghdad on one day. About a month ago there were five or six police either assassinated or killed about the same time. And so some of these activities of shooting down helicopters at a certain time, might be all coincidences, or it might be directed in some means. So that tells me -- I don't know if there's a national architecture, but a regional architecture. And that's where I need the intelligence organizations of the coalition to go ahead and figure that out, some help in that. Because I believe we're doing a good job out in Al Anbar province taking out the capabilities that are attacking us, and maybe some of the leaders just above that. But then the main architecture, the financiers, the ones who provide IEDs, the ones who provide munitions, the capabilities, we've got to start taking out that level, and that's where we need better intelligence or better tips to go ahead and take that out.

And, you know, you might think about guerrilla war in Vietnam; a lot of people try to go back there, or back to recent conflicts that we had; Panama more recently, which wasn't quite guerrilla war. But you see the nature of our military now is we can do munitions from platforms way overhead that are very surgical and have very little collateral damage. And they're fleeting targets; these targets that we go after are very fleeting targets. They're there for a little while and then they're gone. And so we have to use these capabilities to go ahead and take that fight to the enemy. And why not? We're at war. If you go ahead and try to get the target identified positively as the enemy, and that's the best system to attack it, and it's the timeliest target to get on site while the enemy is there, let's use it and minimize the collateral damage. We go through a very deliberate battle -- collateral damage determination. And that's why we use it. It's the right systems.

In my 32 years in the Army, the ability for joint teamwork has improved dramatically; the ability for joint munitions and precision munitions has also improved dramatically, and it's a wonderful tool for the ground commanders.

Thank you all. And again, I invite you to come on out to Al Anbar province, to Ar Ramadi and visit us at any time. Glad to see you. Thank you very much. Good evening.

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