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Presenter: Army Brig. Gen. (Promotable) Martin E. Dempsey

Wednesday, December 31, 2003 9:11 a.m.
EST

1st Armored Division Commanding General's Briefing from Baghdad

(Participating was Army Brig. Gen. (Promotable) Martin E. Dempsey, commanding general, 1st Armored Division. The summary slide shown during today's briefing is located on the Web at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Dec2003/g031231-D-6570C.html>.)

Staff: Good afternoon. We're grateful for your patience. Today we welcome back Brigadier General (Promotable) Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armor Division. We have biographies out on the desk for those who want more information about him personally. He is responsible for military operations here in Baghdad, as most of you know.

We also welcome members today of the Pentagon press corps who will be joining us by VTC.

General Dempsey has agreed to provide us today with some comments regarding recent actions here in Iraq associated with Operation Iron Grip. As a reminder, General Dempsey is the combat leader; he is responsible for combat operations. Therefore, we'd ask you to confine your remarks -- your questions to questions pertaining to operations, and if you have political questions or questions pertaining to policy, we ask you to refer those to the CPA.

Also, as a final reminder, as a courtesy to General Dempsey and your fellow journalists, we ask you to turn off your cell phones and other such devices.

And to the Pentagon correspondents who can hear me, a few minutes ago we thought we did not have connectivity; we think we do now. General Dempsey will be, at the appropriate moment, asking for questions from the Pentagon and you can address your questions through there; we'll attempt that.

And thank you very much for your patience.

Dempsey: Well, good evening to you all. "As-salaam aleikum." And happy new year to those of you that are celebrating the new year. Heck of a place to do it, isn't it? They gave the junior general the New Year's Eve briefing, and so -- the junior division commander. So, I don't know how you got your particular position here tonight, but I'm glad you're here with us.

Those of us who serve here in Baghdad at the end of the year here are very optimistic about the future of Iraq. We have only one New Year's resolution, and that is as the word suggests -- to remain resolute in our work to establish a safe and secure environment for the Iraqi people.

Next slide.

I'll update you today on our ongoing operation, Operation Iron Grip. Here's our description of the operation. It is, of course, not the only thing we're doing at the moment, but it is our main effort.

Next slide.

Some of you may recall from previous briefings the areas on which we've focused. And we've highlighted them on this slide in amber. Operation Iron Grip -- we expanded our focus a bit and looked specifically at the areas of interest which you see here shaded in red.

Next slide.

Operation Iron Grip's primary targets were the former regime elements' cell structure. On the right is a reminder of how these cells are typically organized, and on the left is a illustration of four successful raids over a five-night period about a week ago.

Next slide.

You may recall from previous briefings that we considered that there were approximately eight to 10 cells operating in the city of Baghdad -- that is to say, former regime cells. Well, intelligence prior to Iron Grip identified four more of those for us, for a total of 14, as well as a network that sat above it that provided financial support and some guidance. Operation Iron Grip attacked this structure, with the results that you see on the right.

Next slide.

Now, based on intelligence on potential rocket and mortar attacks against both the green zone, as you know it, and the Baghdad International Airport, we also took a piece of Iron Grip and focused it on those two threats, with the results that you see on the left.

There was, you may recall, one successful single rocket attack on the green zone on Christmas morning, but I'll talk about Christmas morning specifically here in a moment.

Next slide.

And on the right is a summary of our activity to this point in Operation Iron Grip with respect to the parts of it aimed at rocket and mortar attacks.

Next slide.

The roadside bomb remains -- or improvised explosive device remains the enemy's weapon of choice in Baghdad. On the 22nd and 23rd of December, you see that we reduced this threat, which, by the way, is as much a threat to the Iraqi people and innocent civilians as it is to our soldiers.

Next slide.

On the right is a summary of Iron Grip activities related to bomb makers. And I have a roll-up, by the way, of all this at the end that will provide a single-slide summary for you. If you're trying to do the arithmetic, I've got that done for you.

Next slide.

Our many friends -- our many Iraqi friends in Baghdad told us of an impending attack on Christmas morning. With their help and with the Iraqi police and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps at our side, we conducted 13 simultaneous raids overnight on Christmas Eve.

Next slide.

On the right is a summary of our operations on Christmas Eve.

Next slide.

Now, as predicted, on Christmas morning the enemy did attack us. Intelligence told us that the enemy wanted to muster several hundred attackers across the city and attack targets simultaneously. We assessed that he mustered and attacked us with approximately 20 personnel in 18 attacks. And I'd like to illustrate why we believe that using the nine hit-and-run RPG attacks against us as an example.

Next slide.

As you see here, the enemy attacked us at 6:20 in the morning -- build -- again at 6:35, build -- you can't see it, but at 6:45, and build -- and again at 7:05. Okay, build again -- 6:15, build -- 6:24, build -- then 6:43, build -- 6:50, and build -- 0800. Now, what we take from that is that these nine RPG attacks were probably carried out by six to eight individuals organized into three or four teams. So that's the magnitude of the attacks against us on Christmas, though many of you who were in Baghdad at the time and felt the effect or heard the effect of the nine separate RPG attacks could very well have considered it to be a much larger enemy force; as I said, we estimate 20 to 25 people on Christmas morning.

Next slide. And next slide.

And as I said, this is the final slide, it's a summary of Operation Iron Grip to date. I say to date because we're still conducting operations related to Iron Grip.

As always, we continue just as hard to work at the other aspects of life in Baghdad, including fuel distribution, sewage, school renovation, and preparing the Iraqi Advisory Councils at the neighborhood and district level for their role in the upcoming political process leading to sovereignty on 1 July.

Next slide.

And that concludes the formal portion of my briefing. I would be happy to take your questions.

Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you, General. Peter Spiegel with the Financial Times. You said your Iraqi friends sort of tipped you off in this. Can you give us a better idea of the -- where the intelligence came from? And also, shortly after Saddam's capture, you mentioned in a couple of interviews that that was particularly helpful as well. Can you say how much that played into both the immediate seizure of some former regime leaders, and also this operation as well?

Dempsey: Yeah, I probably can best answer that question considering them together because anytime we get intelligence from any source, we have become sophisticated enough and capable enough in our intelligence system to be able to compare and corroborate through any number of databases that we've built, any number of local Iraqi contacts that we've established, any number of documents that may have been captured in any number of places, to include with Saddam Hussein, that we then exploit. And it's in the process of bringing those three things, four things, sometimes six or seven things together that allows us to go into a deliberate and precise targeting process.

And so I think the best way to answer your question is to say all the things you mentioned were in fact used in forming our -- what we call common intelligence picture that led to targeting, that led to the raids that began with Iron Grip.

Yeah?

Q: Can I infer from that, then, that the original documents you got from Saddam, you've had knock-

on effects from that, from that original information you've been able to sort of develop further, or use that information further to --

Dempsey: No, we did get -- we did reap the benefit, we did reap in Baghdad intelligence benefit from the capture of Saddam Hussein.

Yes?

Q: General -- (Inaudible.) -- from CBC. I just wanted to ask you, in speaking with some of the people who live around the areas of operations, during Operation Iron Grip, specifically in al-Dora and al-Dora Farms, many of the people were saying that, you know, the use of explosive firepower was directed oftentimes at empty fields and that, you know, they thought at first that it was just sort of target practice, that there was really -- I don't know, that there was nothing where the U.S. firepower was directed. I was wondering if you could respond to that and also if there is any attempt to make sense of these sorts of operations to the local population.

Dempsey: Yeah. Let me go from the last question and then back to the first question. We constantly work to articulate to the good Iraqi people what we're doing and why, both -- in any number of venues, this one included.

And -- but now back to the first question, on why we might expend some heavier ordnance, let's call it, at selected times, at places that may not make sense to a common Iraqi civilian.

I mentioned that we've been here long enough to establish patterns of behavior by the enemy. That includes patterns of behavior related to his use of mortars and rockets. And there's only a finite number of places that they can attack us from with mortars and rockets, because of our radar capability, and they know at what range it's likely to be picked up. And if it's picked up, they know that they'll be captured, because of line of sight and because of the existence in the surrounding area of, let's say, a population that might in fact turn them in. We have had -- especially of late, we've had -- if someone's shooting a mortar at us, it is as likely as not that that will be reported to us by the Iraqi people and allow us to then move to capture that activity.

Now because there's a finite number of places they can shoot at us from and because we know where they are, then periodically and somewhat unpredictably, we think, we will use those parts of the city -- you mentioned some open fields in al-Dora, for example -- and we will shoot some of our own ordnance in there. And so what that does, if you're an enemy mortarman or an enemy rocketeer, it should cause you pause to believe you can use your favorite rocket place to shoot into the green zone, because you're never entirely sure that it will be safe for you in there, as previous to that it may have been. That's our rationale, and it's been successful.

We also take great care to make sure that the area is under observation by some platform or some individual, to make sure that we're not putting innocent lives at risk. And to date -- we've done this many times -- we have not injured or killed any innocent Iraqi civilians in the process of doing that. So it's been both successful and very carefully done.

Yes?

Q: General, Eric Schmitt with The New York Times. You mentioned the intelligence leading up to the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day attacks. Have you had similar intelligence leading up to tonight and tomorrow?

Dempsey: We had better intelligence on what we believed to be the activities of Christmas Day than we do the activities leading up to New Year's Day. But that's not to say we're devoid of intelligence. If we're not out conducting -- as I mentioned, we do many things. We do offensive combat operations, and when we're not doing offensive combat operations, we're doing reconnaissance operations to gain the intelligence that then allows us to do offensive combat operations, and then all of the stability and support operations that help the Iraqi people and infrastructure and all that. So we've spent some time

here of late gaining intelligence on what might happen to us over the next 46 to 72 hours, and we will act appropriately to make sure that our soldiers and the Iraqi populace is protected from the potential attacks against us.

Yes?

Q: General, Evan Osnos from the Chicago Tribune. When do you foresee transitioning to local control? Where do you think the areas will be that you'll do that first? And where do you imagine or how do you imagine you'll be operating around the time of the transition on July 1st? What sort of responsibilities will you still be doing?

Dempsey: That's a master's thesis-level question. I'll give you the Cliff Notes answer, if you don't mind.

First of all, to the point of local control. There are parts of the city right now that we could -- as you've heard me say before, perhaps, there's 88 neighborhoods in the city, and we think there's only three or four of them that we couldn't be comfortable transitioning to local control right now. Now, we haven't done that. We haven't done that because we're still in the period that I would describe as the coaching, teaching and mentoring aspect of giving the new Iraqi security apparatus some help, training, essentially, to take over that responsibility.

To the question of when I will be ready to do that, I think that's a question that belongs both -- that I own the answer to but so do the Iraqi people. And by that I mean if we were going to turn a zone -- 17 North, for example, or Adhamiya, or, you know, pick your place in the city -- and decide that we were going to turn it entirely over to local control, what I would want first before I did that would be not only a competent, fully equipped police force, probably an ICDC [Iraqi Civil Defense Corps] element that would have already had the opportunity to work with that police force in some kind of joint operation, and I'd want buy-in from the neighborhood and the council and the district council that they understood that from that point forward, the security was their responsibility.

We're getting close in several places in town. We're already doing joint operations with U.S. forces, Iraqi police and ICDC. In fact, it's probably not an exaggeration to say that we rarely do military operations in Baghdad any longer without the presence of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (In Arabic.)

Dempsey: Yeah, there are three aspects to that question, and I've lost the first one. The second one was the status, the legal status, essentially, of Saddam Hussein. And I don't know the answer to that, ma'am. And that's not something that the 1st Armor Division will determine.

The last question was if we have security challenges, why don't we invite other -- I think the last question was -- there's a lot of static on this thing -- what is the possibility of having other security or coalition partners, and I think you mentioned such as the Japanese, participate in the security apparatus. And you know, to that I reply, I think those efforts are ongoing to always encourage others to contribute.

But, ma'am, I forget the first part of your question.

Whoever's translating, do you recall what it was?

Q: (In Arabic.)

Dempsey: Right. The question was, "have we learned anything from Saddam Hussein about weapons of mass destruction." And I will tell you that I have not been made aware of -- or the interrogation net results have not been shared with me, unless they apply to Baghdad, in which case I get

them. And I have not received anything related to WMD.

Yes?

Q: (Inaudible.) -- NHK TV. General, what happened after all to the eight to 10 cells in Baghdad? Are they operational or are they not?

Second, for the roadside bombs, why do you think the enemy has chosen that as their favorite weapon? And three, related to that, are they able to plant that without being noticed by anyone, even in a crowded area like in Karrada district? Or do you think that the people are closing their eyes for them to do that?

Dempsey: I can answer the second one with great -- in great detail and with great clarity because we spend a lot of time working on it.

What was your first question?

Q: What happened to the cells after the operation, the eight to 10 cells?

Dempsey: Oh, what happened to them? That question is one that we address every day. We have a goal in the division to reinvent ourselves based on the common intelligence picture that we develop about every month. I mean, one of the things you learn in this environment is as soon -- in this kind of environment, is when you decide you've got it right, it's time to look to see what you probably should do differently, because we're talking about a very dynamic process that is largely entered into by human beings. And so we don't stay wedded to any particular tactic or technique, we constantly try to figure out what's next. And the -- so in terms of where the eight to 10 cells have gone, we're not exactly sure what effect we've had on them yet. I mean, we know what effect we had on them as they existed prior to our attack. The question is what effect has that had on them and how, then, do we adapt to take action against them in the future. And it's a constant process, and I don't know the answer yet, because it's just really an operation that was accomplished in about the last 10 days.

Now the other part of your question related to the roadside bombs. Why have they chosen that as their weapon of choice? Well, for one thing, it's anonymous. It's relatively safe for them. They can stand off. And I could tell you about how far they can stand off, but I'm not sure that that's germane to the conversation, and it's probably something I don't want them to know I know. But we know how far they can stand off.

It's also very -- it's a psychological weapon, meaning that they are trying to cause us not only to feel the physical effects but the psychological effects of that particular kind of ordnance.

Of course, to people like me, it seems to be anathema to the way we would choose to fight a war ourselves, because it's also indiscriminate. And as I've told you, in the past week we've had several Iraqi civilians killed and our own soldiers drive by. So it is truly a weapon of terror. And why have they chosen a weapon of terror? I don't know the answer to that. Unfortunate, isn't it? But it -- I'll tell you what it does to my soldiers. It makes them all the more eager to find them.

Yes?

Q: Tatiana Anderson (sp), CNN. I know you said you were going to pay attention to intelligence about security-related issues over the next 72 hours. But I wasn't clear if that means that you're in fact stepping up security on the streets or not.

And second, I understand there was some sort of explosion or attack on coalition troops today. I think it was in the Rasafah area, where there were some casualties as well. Do you have any more details?

Dempsey: Well, let me answer the first question. Yeah, any time we perceive that the enemy would

try to attack us to take advantage of one of our holidays or one of our important dates in our history, we always provide or take a posture of extra vigilance and extra security. So without saying more than that, I'll just tell you that the 1st Armored Division will be doing what it gets paid to do tonight.

The second thing -- to the second question, about a roadside bomb in Rasafah, yeah, I got that report just a couple of hours ago. And there was a roadside bomb. Unclear yet about what kind. It wounded five U.S. soldiers and wounded three Iraqi Civil Defense Corps personnel. But I don't have any more details than that. None -- I'm told none of them life-threatening, but I don't know that that's actually the case, and it'll take some time.

Yes, sir?

Q: Chris Crowell (sp), LA Times. General, can you comment on how centralized you think planning and manufacture of IEDs is?

Dempsey: Well, I can comment on what I believe, but I can't tell you that I have absolute confidence that I'm correct. I think that there is an element of central planning and central training and central supplying for improvised explosive devices. They just seem to have a quality about them that would lead me to that conclusion. As you see on our results from Iron Grip, and some of you may remember from Operation Iron Hammer some time ago, we've been pretty successful in attacking the IED bomb-makers. And we're developing some technological skills, some forensic skills, for example, that allow us to do some of the investigative work that will eventually allow us to capture or kill those who are making bombs and planting them against us.

By the way, I didn't answer the question over here, though, about how they get emplaced without people seeing them. Some of these can be just simply thrown out of the side of a car, and we've seen that. Some of them, we know, have been built over time. For example, you might take a burlap bag and put it on the side of the road one day, the next day put something in it, the following day put something in it, and the following day wire it, and those activities may only take you a minute or so each time, so you're not standing there. And some of them have been buried, and the ones that are buried, of course, would take longer. So there's no simple answer to that.

We have had -- and I'll tell you this -- 50 percent of those IEDs are identified for us by the Iraqi populace. So if in a given day -- and this is not an exact number, but the mathematics are simple, and so I'll use this number -- if in a given day there were 10, five of them would be identified for us by Iraqi civilians. We might find two or three others, and two or three might go off.

Yes, sir?

Q: (In Arabic.) Thank you, General.

Dempsey: Well, first of all, thank you for the well wishes on New Year. And we are eager about the new year. We think it will be a good year for all of us, especially the Iraqi people.

The question is, what have we seen in the aftermath of the capture of Saddam Hussein; have attacks gone up or gone down? Absolutely gone down. I'm reluctant to put a percentage on it because I just haven't done that kind of analysis. We tend to do analysis on a monthly -- we do analysis every day, but we tend to decide whether things are going up or down not on a daily or weekly basis, but on a monthly basis. It just provides us a larger sample from which to draw. But clearly, the attacks on us have gone down. The intelligence being provided for us by local Iraqis has gone up.

I find that there is some enthusiasm on the street, some additional hope for the future, but that's not universal. I think that the vast majority -- I've said this for some time now, been here for eight months -- I think that the people of Baghdad are largely neutral to the presence of the coalition and looking for their life to improve, not unlike, perhaps, you and I would be in a similar situation. But we have seen an increase in cooperation with the coalition since the attack (sic) of Saddam Hussein.

Yes, sir?

Q: Tom Lasseter, Knight Ridder. Two questions. What's your sense of the role that Saddam had in the insurgency, whether he played any sort of central commanding role, whether reports were being brought to him periodically, that sort of thing?

The second question is as to the intelligence you got from him that helped in Operation Iron Grip, could you be more specific about what sort of intelligence, whether this came from documents, from interview with him, and what specifically he said?

Dempsey: Yeah, I can't be much more specific. But I think that those that are working that particular facet of the intelligence effort have come to the conclusion that he wasn't directly coordinating things. But honestly, I'm not in that part of the intelligence apparatus. Again, I can speak only about what happens in Baghdad, and so the only things I get out of what they're doing with Saddam Hussein are those things that apply to Baghdad.

To be more specific about what we've learned about Baghdad, we knew that there was a cell of -- again, I said eight to 10, and now we know 14. Now, you might say, "Gee, how do you know there is exactly 14?" Well, you know, you have to form your own conclusions about how I can now say 14. There's 14. And I don't know how we found that out, but I know who they are and I know where they are, and I know if I can find them that they will no longer be doing what they were doing before.

So, yeah, we're gleaning some benefits from that.

Yes, sir?

Q: Thank you. Larry Kaplow with Cox Newspapers. If I read the summary page correctly, I think you said that you had disrupted four of the cells. You didn't really characterize one way or the other, is that satisfactory, do you think, for all the firepower that was used?

And in a broader question, in something like this do you -- is it a goal to try to eliminate these? Or do you look at it as dynamic, that as long as there are foreign forces here there will be new people joining and it's just sort of suppression that you do?

Dempsey: Yeah, well those two questions are related and so -- meaning is it satisfactory to disrupt vice defeat, and do I think there will always be some kind of insurgency here.

The answer to fighting an insurgency is that it's not the kind of -- I've said this before, but I think it bears repeating. This is not the kind of fight where we expect somebody to walk out of a house with a white flag and surrender to us. This is the kind of fight that will end when the insurgency realizes that the weight of progress has made it such that there is no hope for them. And we're all about making sure they realize that their plight is hopeless. And it's also -- there will be reached a time when I think they'll want to become part of the emerging process rather than fight against it. I really do believe that.

In the meantime, the way we encourage them towards hopelessness is doing what I do, as well as helping the Iraqi people see progress in all of the areas I mentioned, especially now in the area of governance. I can't tell you how much time we spend at council meetings talking about the democratic process and helping groups like the Farmers Union and tribal sheikhs understand how they can get a voice into the emerging political process. It's pretty exciting stuff. And I think the more people we get excited about it, the better off we're going to be. And so we spend as much time doing that as we do the other things.

To your point about is it worth the expenditure of the effort, of course it is. I mean, I -- as you know, I've lost soldiers, and there's nothing more important to me than my soldiers. But they believe in the mission we're doing, and so that makes it easy for me to sleep at night -- not easy -- makes it -- it makes it possible for me to sleep at night.

Yes?

Q: Hello, General. Challiss McDonough from the Voice of America. I'm wondering about the PsyOps operations that I think many of us in this room have run across at various times, where you see these big Humvees driving around with loudspeakers on top, broadcasting kind of loud messages to entire neighborhoods. And I wonder what kind of value you place on that specific activity. How much does that really help you get people to tell you what you need to know? Thank you.

Dempsey: We think it helps a great deal. In particular -- it probably is one of those instruments at our disposal that may, over time, be less useful. But if you reverse the tapes back to the May- June-July time frame, when there was not a functioning media in Baghdad, there was not a functioning television system, there was not a functioning radio system -- those things were crucial to us.

Now what we use them for now is a little more selectively and with a little more precision. If we're doing an operation, for example, in a neighborhood, and we want the local populace to understand why, then we would use those teams. It's just easier to communicate with them point-to-point.

If we're doing something citywide, we use the newspaper that we publish. We have a radio station that we appear on. I stand up in front of you-all and I talk, and then it appears in the media. And we communicate to the people of the city of Baghdad in a broad sense.

Yes?

Q: Just to follow up, did you specifically use that tactic in the areas that you targeted during Iron Grip?

Dempsey: You know, I can't say whether we did or not. These things are given by me to my brigade commanders, with the broad general guidance to use them to communicate with the Iraqi people. But I'll tell you these brigade commanders are pretty clever fellows who use every tool at their disposal. Some of you have met them, you've been out with them, and you understand how they do that.

Did you want to ask a question at the Pentagon?

Staff: No, sir. (Off mike.)

Dempsey: Two more questions.

Ma'am?

Staff: General, I don't think they have the link right now.

Q: Thank you, General. Julie McCarthy from National Public Radio. Sir, I wonder if you could share with us your insights into the character of the resistance, insofar as the nationwide element -- the possibility of a nationwide network. Karbala, in the South, saw very orchestrated, sophisticated attacks not unlike the Christmas Day attacks here. I wonder if you could share with us your insights on that.

And secondly, sir, are you concerned that the July 1st date for handing over transition for the Transitional Authority may just come a little bit too early, given the fact that you only have six months left, and from what I understand, not a single area in Baghdad is exclusively under local control?

Thank you.

Dempsey: Yeah, let me answer the last one first because it's one I have a certain passion about. As we were getting ready to decide what to do with Saddam Hussein, we sat around the table and we all understood the great potential that exists in Iraq. You know, they have very industrious people, education, great family ties, oil, water, agriculture. And we all said hey, there's a lot of potential here,

and all we've really got to do is get this dictator out of the way and I think the country's going to take off.

Then we get here, and I find that we tend to be more optimistic about the future than the Iraqi people, which is amazing to me. And part of what I do every day is go to the city council, the district council, the neighborhood council, and I tell them, "This is going to be okay. You have a lot of potential, you just have to step up and use it."

So, no, I don't think 1 July is too soon at all. I think we are going to move forward. And we're not going far, by the way. When we talk about achieving what we call local standoff, we're talking kilometers, you know, not time zones. And so, for example, the division that's here in Baghdad will be on the perimeter here or the periphery of Baghdad, but it's not going to Qatar. So, if they have some stumbles and they ask us to support them, which we will of course do, we will.

But I think that the question doesn't need to be addressed to me whether 1 July is right; I think that's what the Iraqi people want and I completely support it for all the reasons I said.

To the -- what was your first question? Just give me -- if you give me one word, I'll remember.

Q: Nationwide resistance.

Dempsey: Yeah, nationwide resistance. There is a different character to the nation writ large, as you know. I mean, Baghdad is very cosmopolitan; it's a microcosm. You know that. If you go west, you find a certain kind of influences largely tribal. If you go north, if you go south, there are mostly religious influences. I don't know exactly what that means to the nature of the resistance.

And you mentioned there wasn't much difference between the attack in Karbala and the attacks here on Christmas day. They were actually vastly different. Ours were, in our view, former regime loyalists in drive-by shootings trying to make enough noise that it would seem as though there was some instability and chaos in Baghdad on Christmas. In fact there was not. The attacks down in Karbala were suicide bombers. Now, you know, suicide bombers, in our view, are a different threat and potentially different people. But, I mean, that's the subject of a far more lengthy answer.

Yes, sir?

Q: (In Arabic.)

Dempsey: The three questions were -- and if I've misstated them, you can correct me -- but what influence is Ibrahim al-Doury having; second question was why are some of the new Iraqi army and the police being trained in Jordan; and the third question is, there are some former employees who are not being paid. Okay, I'll try to give you a brief answer to each.

I don't know whether al-Doury is pulling the strings or not. I just don't know. I think that he hasn't had much influence in Baghdad, but I don't know what influence he's had nationwide.

On the question of Jordan, there's actually training going on in several places. We are about to open a Baghdad police academy. There's also a police academy in Jordan. And I do know that some of the cadre, but not the basic trainees, for the new Iraqi army are being trained in Jordan. And I think the idea here is that we take the individuals being trained as cadre and we pull them out of the country so that they are not distracted by other things, to include their families. I mean, that's why we sometimes, when we set up schools, pull people away from their families so they're not distracted, and then once they're trained, we put them back. But the training for the new Iraqi army is being conducted in Kirkuk. And most, if not all, of the training for the Baghdad police will soon be done right here in Baghdad.

As for the third one, on salaries, we've had an ongoing bit of -- I'll call it confusion, about making sure people get paid. As we do achieve local security -- for example, there was a time between June and November when all of the fixed-site protective services worked for me. And I trained them, I equipped them, and I paid them. And then we did the transfer over to the ministry, and there's been some

challenges in getting the payroll handed over. It will work out. Nobody is trying to deny them the money. It's just some bookkeeping problems we're having right now.

Yes, ma'am? Last question.

Q: Thank you. Ann Bernard (sp) from the Boston Globe. You mentioned several areas in Baghdad that you think are closer than others to being able to be turned over to local control. Could you name them? And I also wondered, as you look at handing over areas to local control, what kind of monitoring are you doing of the police that you work with to sort of see their progress and see when they're actually ready to take over?

Dempsey: Yeah. I won't answer the first question on will I name the parts of Baghdad that concern me, because, I mean, fundamentally, I don't want to -- I mean, I have very close friends all over Baghdad, and I don't necessarily want to embarrass any of them by naming their neighborhood as --

Q: No, I meant the good ones, the ones that look really good.

Dempsey: No, I won't do that either, because all you've got to do is do the -- you know, just subtract, and then you've left me hanging out here to dry.

But to the other question, about how do we know when the police are ready, how do we know when the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps are ready, how do we know when the new Iraqi army is ready, I have to tell you, with no hubris intended, we are the best in the world at what we do. I mean, we just are. The American army is the best in the world at what it does. And we have a very deliberate training plan that allows soldiers, or policemen, for that matter, to progress from individual skills to small-groups -- we might call them squads -- of 10 men, to platoons of 30 men, to companies of 120 men, to battalions of 500 men. And we have a very deliberate program at -- and at each of those levels, we have tasks that we hold them accountable for learning, we have conditions they have to do them under, and we have standards.

And we're also very introspective about -- that is to say, self-critical -- so that after every one of these events, we always go back, and we ask ourselves, "Okay, what went right? What went wrong?" And we do so in a way that allows us to learn and grow.

We're teaching those exact same skills to our Iraqi counterparts. And my report to you is -- they are very receptive to it. And we're very pleased in Baghdad -- again, I'm only speaking for Baghdad, but we're very, very pleased with the progress of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. They've been on missions with us. They've performed very well.

Are they perfect? No. Are we perfect? No. But we're pretty good.

Thanks for your time today, and I do wish you a happy New Year.

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