

PRESS CONFERENCE:

Mr. Jawad al-Bulani, Iraqi Minister of Interior
Lieutenant General Frank G. Helmick, Commander of Multi-National Security
Transition Command – Iraq and NATO Training Mission – Iraq

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PARTICIPANTS:

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Lieutenant General Frank Helmick

REPORTERS:

Ahmed Jassem, Al-Arabiya Newspaper
Abdul Rachman[ph] Yoberi[ph], [Unintelligible] Baghdad
Ali Hamadani, National Public Radio

Unidentified reporters from Free Iraq Radio Channel, Al-Massar Satellite Channel,
Radio Sawa, Kuwait TV, Diyala Satellite Channel, The Los Angeles Times, and
Japanese News Agency

REPORTERS 1-15

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

LTG HELMICK: Good afternoon and thank you very much for joining us here today. It's a pleasure to be here with Minister Bulani, the minister of the interior, in order to highlight some of the recent achievements in his ministry. As many of you know, Minister Bulani just returned two weeks ago from an extremely successful and productive trip to the United States where he had an opportunity to visit many key leaders in the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the Department of Homeland Security. The Ministry of Interior has a current operating strength of well over 370,000 people, and is responsible for many different types of security to include river police, station police, patrol police, oil police, the national police, border enforcement forces, and facility protection forces. Since June of 2007, some 14 months ago, the Ministry of the Interior has recruited over 70,000 new police and provided additional police training to thousands of others. This is illustrative of the commitment made by the Government of Iraq to provide security and stability to their citizens. I would like to highlight one operational police unit and that is the national police. The national police – a force that had an unacceptable reputation and performance less than 15 months ago – is now the Iraqi police force of choice. Under the masterful leadership of Minister Bulani and the commander of the national police, Lieutenant General

Hussein, this force has proven again and again [that] it is a professional, competent, and reliable police force. Yesterday I had the opportunity to attend a national police basic training center graduation where over 1,700 civilians were transformed over a three-month period into national policemen. All of the basic training tasks were conducted and administered by the Iraqi National Police Institute; that means Iraqi instructors teaching these Iraqi men to be Iraqi national police. This morning I had an opportunity to attend a graduation of the Advanced National Police Training Center. This training is conducted by Iraqi trainers and Italian police instructors through the NATO Training Mission in Iraq which is part of my command. The national police is a national unit – it is not an ethnic force, it is not a religious force, it is not a sectarian force. It is a security force composed of Iraqis for Iraqis. There are many challenges that lie ahead whether it's on the borders, the coastline, along the oil pipeline, or in the capacity development within the ministry. Together we will build on the successes of the past so we continue to progress in the future. I am grateful to Minister Bulani for his leadership in this endeavor. He is leading the way for all Iraqi police forces so that they continue to be well trained, well equipped; a professional and credible force that the Iraqi citizens can count on to provide them that blanket of security they need. Sir, do you have any comments you'd like to

make? And then we'll entertain your questions.

MR AL-BULANI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Thank you very much. As-Salāmu `Alaykum. This is a great opportunity to talk about the achievements and the activities of minister...Ministry of Interior and interior forces. The information, procedures, the developments, the achievements that we have achieved during this...the duration. We have exerted lots of efforts for a reformation to improve the administration, the leadership level, to expand the budget in order to develop work capacity. Also, the strategic made by...the strategy made by the ministry [in] 2006...2005, this effort...lots of time and efforts have been exerted on these achievements. It is the fruit...the fruit is what we see now in our troops. These measures and policies are continuous and developing. And now we're talking about an important transitional phase in our security duties which is developing the technical, the security field and Ministry of Affairs in order to be able to do our duties and to shortcut time in order to reach the feeling and the sense of the citizen that our ministry is a patriotic ministry and we are able to meet the needs of the citizens and provide them with security all over the Iraqi directories. Now I believe the circumstances now are more clear. And during this phase we have

been able to set our goals which is...which are to build the ministry according to the criteria of international institutions. During the last two years the Ministry of Interior was able to reach the regional and the Arabic world. And we say the essence rem-...of success remains within the understanding of the new political system and the constitutional situation of this...of the country and the democratic process to result in friendly relations with our institution and the citizens. We were keen in order to develop the abilities of our officers and to have well-qualified officials working in our ministry in order to improve the criteria of our work. This is our goal but we are working on it during the future. Hopefully we would reach the acceptable and the acceptable expectations and to impose the law so that the law would be the judge for all Iraqis and all Iraqis are subject to the law. Each of them is going to be treated equally according to the adopted...to the well-known legal procedures. We will have no discrimination between any...between the citizens. Each citizen knows his rights, knows his duties. So we are keen to build this kind of relationship with the citizens. The structure of the Ministry of Interior that was enacted by the mi-...the councils...the Ministers' Council, it would be effective after this institute is going to receive the security authority during the coming days. Yes, thank you.

REP1: As-Salāmu `Alaykum. [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Ahmed Jassem. Al-Arabiya Newspaper. The minister. You have talked about and used a strategy that is adopted by your ministry. Now we're wondering where have you reached concerning facing the terrorists that are blowing themselves against the citizens, especially the females. Another question. There are risk....

LTG HELMICK: Can we do one question at a time, please?

INT: [Speaks in Arabic.]

LTG HELMICK: Thank you very much. Thank you.

INT: Okay.

MR BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Concerning your question about the nature of terrorists...terrorism, the Iraqi security system would classify these threats and put the military plans and intelligence data. We have very good intelligence source and we have discovered these gangs that are recruiting women...females in order to use them in their suicide attacks. Lately...the latest actions have been conducted by females. These actions are condemned by all Iraqis. Each human condemns such

acts. Thus, we are developing and recruiting women elements in order to work and to make decisions, legal decisions to face this threat and to activate our intelligence sector. Now we have female investigators. We have obtained the approval of the Ministers' Council to recruit women and police and have them work with us.

LTG HELMICK: Yes, sir. In the back.

REP2: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Free Iraq Radio Channel. To the minister. Yesterday...General James have said yesterday that the security file is going to be delivered to Iraqis in Anbar Province. There have been some complaints from the citizens that the Iraqi police need support there. We have another question. The Iraqi gov-....

LTG HELMICK: Hold on. One question, please, at a time. Thank you.

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Concerning the coming days, we're going to see this transformation of security file to Anbar as you know. As for the legal, the security is going to be delivered to the civil authority there in Anbar and Ministry of Defense is going to handle and going to make use of the

achievements and successes that have been achieved in Anbar with...along with the security forces. We say...we see in front of us [a] number of reformations in administrative level and security level, but we always look to the future, an optimistic look. We're going to solve...and we are solving lots of problems. And we, through successful leaderships, these issues are...we can solve are solvable and are not going to affect the transformation of the security file in Anbar. We're having a plan to develop the capability of Anbar police through providing them with arms. As I know, there is a number of...a good number of equipment that we are using in Anbar.

LTG HELMICK: Yes, sir.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Abdul Rachman[ph] Yoberi[ph], [Unintelligible] Baghdad. Mr. Minister, we have seen some assassinations to high figures. What are your procedures or measures you are adopting to stop such assassinations?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We are expecting such incidents and, indeed, there have been some

wide-scale activity for our security system...defense system. We have arrested a number of those elements who are conducting assassinations. Our...we are going to pursue whoever are relevant...are involved in such assassinations and the crimes that are...they are committing against the civil-...innocent civilians. Of course we are expecting such incidents in different areas in Baghdad...in Iraq, but we are having a strategy to develop our intelligence system and to have supervision staff that are going to be deployed in a planned manner through military operations and security operations in all over the provinces with cooperation with the troops in charge in each area.

LTG HELMICK: Yes, sir.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Al-Massar Satellite Channel. Mr. Minister, you have talked about developing the scientific and technical side. What about the forensic? Do you think the ministry might be able to use high-tech equipment? And where do you intend to export these equipment?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Yesterday we had a conf-...international conference concerning the

forensic department. We have submitted important documents concerning the high-tech equipment and science to uncover crimes and unidentified bodies and how to develop the data collection...collecting data and for million Iraqis. Or we have different procedures...high-tech procedures and we are ongoing...continuing our measures in order to develop this technical process. I believe now the ministry's circumstances, the training centers now are more than 23 or 24 training centers now we have. Some of them are under construction. These are going to focus on technical level and crime scene investigation. We have strong cooperation with Ministry of Justice. The coming phase is going to need development in the security measures and police sector. We have finished the military operations and now we need to practice the technical police work.

REP5: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Al-Ta'ahi[ph] Newspaper. Minister, you have mentioned that the security authority is going to be transferred to Anbar. There are big numbers of Sahwa there. How are you going to deal with them? Are you going to cancel them, or going to join them to other sides?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Concerning Sahwa, they have achieved a very important role and very big achievement in the security operation. And they have participated with the Iraqi security force to improve the security environment in all the areas they were existed in. Some of them haven't joined the security sector in the government. The government now is interested in dealing with this file and to attract a certain number of those who have offered big services to their areas and to the local citizens in these areas. The government is real interested in this file. So I believe a number of the procedures that are going to be improved upon during the coming two months. I believe we're going to have a wider-scale look to the ministries and how do they intend to attract these Sahwa elements and these ministries to offer them loans in order to conduct certain jobs and certain services in their areas. I'd like to say al-Sahwa issue, the government is going to be the sponsor of this file and it is going to be dealt with during the coming months.

LTG HELMICK: Yes.

REP6: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Radio Sawa. Mr. Minister, today or maybe yesterday, Al Anbar police commander have been dismissed. Is it true? There is this committee that was formed to treat Diyala opera-...incidents. Where

have the committee reached with its investigation?

MR AL-BULANI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Anbar commander is not dismissed, only some administrative procedures. As you know, there are no fixed positions. The leaders are deployed according to where they are needed and to the nature of their posts. They go where the ministry needs them. So it was mere administrative procedures and all that would help us to develop the security work and to prepare work condition that are suitable to the challenges and changes. The ministry needs to be close and to deal with these issues. According...concerning to Diyala, there is a committee that is formed and we are waiting for this committee to submit its papers to the government and the prime minister; hopefully soon.

LTG HELMICK: Yes, sir.

REP7:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Kuwait TV. This is a mutual question for both of you gentlemen. What are the successes in Baghdad and governments? Is it true over 5...85%? And is it true that the forces are going to withdraw within the coming year according to the agreement with Washington?

MR AL-BULANI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

As you know, Iraqi security force is handling the security authority in ten provinces. The provinces that are going to receive the security file are in the process of preparation and finish the transformation. Each area in Iraq is different from...is different from other areas for cer-...for known reasons. But when you asked me about the percentage of the achievements and the accomplishments, there is no percentage. I believe the work...working situations now are better. What we have achieved in the majority of the provinces meet the security expectations that the citizens are able to move in a natural, normal way. And if you watch the match...the ballgame between Zora and Erbil on the Iraqi teams, Erbil and Zora, when you see this incident, you would know that the security has improved in most areas, especially in Iraq.

LTG HELMICK: If I could just add to what Minister Bulani said, General Petraeus will make a recommendation to the secretary of defense and to the president of the United States on the number of units that will remain here. It is a continual assessment based on a number of factors that he takes into consideration. And, as all of you know, security anywhere and in Iraq is a never-ending commitment where

it takes a partnership of not only the Iraqi security forces, that's the police and the military, but at this time with the coalition. Where we can step back, we have stepped back. But again, that's a decision for General Petraeus and the president of the United States. Yes, sir.
In the red.

REP8: My question is to both of you. Can the Iraqi police, on its own, maintain...handle the internal security of the country without the coalition forces, say, as of today?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: First, I would like to talk about the preparation on the readiness of the Iraqi security force. When we talk about their readiness, I would like to say the level of our preparation to handle these responsibilities would depend on a number of elements. First, the conditions and the situations depending on the transformation. I have talked that we...there are 10 provinces under our authority with the Ministry of Defense and some.... We have joint operations in other provinces and with our partners in the Multi-National Force. The transition of authority.... Now, there is a committee...Iraqi committee and a committee from the Multi-National Force that are working together and evaluating the transition. Now we believe the

preparation is suitable to under-...to handle this responsibility. Yet, still, the support and back up is...needs coordination and joint work with our brothers in Ministry of Defense when we need from them to have...to support us in certain areas and if we need the coalition's support. We need...it is a matter of coordination and we're going to work according to this. Okay. After you.

REP9: [Repeats question in Arabic.]

INT: Diyala Satellite Channel. Mr. Minister, you have controlled the police stations that were controlled by militias. Now the citizen is sensing the law is above all in Diyala. But in Baghdad there is this interaction between you and Baghdad Operation Command. When is this interaction going to end?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: As you know, the security work situation...circumstances, especially in areas where we have joint commander between Ministry of Interior and [Ministry of] Defense, we believe the interaction, it happens in all areas and in certain circumstances. But the brothers in Ministry of Defense, they have started to feel that there are some authorities that are not matching the...their field and they are merely police responsibility. So, we...the work is

continuous in this matter and the frie-...brothers in the Ministry of Defense and operation command are discussing with the Ministry of Interior. Ministry of Interior share with other institutes the responsibilities. And we believe there are some procedures that are going to be taken in the future to develop the work in order to transfer the responsibility to the Ministry of Interior in certain areas. We believe the Ministry of Interior and the local police, the national police.... The local police now are responsible for big areas to control opera-...security operations – Basra, Mosul, Maysan, Baghdad, Diyala. As you see now, the troops are participating there are from Ministry of Interior, specialized Ministry of Interior. As you see, we have participated in these operations. When we do participate, we would transfer more than 17 leaders in different departments. And this have a...have participated in the success of these operations with coordination with our brothers in Ministry of Defense in our continuous meetings and joint work depending on coordination.

REP10: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I would like to congratulate you due to Ramadan month coming. Joint question for both of you gentlemen. Mr. Minister, there is this motto saying, “Be to the unjust an enemy.” There are some detainees in the American and Iraqi prisons have been...that

didn't...was not found guilty with any charge and still are not released yet. Do you....? Yet, we see there is an order from judges to release them.

MR AL-BULANI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

The answer is concerning the Ministry of Interior. Part of our file depends on our brothers in Ministry of Justice and the recommendations and instructions that we receive from the brothers from the Judicial Council and prosecution. We have certain cases...they are simple cases such as crossing borders or maybe passports—minor violations that the Iraqi law would have minor penalties on these. The security.... We have a committee to study this matter and we are working together on this matter. I would like to make clear to you that the Iraqi government is paying attention to the detainees and the charged individuals. The situation, the circumstances now have changed in the country. We have a constitution now. We are committed to the human rights. We...the conditions...the humanitarian conditions, we're committed to them. And the release proceed...process is...has certain procedures through committees that are working on it. And as far as the Multi-National [Force] detainees, I believe the general would go into...would answer your question.

LTG HELMICK: I will give you a general answer because detainees are not my area of responsibility. I do know that number one, we do not condone any maltreatment of any detainee that we have—or in any facility in this country for that matter. Number two, Multi-National Force – Iraq has a separate organization that deals specifically with detainees and I can assure you that there is a lot of scrutiny placed on detainees and the detainee situation. Yes, sir.

REP11: I wanted to ask about—this is for both of you. The Los Angeles Times. Prime Minister Maliki said a few days ago that all foreign troops should be out of Iraq by the end of 2011. I'd be curious for the interior minister asking first...answering first. I mean do you feel that you do not need any foreign forces in any role – as an advisor, what have you – at the end of 2011 as the prime minister has outlined? So I'd be curious just for both of your thoughts on this. Thank you.

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I believe the Iraqi delegation that is negotiating have received instructions from the min-...prime minister and from the Iraqi government to show more flexibility in determining the basics of

the agreement. I believe the technical details are depending on the political, the security, the economical situations. Con...the timetable and the timing for the withdrawal, it is still within the frame of the talks that have been shown by the negotiating sides. The negotiating circumstances needs from us to pay attention to the technical.... The Iraqi government and the U.S. government are working together in positive way in order to assure and to conduct the agreement that would grant Iraq and the region good interests and good relations between Iraq and U.S. to start from strategic interests that are going to achieve benefit and stability on the political and economical level. It is a will that is determined by the independence of the government in determining the interests of Iraq above all.

LTG HELMICK: I will just comment that it is a very complex strategic issue being worked at the highest levels of the U.S. government, General Petraeus, and the Government of Iraq. Okay. In the back. Yes, sir.

REP12: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Mr. Minister, Independent....

LTG HELMICK: Go ahead. Go ahead. Yeah.

REP12: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Mr. Minister, Independent Leak[?]. We have inaugurated 16th Street in Doura area but we have found a sniper in the area. What is your comment on this incident?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: These incidents that are witnessed in different areas. We cannot evaluate the security situation according to them. As you...it is possible that we find certain threat that the existence of a sniper might form and a number of injuries. But we can ask where is the sniper now? There...it is for sure he is either killed or detained by the police or Army troops. So as you...I don't believe this criminal is going to be allowed loose like this. We are doing our duty, our job in the security operation in Baghdad.

LTG HELMICK: Yes, sir.

REP13: Ali Hamadani, NPR, National Public Radio. [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Mr. Minister, some warrant arrests have been issued against member of Sahwa elements. They have been working for over a year and a half with U.S. forces and they are being paid by the U.S.

forces. Now the Iraqi forces are chasing them. What is the situation now? Are they wanted by the security system? Their offices have been closed.

MR AL-BULANI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Now, let me first distinguish between the warrant arrests that are targeting elements or the whole phenomena. It is targeting elements that have certain charges against them. The law doesn't protect the elements who would join Sahwa. As the Iraqi law stipulates, in the case of an Iraqi officer is involved in a crime or something like it, he's subject to interrogation and to the law. So, as you see, we do not have double standards according to this. We need to distinguish, to separate between when the judicial system issue a warrant, it doesn't target the phenomena, al Sahwa, in general, but it targets elements. Al Sahwa is a protest of people that have been suppressed by al-Qaida. Al-Qaida have hurted these people...have hurt the tribesmen so these... We have executive procedures. The system we are dealing with every day, we might see some arrest warrant...warrant arrests against a number of Sahwa elements, but I don't think it would form a big deal.

LTG HELMICK: We're going to take two more questions.

REP14: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: [Unintelligible] Magazine. I have a joint question for both of the gentlemen. There are news about detaining the mastermind behind the explosion of the governmental institution and Sadr issue...in Sadr City. Would you please, Mr. Minister and General, would you give us details concerning the detainee and is he an official in the government?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: First, not all the operations are announcable[sic]. Each operation have certain circumstances. All the elements of...that are involved in the crime. If we see good coming from this, you see now...our ministry now is working in a clear, open way and we are delivering our statements to the media. We estimate the information before announcing them.

LTG HELMICK: And I'd just like to add on that, we work very, very closely with all Iraqi security forces, both the military and the police, on all operations. Okay. Last question. Yes, sir.

REP15: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Japanese News Agency. Mr. Minister, one of the [unintelligible] have talked earlier about the silence gun which is [unintelligible] in Baghdad which would bring the story of Baghdad sniper. They are targeting high figures in the society. There is some talks about a list of victims. Do you have a plan to protect the political figures?

MR AL-BULANI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We wanted to classify the assassinations, I believe the assassinations targeting political figures. We are extremely sorry for these incidents. I believe the organized crime might target these elements...these figures in order to keep the security file unstable and critical through conducting their assassinations, especially if they conducted...especially if they had targeted a special class in society. You have mentioned...what we have...what you have mentioned is part of the intelligence we are receiving now and we need to investigate the truth about these information we are receiving. Some of these assassinations are conducted.... Yes, the Ministry of Interior is doing its duty and working on pursuing these fig-...these elements and detaining them and bringing them to court to receive their punishment. Yes...yet, to find a way to prevent these assassinations, we're working on certain measures and the citizen is going to sense the improvement in the security field in all over Iraq,

especially in Baghdad. Now we're focusing on developing the mechanisms in preventing and stopping these crimes.

LTG HELMICK: Thank you very much for being here today with us. And again, I'd like to thank Minister Bulani for his leadership in a ministry that is providing valuable security for the citizens of Iraq. Shukran jaziilan.

MR AL-BULANI: Shukran jaziilan.