

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Brigadier General David G. Perkins, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq
Major General Mohammed al-Askari, Spokesman, Iraqi Ministry of Defense**

DATE: July 30, 2008

TRANSCRIBED BY:

SOS INTERNATIONAL LTD.

PARTICIPANTS:

**Brigadier General David Perkins
Major General Mohammed al-Askari**

REPORTERS:

Ahmed Jassem from Al-Arabiya

REPORTERS 1-10

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: My sisters, my brothers, I want to welcome you here today in my

conference...in our conference...our joint conference today. I want to welcome my colleague, MNF-I spokesman, in this conference today. And I hope that we answer all your questions and provide you with all the info that we have here today in order to accomplish your missions as well. I know that you all know the security work is continuous with a big momentum in all Iraq...throughout Iraq in order to get rid of all the terrorists or terrorism groups and outlaws. That's why our capabilities is...are increasing day by day. And of course, as our security forces' capabilities are increasing. And the cooperation of the Iraqi people actually something is pleasing us and we are seeing that every day as well. The operations...before we talk about the operations in Diyala, there was a plan, a central plan to pursue all the terrorism groups in all the hot spots and to also pursue and watch their movements from [one] area to another. And that's why you'll see that the operation command in Basra is continuing to work with their aggressive operations in the different areas in Basra. And they were capable of confiscating a lot of...seizing a lot of weapons...weapon caches up there and also to pursue all the outlaws and gangsters up there. And every day we see the Baghdad...the Basra Operation Command there in doing a lot of operations and also in Maysan Province. Yesterday the security forces, they actually arrested five gangs and then they were...that gang was doing or forging documents. And also the security forces

in Maysan was able to seize a lot of trucks that belongs to the government as well. Also, their operations in Northern Babil...the police and security forces in Northern Babil, they were able to pursue and chase a lot of groups, insurgent groups. And they were able to arrest about 65 targets and confiscate and seize a lot of weapons. They are working in Tharthar area also. And the Ninawa command, operation command is working and achieving a lot of security gains. And they were...last week they were able to stop a lot of suicide attacks and also seize a lot of operations equi-...and seize a lot of equipment in Ninawa. And no doubt that you probably watched the work...accurate work that the [unintelligible] doing in Baghdad throughout the visit of the imam this week also, although that we had a bombing in Karrada area. Before the bombing, the media started leaking some information that the visitors or the pilgrimage were targeted by terrorist groups in the Maysan area, but this is not correct or invalid[sic] information. And I think the...that wasn't successful also. But although we had three bombings in Karrada area, but we were successful to actually provide security. This is a small introduction of all the operations...security operations that we have done. And I want to say that all the operations...security operations are continuous in all areas. And we have...we're doing some work and operations in Maysan area, but that doesn't mean we're not doing work in other provinces like

Ninawa. But we're going to continue to pursue all the terrorist groups and not give them the chance to start working again. Now the Tiding of Peace Operation in Maysan area is continuous as well. And we are working on also Diyala area and putting all the plans and studying the area, and also studying the society and the population of the area as well. As you know that the theater in Diyala affects the theater in Baghdad. That's why we put the plan carefully and we used the best forces that we have in the Army and the police. And we gave the time for our forces to organize...to be organized and give them some time to take some rest before the op...start of operation. And this operation is going to have...we'll have all our forces and sectors participating in this operation. And we announced the beginning of this operation yesterday by the prominent figures and the sheiks and then the government in that province and they're all supportive of it. The work is going to be focused in Diyala on four dynamics. The first dynamic is going to be about spreading our...employing our forces and controlling the area, the outskirts and the central of the city and not give the chance to all...to any of the terrorist groups to control the city. That's why since yesterday we started the first phase to deploy our forces in all the areas of Diyala and to secure it as well. The second dynamic or the second thing is to...is related to the second page is to pursue the terrorist groups and to seize all the weapons and to.... And that's

according to the Iraqi laws. And the third dynamic is going to be or is related to getting all the displaced families back to Diyala Province and to take care of this society that was oppressed by the outlaws and the terrorist groups and elements. And this fourth dynamic will...is related to the reconstruction in the [unintelligible] city and also taking care of the agricultural projects as well and getting back to normalcy in Diyala. I have to indicate that there is a great role and great coordination between the MOD forces, MOI, and the coalition. And there is a great role for...that the governor and the provincial members are playing. And also the Awakening groups as well are working with us. And yesterday we opened 13 support offices in Diyala Province. And those offices they are not...or centers, they are not armed...they are unarmed centers. The only thing they do is provide information and provide services to the security forces while they're doing their job. Until now and so far, yesterday is just the beginning of the operation. But the total work that we have done is that we arrested about 50 terrorists or targets, destroyed and confiscated about 15 gangs of caches. We about...we defused about ten car bombs and we confiscated a lot of weapons. What we've seen and we've touched in Diyala in the past two days is that we are lifting the...a fear barrier between the people and our security forces. Before when we have done, you know, any operations in the past, the people used to come to us in

disguise and try to give us the information as quick as possible and try not to show that they are cooperating with the security forces. But what we've touched...yesterday it was totally different. Actually a lot of people came to us; a lot of women, a lot of young men came to us and tried to help us in providing information to us. And when we asked them how can we provide security to them or how can you protect them, they said to us that they don't want us to protect them. They know how to protect themselves and they want to talk out loudly how they are against terrorists and terrorism groups and this is a good thing. Yesterday also there was an operation in Diyala. We are about...there was about four people, we have their names. They were trying to plant IEDs in the road that the...used by coalition and Iraqi security forces and, of course, indeed, by the cooperation of the Iraqi people, we were able to arrest Mubarek[ph] [Unintelligible] Hassem[ph] [Unintelligible] and Hassem[ph] Muqtabi[ph]. And last, before I want...before I defer to my colleague to talk about the operations or what's from the coalition side, we have 565 registrations...voters' registration centers. This...they work from the morning 'til the evening, apart from the holidays. Those centers, they are secured and they're...by the Iraqi security forces, and if you want to go and register, you're welcome to do that.

**BRIG GEN
PERKINS:**

Well, thank you, General. Good morning and As-Salāmu `Alaykum. It's an honor to join Major General Mohammed al-Askari here today. We have become good friends in just a very short amount of time since I've been here. And I have found him to be a great soldier and admirable example of the Iraqi Army's professionalism. The partnership between the Iraqi security forces and coalition forces continues to grow stronger and continues to contribute to the decline of violence throughout Iraq. However, this progress made by joint security operations couldn't have been possible without support of the Iraqi people. It was Iraqis who came together in their neighborhoods and took a stand against terrorists, criminals, and special groups. The Iraqi people rejected those bent on creating anarchy and division amongst them. And it became a key factor in the decrease of violence that we have seen over the past year. Monday's suicide bombings in Baghdad and in Kirkuk are tragic reminders that this is a difficult and challenging fight. The enemy is still capable of using high-profile attacks as it attempts to incite ethnosectarian violence, disrupt Iraq's democratic processes, and pit Iraqis against Iraqis. As our thoughts are with the families of the victims from Monday's attacks, it is also encouraging to see the signs of unity amongst Iraqis. No longer do these high-profile attacks unleash cycles of ethnosectarian violence and retribution. Just as Iraqis rejected the terrorists and their violent ideologies,

Iraqis now are also refusing to be divided and pitted against one another. The Iraqi people have shown their commitment to securing their cities and neighborhoods and they are not giving up the security gains that saw ethnosectarian attacks fall by 98% in the last 12 months. Nevertheless, Iraqi and coalition forces are undeterred in our mission to relentlessly pursue terrorists, criminals, and special groups. Our joint security operations in Basra, Baghdad, Mosul, Amara, and now Diyala have made progress in establishing security and the rule of law. As Major General Mohammed al-Askari has discussed with the voter registration security plans, the Iraqi Army and police are steadily increasing their capability to maintain security and protect the rights of Iraqi citizens to participate in the political process. With the Iraqi forces improving their capacity, coalition forces are progressively transitioning to provide more training to the Iraqi forces and to provide greater support in developing Iraq's economy, government institutions, and infrastructure. Our partnership mission is to continue to support in protecting the population and support Iraqis in using their great resources to build their great nation. We are proud and honored to be partners in that process. Thank you once again and we are now willing to take your questions.

REP1:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Major General, as you know that the operation in Diyala has been delayed and...compared to other provinces. And this province is suffering from terrorist groups more than other areas. And you know that. Why is the delay when it comes to Diyala operation?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: First of all, I want to say that Diyala wasn't neglected in the way you just mentioned. There was operations a year ago in Diyala. And we had a...coalition forces or Multi-National Force played a big role in providing security up there. And that's when we created the 5th Division also and the national police. And Diyala is a big city and it has a lot of, you know, different ethnicities and it's a diversified city. And it has also the mountains that we have around the city. Also we have farms and orchards. And that's...it helps gangsters to have, like, to fight and hide in those farms. And it helps gangsters to have this guerilla war they want to have. And that's why we have to prioritize our work and the targets like Baghdad, Basra, Mosul. After finishing all the work in those areas, we started...now we're working on Diyala again. And we are not working or fighting an organized army. We are fighting terrorist groups that's hiding and taking people...or using people as cover for them and trying to kill people. And that's why this work at

the...relies of...on preparing our forces and the intel info that we have. So that's why before we started this operation we had a study in place...an accurate study. As far as this being secretive about operations, I know that there was some leakage to the...of information to the media. And that, of course, this is something you can't hide. When you are gathering forces around Baghdad and around other areas, of course that's going to give the impression to the media there's going to be an operation in Diyala, for instance. And...but we...the operation was August 1st and we are...we actually started the operation before August 1st. And I think this gives...this is a good thing. And operation...you know the mechanism of execution of this operation...the execution, the preparations that we put in place, this is all going to help to suc-...for this operation to succeed. There is also coordination between the security forces in the area. About eight terrorists yesterday, they ran away and...people in other neighborhoods helped us to catch them. And we have work of the...the 8th Division working in Wasit area and the Baghdad area. We're also...this is integrated work trying to surround Diyala Province and to help provide security and achieve our mission. Please, if somebody's...ask any question; please give your name and who you are directing your question to, me or General Perkins.

REP2: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: You said yesterday that you opened 13 support offices or centers and you said that you opened 13 centers for the sheiks...for tribe sheiks. But when I called yesterday to...when we contacted the commander of Awakening Groups there, Abu[ph] Taqwa[ph], he assured us that we.... When we called the tribe leaders, Mr. Mosun[ph] and Sheik Mosun[ph], Sheik Hawaz[ph] and they assured us that nobody contacted them. And so is there any discrimination here?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I just want to say that the work is security work and military work is military work. And that the sheiks and Awakening...the sheiks...the Army's one army and the police is one police. So the matter of executing security operations, this is limited to the security forces. And so we won't give the...a chance to other elements to exploit the chance here and the situation and try to use it to their advantage. Even the prime minister ordered all security forces to get extra or get paid in advance...to get the Awakening groups' salaries in advance to command their work and their big role. But what you just mentioned and the names you mentioned, I think the work is...we're just starting this operation. And I think the

doors are open to all the sheiks of the tribes. And to any Iraqi citizen who wants to provide security and secure Diyala Province, the doors are still open. And we're still in the beginning and we're going to accept anyone who wants to help and support.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Major General, what is the size of force of...that...American force that is participating in the operations in Diyala? And my other question is about...in regards to the bombings in Bag-...that happened yesterday in Baghdad. Do you think that's a security vio-...spikes in violence or security violations because of the visits or the pilgrimage visits to the imam?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I think this...the security forces that we have is enough to secure the area, achieve the mission, and I think we prepared everything. And the security forces, how they are going to go search the areas, cover the areas, and secure the areas and how we're going to...plans are in place to how to maintain all the gains...and security gains as well. The Iraqi security forces, we have two divisions: the 5th Division and their area of responsibility is in Diyala province. We have two...more than two divisions from the

Iraqi forces. We have more than one division from the MOI and there is a real active participation from the Multi-National Force and that's the support to this. The Iraqi security forces...there is one brigade from the coalition forces. And we rely on the air support from the sec-...American or coalition forces. I don't think we need any infantry but...from the coalition side, but we have coordinated our work to have a joint operation here. The second part of your question is the number of people you have seen yesterday. And that's a big burden for peo-...for Iraqi security forces and now. And the bombing that al-Qaida and their ways and tactics to do this. And they try to exploit the opportunities and try to exploit everything to do their bombings. And I think they were unable to do it because they weren't able to do their big attacks, they try to do this. They work on...they draw[?] on people from other areas, from outside of Iraq to get those foreign fighters. And they failed to get...from a year ago, they failed...al-Qaida failed to get all those foreign fighters to come to Iraq and do their suicide bombings. And now they've started working on the second line which is again, recruiting Iraqi...young Iraqi people to work with them. And now they failed, too, because of, you know, they...initiatives in Anbar and how Anbar people and other people started working and...with us, not against us. And then now they started thinking about the weakest things which is the third line. They're using...the corrupt

ideology or strategy that they have is using children and women to conduct their...perpetrate their attacks. And that shows you how weak they are as they try to recruit new volunteers to...that carry the same ideas that they have...the same ideology. But because of the help and the participation of all Iraqi people in facing and...the al-Qaida...and rejecting al-Qaida, now they have fewer and fewer chances. What happened in...yesterday, it means...it doesn't mean that we had a security problem and we do undertake responsibility for that. But there are also real justifications that might help us here. And if people look at it from the way...how Iraqi security forces and security forces that helped and worked with us...with the people. And there are a lot of restrictions for the security forces as far as, you know, searching women. And also we have lack of female searchers and we're trying to fill that gap and shortage by recruiting more female to...females to the Iraqi security forces. But we had Iraqi police, Iraqi Army in the...on the streets searching and trying to provide security. I think we have done a good job. One or two attacks is not a bad thing compared to the numbers, the huge numbers of people we had in...on the streets yesterday and the day before.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: My question is to Mr. Mohammed al-Askari. There is a...one...a

complete division in Jalilam[ph]-[unintelligible] area that controls those areas and it doesn't belong to the MOI and this division, according to what the minister of interior said.

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: There is a brigade that was put there because we needed them and after Diyala operation, we're going to reassess the situation and we're going to reassess all the security forces and we're going to redeploy them in all the areas also.

REP5: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Ahmed Jassem from.... My question to David...General David Perkins. Is the coalition or American forces going to only support...play the support role in Diyala operations or are you going to have a broader role? And my question to Mohammed al-Askari. Is there any timetable for the operation in Diyala or is going to end whenever the security is there?

BRIG GEN PERKINS: With regards to the role of the coalition forces, the operations in Diyala from the beginning have been Iraqi planned and are currently Iraqi led and that will continue to be the case here. As the general has said, the majority of the effort of the coalition forces are

focused on supporting that effort, providing what we call enabling capability such as air support, helicopter support, some logistical support, engineer support. Those things that complete the capability of the Iraqi security forces and enable them to accomplish their mission as laid[?] out. So throughout this campaign it will remain an Iraqi planned and Iraqi led with the coalition forces in support as needed as the campaign develops.

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

There is no timetable in place for this operation. They can...the operation is going to continue and we're going to continue to disarm the areas and to provide security.

REP6:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

My first question is to Mohammed al-Askari. A lot of people are review-...that's reviewing the political situation here in Iraq, they think that the deterioration of security situation in Diyala is because of the...a lot of terrorist groups coming from Iran and to Diyala and vice versa. And so what are the plans you have in place to stop the infiltration of terrorist groups to Diyala? My other question to General Perkins. There are reports, after the bombings in Kirkuk, said that American soldiers started fearing any woman wearing this

veil or burqa. So how do you deal or comment on that?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

The first...your first question, I know this is correct and we know how...we do have information about those peo-...terrorists infiltrating from the other areas and coming to the Diyala area. That's why they always try to disguise because they don't have the courage to face or confront with the Iraqi security forces. We have studied this thing deeply and we are putting the solutions...how to put...to stop this, not only in Diyala but in the southern, western, eastern time. That's why we are going to consolidate the forces and increase the forces on the borders. Also, we are increasing our capabilities as far as, you know, reconning the areas and observing the borders and trying to control the forts on the borders and control all the main roads. And that's why it's all in...it's taken into consideration. We're not going to give the chance to anyone to infiltrate to Diyala or ins-...or outside of Diyala.

BRIG GEN PERKINS:

Yeah. With regards to the female suicide bombers, obviously a very difficult problem. It is, as the general said, indicative of the level of violence and the bankrupt philosophy that these terrorists and al-Qaida have that they will resort to using suicide bombers and

specifically female suicide bombers. The coalition forces are very respectful of the Iraqi culture and traditions. And so this is a, as I said, a difficult problem to deal with. The good news, as I said in my opening statement, is that the response of the Iraqi people to these bombing incidents, both in Baghdad and Kirkuk, has been one not of resorting to ethnosectarian violence, but of coming together to decide how they are going to fight this and soundly reject the philosophy as espoused by al-Qaida. One example of the Iraqi people coming together to fight this is the group that is being stood up known as “the Daughters of Iraq”, female Iraqis who have volunteered and are going through training so they can take part with the Iraqi security forces and the coalition security forces to help in the security of areas, help with being able to screen other female Iraqis, and providing an additional capability such that the coalition forces can continue to respect the culture and traditions here, however, add to the security situation overall. So again, a very difficult problem set. But again though, a great indication of the Iraqi people coming together to try to solve that difficult problem set in conjunction with the coalition forces.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: You have mentioned...Major General Askari, you mentioned that that operation is related...in Diyala is related to operations in

Baghdad. And you said operations in Diyala, according to your statements...previous statements, is related and connected to the operations in Mosul, too, because these two provinces now, they are like safe havens to al-Qaida members. In your opinion, are the terrorist groups or elements are capable of moving from...maneuvering from Diyala to Ninawa Province and vice versa? And is Iraq...has Iraqi forces put any plans in place to stop the movement of al-Qaida?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I won't...what I wanted to say is the Ninawa command...operation command, they are achieving a lot of success. And there's going to be a consolidation for this command also; a great consolidation in order to kill and get rid of all the safe havens and of all the terrorist groups. And if we have...if we just review that the security situation before and after accomplishing or starting this operation, of course you'll see improvement in the security situation. There are going to be efforts and focus by the operation command and by...from central government to actually support the op-...Ninawa Operation Command. As I told you, how we're going to prevent the movement of those elements, I think this is going to be difficult because they're not well-known figures to us. They do have forged

documents. But we do have previous experiences, you know, when they...as, for instance, terrorists that fled from Basra to other provinces that were caught somewhere else. So the work is not a divided work. We...it's a continuous work. And there is a...we have a crisis cell here headed or chaired by the chief in command of prime minister, and they working very hard to distribute all the targets in all the provinces. And they have a tracking plan in place. We also rely on the Iraqi Air Force that's started to work and they are capable of, you know, working and providing air support and reconning and providing, you know, coverage for that. The Air Force now working or providing a lot of work to provide, you know, to cover Ninawa, Anbar, everything and with high technology. And so the sharing of information and the coordination with the coalition forces or Multi-National Force here that has a great technology and capability as far as doing, you know, reconning the borders. And so if you look at the work and the things that we are doing and how the terrorist elements and groups are suffering and they're unable to move or maneuver out of their areas. So what all they do is they're using those corrupt ideology and they're...you know, like by using those desperate ways of putting, you know, car bombs or suicide bombers and all that.

REP8:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Twenty-four events that's going...we're going to have like religious events that's going to happen, about 24 ones that's going to happen. How is it going to...? How are the forces...? How are you going to organize those ceremonies and those religious ceremonies? Putting in mind that we are the only country that having these ceremonies. How you are going to also fill the shortage of female security guards or searchers? Thirdly, the Karrada area. This is a well-known area that every time we have an event or religious event we have any...we having bombings and attacks. Do you think this...? Don't you think that this area needs to be taken care of?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: What's your first question?

REP8: [Repeats question in Arabic.]

INT: My first question was about the 24 religious events that we're going to have.

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: As you know that the Iraq situation is a special situation. And if you just look at in the past, like in the previous years, how we had...the situation was different in 2005 and in 2006 and now it's different

too. So Insha'Allah, God willing, we think that things are going to get better and we're going to have smaller checkpoints. And it's going to be, you know, a regular, you know, observances and all that. So hopefully, after finishing or getting rid of all of the terrorist groups and after the rule of law prevails, then this is going to turn to being a, you know, normal life. Everything is going to go back to normalcy. And we'll be able to...that's after we are able or capable of maintaining the security gains. And Karrada area, unfortunately, we had a lot of attacks in there. That doesn't mean we're not taking care of Karrada area. But as you know that there is highly populated areas in Karrada area. And these are old areas that can be used... especially the terrorist groups are using women right now that can be exploited by the terrorist groups. And especially when...you know the culture here – and Iraqi security forces, the men cannot search the women – can be exploited by the terrorist groups. And that's why we saw that in the attacks in Karrada. And I agree with you; Karrada area is [unintelligible] attacks. And if you know how many op-...that security forces are doing a great job. And if you just know how many operations they were able to or how many attacks they were able to stop there...the security forces was able to stop in the Karrada area was way more than the attacks that's been perpetrated in the Karrada area. And the other question about the shortage or the lack of female searchers, we are...in the Ministry of

Defense we are working and studying how to activate the role of the female security or female soldiers and female security guards. We also are getting equipment that helps to search women or those...through using this technology or this equipment that we can use and with...and would help us with the lack of...or shortage of women. We can search women without having to come close to them and all that. And I think this is not a...I don't think they are going to continue...al-Qaida will be able to do this a lot. Because I think...I don't think they can recruit more women. I think they only have 10 or 15 of them. And I don't think it's that easy to recruit women to commit suicide bombings. And if they're claim[?] that al-Qaida is.... I think they're desperate and they're suffering and they are giving a clear picture on how they are killers. They don't care about religion. They don't care about human being. The only thing they're trying to do is to kill people with any mean they can.

REP9: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I have two questions. The first one is that you said there is 1...35 wanted individuals that was arrested in Diyala area. Do you have a list of...they were in al-Qaida. And do you have any list of that? Can you...General Perkins, can you describe to us what are the problems or the challenges that American and Iraqi forces faced in the first stages...in their first stages in this operation?

**MAJ GEN AL-
ASKARI:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

As far as the 35 individuals who were...the ones that was arrested, our work wasn't random. There was a plan in place. And we had coordination between the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi judicial system and also the other security forces. We also have lists in place and we have warrant...arrest warrant orders as well in place. All the.... Yes, some of the people we arrested, they belong to secur...to terrorist groups; some of them al-Qaida, belong to al-Qaida...are part of al-Qaida. They were arrested yesterday. And the investigation is still undergoing so we'll know through the investigation about their affiliations. There is going to be media coverage for Diyala operations. And we're going...we formed a media cell that would work in...for Diyala operations. And we're going...that's going to coordinate their work with security forces there. And we are going to inform you. I can't give you the number of al-Qaida members that we arrested. I have the number, but I'm not going to give you the number. We do have a list. We know when.... Go ahead, General.

**BRIG GEN
PERKINS:**

A couple of challenges. The first one is the basic kind of challenges that all good soldiers have to deal with. And the Iraqi soldiers and

the coalition soldiers, as usual, have done exceptionally well. Very tough conditions out there. Very hot, very dry. There's palm groves. There's other agricultural areas that provide enclaves and hiding areas for the terrorists. So it just takes a lot of physical effort to go through this difficult terrain in very hot and demanding conditions. And both the Iraqi security force soldiers as well as the coalition soldiers have done an admirable job in working under very difficult conditions out there and continue, even as we speak, and will continue to the end of the operation. The second part of it is an immense amount of coordination has gone on between the coalition forces and the Iraqi security forces in preparation for this – going over the intelligence products to make sure that to the maximum extent possible we have done everything we can to mitigate any collateral damage, to make sure that we minimize the impact on the law-abiding citizens in that area, to make sure our intelligence focus specifically on known criminal and terrorist activities there, and to make sure that as we, with the Iraqi security forces, conduct this operation, we get the maximum cooperation from the people who live there today and who will have to continue to live there after we leave. And I think the general made a very good point that the cooperation that we are getting from the people who live in Diyala has been exceptional. They are coming forth. They are giving information. They want to take control of the area themselves. They

want to have the rule of law be the rule of the day there in Diyala. And therefore...and how we as coalition forces and Iraqi security forces conduct our operations is probably just as important as what operations we conduct. So the fact that the Iraqi security forces and the coalition forces are conducting this in a very coordinated and in a very disciplined and in a very focused way ensures that not only do we get the maximum benefit with regard to ridding the area of terrorists and criminals, but also that we have gained the support and we will continue to gain the support of the law-abiding citizens that live in Diyala.

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Last question, please.

REP10:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

General Askari, I have two questions. The first question is after finishing the operations in Diyala, do you see or the MOD had put in their consideration to get or receive more security ca-...security file in other provinces? And how do you think...how do you look at the Awakening groups? Are they still an obstacle in the way of receiving the security file in provinces?

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

My brothers, there is a deal or agreement with the coalition forces. When we...our capabilities are growing day after day and we are getting the responsibility or receiving the responsibility of security. They...not the security file, but the responsibility of security in other provinces. And also as Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense, we are...by the end of this year, think we are going to receive the responsibility of security in, if not all the provinces, most of them. And we are getting prepared to be capable of receiving the security responsibility. We are working according to a program that we have been working on for awhile now. And we are able to receive security responsibility in about 10 provinces. And we are hoping by the end of this year we will receive responsibility of security in all of the provinces. Secur-...Awakening groups, they weren't an obstacle. They were a help actually. But as you know, in the beginning of any work and any co-...there will be problems, there will be hurdles. And...but we were able to overcome those problems and we were able to work together. And they were the one who stood by us...by our side to help us to provide the intelligence products, the work, and also the intel, all the work and help securing the areas. But we say again, security forces are security forces. The Army is the Army and the Awakening groups are Awakening

groups. They're...and they're organizations...support organizations and they are supporting us. And they cannot take our role and be prima-...take, you know, primacy as far as providing security for people and we be in support. They are support. They provide support to us. They sacrificed, they worked with us, they cooperated with us. And we have to embrace this experiment here and we work with them. But as far as countering terrorism and fighting terrorism, this is something left to the security forces. But they can help and contribute to how to maintain our gains and security gains after, you know, cleansing areas after operations. I want to thank all of you here and I want to thank the general.

REP10: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: My question is...was...the names of the operations in all provinces.

MAJ GEN AL-ASKARI: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Do you want me to give it to you? You're the media personality or you want to... you have to know the names of operations. I mean I'm trying to close the conference here and you're trying to ask me about the names of the operations. I want to thank everybody here. I want to thank General Perkins that covered...clearly today covered and provided all accurate information. I want to welcome you here

all. Thank you today.

**BRIG GEN
PERKINS:**

Thank you.

**MAJ GEN AL-
ASKARI:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Thank you very much.

**BRIG GEN
PERKINS:**

Shukran.

,