

**PRESS CONFERENCE:**

Major General Kevin J. Bergner, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq  
Major General (Sel.) Brooks L. Bash, Commander, Coalition Air Force Training Team,  
MNSTC-I

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**PARTICIPANTS:**

Major General Kevin Bergner  
Major General Brooks Bash

**REPORTERS:**

Ernesto Londoño from The Washington Post and unidentified reporters from Aria Newspaper and Radio Sawa.

**REPORTERS 1-6**

\*REP1 = REPORTER 1  
\*INT = INTERPRETER

**MAJGEN BERGNER:**

Good afternoon and as-salaam aleikum.

I'm joined today by Major General (select) Brooks Bash, the Commander of the Coalition Air Force Trai Team, part of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq. He will talk with you in a few moments about the coalition support to the Iraqi Air Force – an important component of their growing security forces.

Let me start off today by talking about the horrific attack that took place yesterday.

The Multi-National Force-Iraq joins the US Embassy in strongly condemning the attack in Baghdad yesterday that killed and wounded innocent civilians. We also join the Iraqi people in expressing our condolences to the families of the victims in this barbaric attack. We are working closely with Iraqi authorities to investigate the circumstances and assist their efforts to bring those who perpetrated this attack to justice.

Yesterday's attack is a barbaric reminder that there is still much work to do in improving security for the citizens of Iraq.

In that regard, Prime Minister Maliki is directing Iraqi Security Forces in simultaneous operations in Iraq's three major cities and now also in Maysan province. These operations are intended to restore the rule of law so all Iraqi citizens can share in the security gains achieved by so many over the last year. During the past week, Iraqi Security Forces conducted ten battalion-level operations in Mosul and three in the rest of Ninewa province.

Operations in Baghdad in the past week saw the Iraqi Army move through 16 sectors in the Sadr City area of east Baghdad. They captured more than 30 caches of weapons and munitions, bringing the total to more than 188 since operations there intensified last month. Cache finds in the Baghdad Security Districts are the highest on record, with the average weekly number tripling over the last four weeks.

On Saturday, Iraqi Army Soldiers found and captured four weapons caches in Baghdad.  
(SLIDE 02 – Rashid Cache 01)

One was particularly large. Soldiers from the 25th Brigade of the 6th Iraqi Army Division operating in the West Rashid area of Baghdad received a tip from a former militia member. He told them where they could find a significant stockpile of weapons. A unit led by the 3/25/6 Iraqi Army Battalion Commander, COL Mohammed, followed the information to a warehouse where they found and secured these weapons, taking them out of the hands of extremist militias. (SLIDE 03 – Rashid Cache 02)

The cache included:

- 90 122mm rockets
- 90 new rocket fuses

(SLIDE 04 – Rashid Cache 03)

- 6 Iranian mortars
- 22 blocks of C4 explosive
- 11 blocks of TNT

(SLIDE 05 – Rashid Cache 04)

- 8 Explosively Formed Penetrators
- EFP components (significant items include 20 EFP back plates, 324 plastic pipes, 20 digital timers and 4 Passive Infra-Red devices).

Even amidst horrific attacks like the one yesterday, the Iraqi people are courageously pressing forward, and Iraq's government and coalition forces are pressing to do more for the citizens of Iraq.

(SLIDE 07 – IA at Ar Rissala)

Last Wednesday, Iraqi medical personnel and doctors from the National Iraqi Assistance Center (NIAC) visited the Ar Rissala health clinic in Basrah and treated more than 500 patients.

(SLIDE 08 – IA clinic visit to Az Zubayr)

Under the direction and coordination of COL Billal of the Iraqi Army's 51st Brigade, 14th Division, Iraqi medical professionals also visited two other Basrah neighborhoods on Thursday, treating more than 1,000 patients. The visits were made possible because of security provided by Iraqi Soldiers from the 26th Brigade, 7th Division and the 51st Brigade, 14th Division of the Iraqi Army.

In Mahmudiyah last week, Soldiers from the 25th Brigade of the 6th Iraqi Army teamed with Coalition forces to conduct medical assistance operations in a northern neighborhood that was once besieged by extremists. Iraqi Army medics and medical professionals from an area clinic treated more than 700 patients.

(SLIDE 09 – Title Slide)

Northwest of Mahmudiyah in the village of al-Dhour, local leaders and Iraqi Police officials re-opened a refurbished water treatment facility that will serve area families and businesses. The facility had been abandoned in 2004 because of violence in the village, but today it is back in operation.

(SLIDE 10 – Rashid "Olympics" 01)

On Saturday, over 40 soccer teams from across al-Rashid kicked off a three-month long soccer "Olympics." The more than 400 players were part of an opening ceremony attended by local district and provincial leaders and soccer fans of all ages.

The event was planned and executed by the Rashid District Council Youth Director, and the security plan was developed and carried out by the area's Iraqi Security Forces commander. Soldiers from the 43rd Brigade, 11th Iraqi Army Division, commanded by COL Haythm Abdul Khather, were on hand to ensure the revelers stayed safe and enjoyed the day.

By the time it concludes with a championship game in September, more than 330 teams from 14 communities will have played and competed for the crown.

(SLIDE 11 – Baghdad al-Jadida pool 01)

In the eastern Baghdad neighborhood of Baghdad al-Jadida, the community's swimming pool, which had been closed for several years, was re-opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony and then thrown open to the area's children.

(SLIDE 12 – Baghdad al-Jadida pool 02)

The pool was revitalized by local contractors using local workers.

(SLIDE 13 – Baghdad al-Jadida pool 03)

Security for the re-opening ceremony was a joint effort of the Iraqi National Police and the Iraqi Army, with support from Coalition forces.

(SLIDE 14 – Title Slide)

As security improves, dedicated Iraqi leaders, civil servants, Soldiers, police officers, and citizen volunteers are working each day to build upon these gains. Coalition forces are working closely with them and will continue to partner in ways that re-vitalize the economy, restore the agricultural capabilities and improve the availability of services.

Nevertheless, as yesterday's attack grimly reminds us, much work remains ahead of us, and it will take place amidst a tough security environment... one that requires a concerted and sustained effort by Iraqi and Coalition forces.

Following General Bash's remarks, we'll be glad to take your questions.

**MAJ GEN BASH:**

THANK YOU FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH YOU. I AM PROUD AND HONORED TO SERVE ALONGSIDE IRAQ'S AIRMEN, INCLUDING MY FRIEND AND PARTNER IN BUILDING THIS NATION'S AIR FORCE, STAFF LIEUTENANT GENERAL KAMAL, COMMANDER OF THE IRAQI AIR FORCE. TODAY I WILL DISCUSS THEIR RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS WELL AS THE CONTINUED CHALLENGES THEY FACE. I WILL PROVIDE A FEW OPENING COMMENTS BEFORE ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS.

THE SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ CONTINUES TO IMPROVE EACH AND EVERY DAY. DURING THE PAST 3 MONTHS WE HAVE WITNESSED OUR PARTNERS IN THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES TAKE THE LEAD IN 3 SIGNIFICANT OPERATIONS IN BASRAH, SADR CITY, AND MOSUL. THE SUCCESS OF THESE OPERATIONS IS A CULMINATION OF THE INVESTMENTS MADE BY THE CITIZENS OF IRAQ AND THE COALITION TO IMPROVE THE CAPABILITY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND PROFESSIONALISM OF IRAQ'S SECURITY FORCES. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT TOGETHER WE CONTINUE TO DEVELOP A WELL-ROUNDED IRAQI JOINT FORCE, ABLE TO PROVIDE AND SUSTAIN PEACE FOR IT'S NATION'S CITIZENS.

TWO MONTHS AGO, THE IRAQI AIR FORCE CELEBRATED ITS 77TH ANNIVERSARY AS A MILITARY FORCE. IN 1931, THE ROYAL AIR FORCE BEGAN A PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM FOR IRAQ'S SINGLE-ENGINE BI-PLANES. TODAY, THE IRAQI AIR FORCE IS DEVELOPING NEW CAPABILITIES WHICH FAR SURPASS THOSE OF 77 YEARS AGO. THE IRAQI AIR FORCE IS GROWING IN PERSONNEL AND AIRCRAFT, LEADING TO IMPORTANT CAPABILITIES IN THREE MISSIONS: INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE, AND RECONNAISSANCE – COMMONLY

REFERRED TO AS ISR; BATTLEFIELD MOBILITY; AND SOON IN GROUND ATTACK OPERATIONS.

FIRST WITH REGARD TO ISR, THE IRAQI AIR FORCE CURRENTLY PROVIDES INTELLIGENCE WHICH CAN BE ACTED UPON BY IRAQI SECURITY FORCES. TODAY, THE AIR FORCE HAS 11 ISR AIRCRAFT WITH 5 MORE TO ARRIVE OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS. THESE AIRCRAFT ARE CAPABLE OF PROVIDING PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEO OF ANY POINT, DAY OR NIGHT, WITHIN IRAQ'S BORDERS. IN PARTICULAR, THE VIDEO CAN BE TRANSMITTED LIVE TO PROVIDE GROUND FORCES WITH AN OVERHEAD VIEW OF AN AREA OF INTEREST. THIS CAPABILITY HAS BEEN USED AGAINST SPECIFIC TARGETS – LEADING TO THE CAPTURE OF INSURGENTS – AS WELL AS FOR BATTLESPACE SURVEILLANCE DURING OPERATIONS IN SADR CITY AND MOSUL.

OUR FRIENDS IN THE IRAQI AIR FORCE ARE ALSO PROVIDING ISR SUPPORT TO OTHER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES. RECONNAISSANCE MISSIONS ARE ROUTINELY CONDUCTED OVER ELECTRICAL POWER-LINES TO LOCATE AND PROVIDE IMAGERY OF DAMAGED TOWERS TO THE MINISTRY OF ELECTRICITY. IN ADDITION, RECONNAISSANCE OF OIL PIPE-LINES HAS LED TO DISCOVERY OF OIL LEAKS AND PIRATING ACTIVITIES. IRAQI AIR FORCE INTELLIGENCE PERSONNEL ANALYZE OIL LEAK LOCATIONS AND TRENDS AND REPORT THEIR FINDINGS TO THE MINISTRY OF OIL. ISR HELPS TO FOCUS THE RESOURCES OF THESE MINISTRIES BY PROVIDING TIMELY INTELLIGENCE REPORTING.

THE SECOND MISSION AREA IS BATTLEFIELD MOBILITY WHERE IRAQI AIR FORCE CAPABILITIES ARE BECOMING AN IMPORTANT PILLAR WITHIN THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES. THE AIR FORCE CURRENTLY HAS 15 MI-17 HELICOPTERS, 16 HUEY-2 HELICOPTERS, AND 3 C-130E MEDIUM AIRLIFT AIRCRAFT TO TRANSPORT AND RESUPPLY IRAQI GROUND & POLICE FORCES. JUST AS WITH ISR, BATTLEFIELD MOBILITY WAS CRUCIAL TO THE SUCCESS OF IRAQI SECURITY FORCES DURING RECENT MILITARY OPERATIONS. IN BASRAH, THE AIR FORCE TRANSPORTED OVER 3,400 SOLDIERS TO THE FIGHT, EVACUATED 111 WOUNDED PERSONNEL, AND DELIVERED OVER 280 TONS OF FOOD AND SUPPLIES TO GROUND FORCES. TO SUPPORT MOSUL OPERATIONS, IRAQI AIR FORCE HUEY-2 HELICOPTERS CONDUCTED THE FIRST ALL-IRAQI AIR ASSAULT MISSION TO INSERT GROUND FORCES INTO A SUSPECTED INSURGENT ENCLAVE.

SIMULTANEOUSLY, AN IRAQI ISR AIRCRAFT WAS OVERHEAD, PROVIDING LIVE VIDEO FOR THE COMMANDER TO MONITOR THE MISSION. DURING SADR CITY AND MOSUL OPERATIONS, AIR FORCE HELICOPTERS CONDUCTED LEAFLET DROPS TO INFORM LOCAL CITIZENS OF IRAQI GOVERNMENT INTENTIONS TO REMOVE CRIMINAL ELEMENTS.

COMBINING IRAQI GROUND FORCES WITH AIR MOBILITY ENABLES A GREATER CAPABILITY TO WIN THE COUNTER-INSURGENCY FIGHT. IT ALLOWS THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ TO QUICKLY PROVIDE SECURITY FORCES IN ANY LOCATION THROUGHOUT THE NATION WHENEVER TROUBLE MAY ARISE. FINALLY, IN THE THIRD AREA OF CAPABILITY IMPROVEMENTS, THE IRAQI AIR FORCE IS DEVELOPING IT'S ABILITY TO FIRE WEAPONS FROM AIRBORNE AIRCRAFT TO TARGETS ON THE GROUND. IN FACT, COALITION PERSONNEL ARE CURRENTLY TRAINING OUR IRAQI AIR FORCE PARTNERS WHO HAVE TODAY

CONDUCTED THEIR FIRST ROCKET LIVE-FIRE AT AL-KUT. WITH ROCKETS ON IT'S HELICOPTERS AND MISSILES ON IT'S ISR AIRCRAFT, THE AIR FORCE WILL BE ABLE TO FLY OVER A PARTICULAR AREA OF INTEREST, GATHER INTELLIGENCE, IDENTIFY TARGETS, AND DESTROY THOSE TARGETS IF NECESSARY.

ADDITIONALLY, THE IRAQI AIR FORCE IS CURRENTLY TRAINING TO FLY USING NIGHT VISION GOGGLES. THESE GROUND ATTACK AND NIGHT VISION CAPABILITIES WILL GREATLY EXPAND THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF IRAQ IN IT'S FIGHT AGAINST THE INSURGENCY AND CRIMINAL ELEMENTS.

IN THE MIDST OF THESE SUCCESSES, THERE ARE ALSO CHALLENGES TO OVERCOME IN INFRASTRUCTURE, SUSTAINMENT, AND AIRCRAFT PROCUREMENT. MNSTC-I AND ISF, WITH SUPPORT FROM THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT ARE WORKING THESE CHALLENGES TO CONTINUE THE SUCCESSFUL GROWTH OF THE IRAQI AIR FORCE.

THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ARMED FORCES BUILDING PLAN FOR 2008 TO 2020 CALLS FOR A TOTAL INVENTORY OF 376 AIRCRAFT. BASED ON THIS PLAN, THE GROWTH OF THE IRAQI AIR FORCE WILL TAKE MANY YEARS TO PURCHASE AIRCRAFT, TRAIN PERSONNEL, AND MATURE OPERATIONS. AS AN EXAMPLE, IT TAKES 3-TO-4 YEARS TO RECRUIT AN INDIVIDUAL, PROGRESS HIM THROUGH OFFICER EDUCATION, TRAIN HIM TO FLY AN AIRCRAFT, AND FINALLY TO PROVIDE HIM THE EXPERIENCE NECESSARY TO FLY COMBAT MISSIONS.

AS AN EXAMPLE, THE NAME OF THE YOUNG MAN YOU SEE IN THIS PHOTO IS MOHAMMUD. THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN MINUTES BEFORE HIS FIRST AIRCRAFT RIDE. MOHAMMUD HAD NEVER CONSIDERED BEING A PILOT AS HE HAD A COLLEGE DEGREE AND WAS TO BE AN ENGINEER. ONE OF OUR ADVISORS CONVINCED HIM TO TRY TO BECOME A PILOT. AFTER HE TOUCHED THE PLANE, LOOKED AT FLIGHT CONTROLS, ASKED HOW AN AIRPLANE WORKS AND JUST WALKED AROUND IT FOR ABOUT 10 MINUTES, HE GOT REALLY QUIET.

MOHAMMUD SAID "CAN WE REALLY DO THAT?" THE ADVISOR ASSURED HIM THAT HE COULD. THEN HE AND 3 OTHER PILOT CANDIDATES BOARDED THE PLANE FOR THEIR FIRST FLIGHT WITH THE NEW IRAQI AIR FORCE. THEY NOW ALL SPEAK FLUENT ENGLISH, AND IN SEPTEMBER WILL BE THE FIRST IRAQI PILOT TRAINING GRADUATES AND ABLE TO FLY AT NIGHT AND IN ALL WEATHER CONDITIONS.

THIS IS A GREAT PICTURE. TO ME, MOHAMMUD IS LOOKING INTO HIS FUTURE. OUR TEAM OF COALITION AIR FORCE ADVISORS ARE COMMITTED TO HELP BUILD A CREDIBLE IRAQI AIR FORCE CAPABLE OF FIGHTING INSURGENTS AND PROTECTING IRAQ'S SOVEREIGNTY. I AM HONORED TO SERVE ALONGSIDE STAFF LIEUTENANT GENERAL KAMAL IN THIS ENDEAVOR. WHILE THERE ARE CHALLENGES THAT WE FACE TOGETHER, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT THE FUTURE OF THE IRAQI AIR FORCE IS BRIGHT.

THANK YOU. I AM HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THAT YOU MAY HAVE FOR ME.

**REP1:** ...Dhi[ph] Qadum[ph] Al-Fawadi[ph]. Can you give us any more information on him—where he is, what his background is, what his general modus operandi has been? And do you expect this to be a new tactic that the special groups are using given al-Qaeda used this same tactic for years and it was very difficult to control and pretty much brought the country into a civil war a couple of years ago?

**MAJ GEN BERGNER:** Well, the individual you mentioned is a known special groups criminal. He is a person of interest that Iraqi and Multi-National Forces are aware of and have been in pursuit of. And the initial intelligence and information derived from yesterday's attack point to the cell led by that individual. Exactly who was involved and who perpetrated this criminal activity is something that we'll know more about in the next couple of days as the investigation, both by Iraqi forces and coalition forces, proceeds. As to their purpose and their...what this might signal into the future, well, obviously, this is just one of the most senseless and barbaric acts of violence. And exactly what their purpose and intent could be is something that will also have to be better understood in the future. Yes.

**REP2:** General Bergner. I'm Ernesto Londoño with The Washington Post. Could you elaborate on the strategic importance of Amara in the

province and tell us why, in your mind, this province has emerged as a priority, as a key battleground.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Well, first I would start off by pointing out that the operations being undertaken in Maysan are specifically directed by the prime minister and so they reflect an assessment by the prime minister and the Government of Iraq about the importance that Maysan has and the importance of security operations in Maysan and Amara in particular. This is a place that the Government of Iraq has established a very straightforward framework to remove the illegal weapons and to reduce the illegal militias operating there and enforce the rule of law. And so that is their specified purpose in specifically undertaking the operations that they are now engaged in there.

**REP2:**

What is the significance as far as proximity to Iran and possibly its...it sort of being a hub for smuggling of weapons and fighters?

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Yeah. Well, certainly it is a province that has a significant...shares a significant border with Iran. It is a place where the Government of Iraq specifically is focused on removing illegal weapons and

enforcing the rule of law there. And all of that could contribute to a better control of smuggling and a reduction in illicit cross-border activity that would include reducing the amount of illegal weapons being moved across that border and any other border. And that's a concerted effort by the Government of Iraq in all of the provinces of Iraq is to better control their borders and better secure their sovereign terrain from external influences. Thank you. Yes, ma'am.

**REP3:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** I have three questions. There are several rumors as we media hear about the Kurdish involvement and the Kurdish militia's involvement. Would you consider that the Mosul operations have succeeded now? Would you consider that it's a success? The second question regarding the...Major General Abdul Khalif[ph] Khalaf[ph]. It was supposed that he should lead other operations in Maysan and Basra, but he went to Baghdad suddenly and some sources say that...informed sources say that he was threatened and he was asked to leave the city and go back to Baghdad. And there are so many details regarding this. And the last question is about Jaish al-Mahdi. After operations in Basra and Sadr City, do you think that now you have finally able to dismantle JAM? And do you feel now much relief that they aren't a threat to Iraq in general?



Thank you.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

As for operations in Mosul, there is no question but that Iraqi security force-led operations in Mosul with support from the coalition continue to place more pressure on the al-Qaeda network and their affiliates in the Ninawa Province area. They have made progress in capturing and killing sig-...important figures in the al-Qaida network. They have made progress in expanding the control to the western border to reduce the flow of foreign terrorists and foreign terrorist facilitators that sought to operate there. And they have significantly improved the level of cooperation between the citizens of Mosul and the Iraqi security forces there. And so there is no question there's been progress. There is still a great deal of progress required there and a concerted effort will be necessary to keep the pressure on the al-Qaida networks and their affiliates and to continue to pursue those that seek to incite violence in Mosul. Your question about...make sure I understand who you are talking about. You're talking about General Abdul-Karim al-Khalaf from the Ministry of Interior?

**REP3:**

...that's what we need actually from Kurdish militia to be [unintelligible] Mosul just like now. For that reason he came back

to Baghdad I think.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Oh. Well, let me just tell you that I've known General Abdul-Karim al-Khalaf for about...almost 14 months now here in this capacity. And I know him to be somebody of great courage and great commitment to serve Iraq. My understanding is that he is currently in Maysan Province by direction of the minister of interior, specifically there to help oversee as the operations officer and spokesman for the Ministry of Interior. And so I would say that his movements reflect the needs of the Ministry of Interior and are generally...and reflect his courage and commitment to serve the people of Iraq. And I believe that he is in Maysan specifically to help oversee operations there. Your last question about the status of Jaish al-Mahdi and what their influence is on the security situations in Basra and Sadr City, I would just go back to the progress that Iraqi security forces here, under the leadership of General Abud and the Baghdad Operations Command are making in restoring security in Sadr City. It's a result of legitimate security forces working closely with the citizens of the communities here in Baghdad. And it has improved security. It has reduced the number of attacks. It has reduced the number of indirect fire attacks into the neighborhoods of Baghdad. And so there is no question but that General Abud and

the Baghdad Operations Command's effort here, along with the support of coalition forces, is improving the security in Sadr City. And I would point to the same thing in Basra where the Iraqi Army forces there were under the leadership of the prime minister specifically deploying to Basra to lead operations there, have made a significant difference. And in fact, your own reporting has clearly characterized the improvement in the freedom of the citizens of Basra, revitalization of businesses, improvement in employment opportunities, and the reconstruction activities that it's now facilitating. And so there is clearly an improvement in both of those places as a result of the Iraqi force's operations there. Shukran.

**REP3:** [Unintelligible]

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:** I'm sorry?

**REP3:** I mean do you feel satisfied about that? I mean about Jaish al-Mahdi now.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:** Ara[ph], if you could...

**INT:** She's saying are you satisfied about JAM? This is literally what she said.

**MAJ GEN BERGNER:** This isn't really about being satisfied about any entity like that. This is about seeing progress being made by the legitimate security forces of Iraq in enforcing the rule of law in Iraq. And to that degree, this is about those security forces and their citizens working closely together to enforce the rule of law. And in this case, if it reduces the role of illegal militias that are using the force of arms to intimidate and threaten and kill innocent people, then they are certainly making progress against them. Shukran. Yes.

**REP4:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** There are some intelligence reports saying that the Iraqi security forces...by the Iraqi security forces saying that the armed groups started to change their tactics through eliminating physically some of the security members through silence, weapons and which is a new technique. And some intelligence reports saying that they will target the mosques. And so do you have any update or any information about this? Because the...there are reports saying that the armed forces will consider changing their tactics and targeting

the citizens and...or even members in the services...security services.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

I haven't seen the specific report that you are referring to, but I would simply say that there is a commitment, both by the coalition and Iraqi security forces, to adapt our tactics, our techniques, and our procedures as we see different activities undertaken by the criminals, the terrorists perpetrating violence on the Iraqi people. There is no question that we have seen those groups in the past use mosques to store weapons in and to operate out of. In fact, Iraqi security forces have recently cleared a number of mosques and found weapons stored there. They have...the Iraqi security forces have also recently located rockets and rocket launchers that were concealed near civilian hospitals. And they have certainly seen these terrorists and criminals conducting attacks from civilian neighborhoods where they indiscriminately put the people in those neighborhoods at risk as a result of their actions. And so these are activities we've seen. It's the nature of this enemy that Iraqi and coalition forces are engaged in. And we will continue to adapt as we see them seeking to change their tactics so that we can protect the citizens of Iraq from these people. Yes, sir.

**REP5:** [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Aria[ph] Newspaper. I have a question to General Bergner. Regarding gathering the intelligence, we can see some of the balloons in Baghdad and especially in Kadhimiya. My question is about yesterday's event. We know that there are cameras in the streets. Do you think that the technology was able to gather information on those balloons to monitor the movements of those special groups and especially about what happened yesterday? And the...question to...two questions to General Bash. One about these...the operations and the strategic operations by the Iraqi Air Force. Do they control...are they still under the control of the coalition forces or do they receive instructions from the MOD to carry out the imper-...to carry out operations, let's say, in Maysan or Basra? Do they receive instructions from the coalition forces or from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense? And are there any casualties in 2008 regarding the Iraqi Air Force? Regarding in training or...?

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

Okay

**INT:** ...or casualties in combat operations? Thank you.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

First, I would point out that the coalition and Iraqi security forces draw from a range of intelligence sources and intelligence methods. Certainly we have surveillance capabilities. Certainly we also rely on human intelligence and we also rely on the full range of other intelligence capabilities to help understand what might have happened and who was potentially involved in those attacks. And so when we talk about why we know something or how we know certain things, we rely on the full range of those capabilities to be assembled together so that we're not depending on just one source as the basis of that information. And you can be assured that we do rely on each of those kinds of sources before we would make an assessment as to who was involved or exactly what took place. We also would want to exploit that intelligence and take every advantage possible to locate the perpetrators before we talked in detail about how we knew something or what led us to certain actions. We would want to make sure that we had the best opportunity to work with the Iraqi government to help bring those involved to justice. And so we would not want to ex-...discuss that prematurely. Shukran jaziilan.

**MAJ GEN  
BASH:**

With regard to your second question first as to whether there was any casualties this year for the Iraqi Air Force. Unfortunately, back

in late February we lost an MI-17 on a training mission. And again, I'll express my condolences for the loss of both the Iraqi service members and the coalition member that was on board that aircraft. Since that time, the crash has been investigated and we've determined the causes and helped the Iraqis institute changes...safety changes and procedural changes so that we can avoid any future accidents similar to that one. With regard to operations...Iraqi operations today and under whose control they are, clearly they are under the control of the Iraqi leadership. In many cases, the Ministry of Defense and the minister of defense and General Kamal, the commander of the Iraqi Air Force, is directing his forces. On a daily, hourly basis, they submit information for the air-tasking order which directs their forces. To give you a good example, during the early part of the Basra operation, General Kamal directed his helicopters to leave Taji and fly down to Basra. Within eight hours they were in place in Basra and there was absolutely no coalition involvement in any of that direction. Similarly, in Sadr City and today in Mosul, they are conducting operations without any coalition members on board and the direction is coming from Iraqi leadership.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

We have time for one more question. Yes, sir.



**REP6:** As-Salāmu `Alaykum. [Asks question in Arabic.]

**INT:** Question from Radio Sawa. General Bergner, in your opinion, why do you think we have the explosions...why those explosions return to Baghdad in such an hour? And now we are...the other question is now we have security barriers, concrete barriers in Baghdad. They are being established again at a time that you are saying that there is an improvement in the...at the security level. And question to General Bash. What is the scope of the Iraqi Air Force? Are there certain areas that they can work on or is it open so that the Iraqi Air Force can use the Iraqi skies whenever they wanted?

**MAJ GEN BERGNER:** Well, let me just start by...

**INT:** ...whatever they wanted.

**MAJ GEN BERGNER:** Let me just start by saying that we have said all along this is a tough fight and it's one that we are going to have to continue to focus the collective efforts of the Iraqi security forces with support from the coalition and, most importantly, the support of the Iraqi citizens in denying these terrorists the capability to conduct the indiscriminate

violence like we saw yesterday. While we have seen improvements overall and an improving trend reducing the number of attacks like this, yesterday is a grim reminder that this will require perseverance and it will require the continued great courage of the Iraqi people and the Iraqi security forces to stand up against this violence and not allow these terrorists to operate in any place in Baghdad. And so that's what we are collectively committed to continuing to pursue. And there is progress, even amidst a terrible, terrible attack as we saw yesterday. There is progress overall because of the improvements in the Iraqi security forces and the increasing support that they are receiving and that coalition forces receive from the citizens of Iraq. And so we will press on and support the Iraqi people across the board in further reducing the capability of the criminals and terrorists who conduct those attacks. Shukran.

**MAJ GEN  
BASH:**

With regard to Iraqi Air Force operations and the extent of their operations within the nation of Iraq, today there is no restrictions on where Iraqi aircraft can fly. On a weekly basis, we have literally hundreds of sorties flying all around this nation providing transportation, helicopter lift, and intelligence surveillance... reconnaissance over power lines and oil lines. Certainly there is a lot of coordination that goes on with the coalition forces to ensure

the safety and the de-confliction of those aircraft just as it would in any nation in the world. But there are no restrictions for where they can fly.

**MAJ GEN  
BERGNER:**

I want to just close by saying thank you to General Bash—not just for joining us here today but for what he and the rest of the Air Force team that he commands are doing to work so closely with General Kamal and the Iraqi Air Force as it continues to develop its own capabilities. So, Brooks, thanks very much for being with us and thanks for what you are doing with all of our Iraqi partners. Shukran jaziilan. Ma’salama.