

Transcript
Military Analyst Call – IEDs
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Briefers: [REDACTED]
Transcriber: Murphy
ON BACKGROUND

Ms. Barber: Hello folks, it's Allison Barber. We are ready to get started. Thanks so much for calling in today. I think you have the agenda. We'll open up with [REDACTED] is going to make some remarks for us this morning – or this afternoon, and then we'll turn it over to [REDACTED]. Thank you, sir, for being with us today.

[REDACTED] Sure Allison.

Ms. Barber: And with that, we'll get started. Please remember this is on background. But we're happy to take your questions, field them, and get back to you with any thing in addition to this after the call. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Thanks Allison. In Iraq, over 214,000 members of the Iraqi Security Forces are engaged in operations to secure their country and prepare for the Dec. 15 elections. The Iraqi Ministry of Defense has about 100 battalions – Army, Special Operations, and Strategic Infrastructure Protection – that are in the fight today.

And over one third of these battalions are leading operations with U.S. and other Coalition forces in support.

Yesterday, as another indicator of progress, the Iraqi Air Force flew their first C-130 mission with an all-Iraqi crew. And elements of the Iraqi Army's first battalion, first brigade, 9th Division, completed their T-55 and BMP-1 (sp) gunnery qualifications in preparation for their conduct of operations in the western part of Iraq.

Iraqi Ministry of Interior forces are also progressing, with over 112,000 members in operational units, ranging from the well-known special police battalions, of which there are 12, to border forces, highway patrol, dignitary protection and civil intervention forces.

Today, there are approximately 73,000 local and provincial police, which is about half of what will eventually be required throughout the country. Each Iraqi unit has a Coalition transition team with it, and, at both Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior there are Coalition advisory teams focused on strengthening these national-level organizations.

For the U.S., we have approximately 156,000 on the ground in Iraq today. This number will stay at about this level through the (Dec. 15) elections. Shortly after the elections, we'll transition as many as five brigades nearly simultaneously, so the actual in-country numbers will spike for a short time in January until the outgoing units actually redeploy.

In addition to the U.S., other Coalition partners have 21,000 personnel committed to operations in Iraq.

As we help the Iraqis plan and prepare for the upcoming elections, there are some very positive indicators of wide-spread voter participation. Still, security preparations are ongoing, and there are multiple operations ongoing in an effort to disrupt terrorists and other enemy forces from what we believe will be an effort to interfere with the electoral process.

And to be sure, there have been reports of threats and intimidation. We have seen Iraqi Security Forces attacked across the country, including the attack on the police academy classroom today in Baghdad.

But despite these attacks, Iraqi Security Forces continue to improve. There are occasional setbacks, but the progress is evident and momentum is building.

Operation Sayaid in the Euphrates River Valley is a good example of what can be accomplished when Coalition and Iraqi security forces work together. From November 26th until December 3rd, from al Qaim to Hadithah to Ramadi, Iraqis and Coalition forces conducted coordinated, simultaneous operations which resulted in the establishment of multiple outposts from which the Iraqi Security Forces can now operate.

Together, Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces detained over 1,000, many resulting from tips provided by local Iraqis.

Almost 300 weapons caches were discovered. But probably most importantly, the people of the Euphrates River Valley saw their forces – Iraqi Security Forces – operating against the terrorists in this critical area of the west.

The Euphrates River Valley remains a difficult area to secure, but through Operation Sayaid Iraqis have made some notable progress. This type of progress is occurring across the country, as every day Iraqi Security Forces march toward the day when they will be able to secure their people and their nation.

Thanks.

Ms. Barber: And with that [REDACTED] we'll open up to you to talk about the IED Task Force.

[REDACTED] Okay, Allison. I assume everybody can hear me okay here.

Ms. Barber: Let me do a check real fast. Is the volume okay for our folks on the call?

Voices: Yes. Yes, it's good.

Ms. Barber: Thank you, sir.

[REDACTED] Okay, great. What I wanted to do is just take a couple minutes – you saw, I suspect most of you saw -- an announcement that came out of public affairs naming retired four-star General Montgomery Meigs, United States Army, to take over as the new head of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Task Force.

Now here with me today is [REDACTED]

And there's a couple reasons why we did this. But first of all, it's clear to all of you, I suspect, as it is clear to us, that the single most significant threat that we face in theater – and I say around the world, but particularly in Iraq, and we'll probably see more of in the future – not probably, we know we will – are these improvised explosive devices.

Now what I wanted to just tell you is is that you may not have heard this ever before, but I look at these IEDs – it just happens to be a name – I call them weapons of indiscriminate destruction. And I think that it's important for – and I'm not telling you we're changing the name of this task

force because everybody understands what an IED or this improvised explosive device is – but it's used, and it's killing a lot of civilians in addition to military personnel.

But the primary source of U.S. casualties, both injuries and deaths, are from these IEDs. And the number of civilian casualties continues to increase, in particular in locations such as Iraq, but obviously you've seen them used in other countries around the world.

The Joint IED Task Force is, along with the Services and all of DoD, is designed to take on this end-to-end threat. And I'm not talking just about technologies; I am talking about looking at intel, tactics, techniques and procedures, operational analysis, research and development, there's a whole variety of things that we're using here.

Now along with Monty Meigs coming on board on the 12th of December, and he'll be working full time on this particular job, we're going to grow the IED Task Force from about 175-ish, somewhere in there, to almost 300 people. And part of the reason why we're doing this is we're going to open an improvised explosive device center of excellence out at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California. And this will help us synchronize, it will help us integrate technology, training and concept development, frankly, with not only the NTC, but other training centers for all of the Services around the country so that we in fact can bring about the best practices, the best equipment, the best techniques, the best tactics that we learn into the training regime in an even more comprehensive and coherent way.

So, we brought that through the Service chiefs; we brought that through all of the Services and washed it through the leadership here in the Pentagon. And this is all part of this broader effort to look at these evolving threats in the mid- to long-term, in addition to those that we're dealing with immediately.

Just a reminder here: Again I said end-to-end. This is meant to be a defeat of the entire IED system again. We are looking at just about anything we can. We want to make sure that we continue and do even a better job of sharing best practices amongst all of our troops, our forces that are deployed, and also on the training end of this.

Now, for the sake of time, and I know you all want to ask some questions, I'm not going to go through right here the history. I can answer that in one of the questions, if you'd like, of the evolution of this task force. But we've done quite a bit.

Let me just suffice it to say that Gordon England is the acting deputy secretary of defense, and

██████████ in an effort to make sure there is nothing between what this task force needs to execute it's mission to help our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen, and also to deal with civilians, ██████████

We have significantly removed a lot of speed bumps, road blocks, whatever you want to call it. We've given General Votel in the form of directives signed by the deputy secretary quite a bit of authority involving contracting up to \$25 million a pop for literally anything we need to execute within the IED realm.

The task force has expended in FY '05 \$1.345 billion and again in FY '05 on IED initiatives and there is a substantial increase in that for FY '06 between what we've got funded mainly out of supplementals from the Congress, and we're working to spend that in a very smart way.

I guess with that, rather than me continuing on and talking about what this adaptive, innovative enemy is like and how we respond to this, and also what initiatives we've got going on, and talking about some of the success stories, let me just open it up for questions. Now I suspect we're going to get part of that. Is that reasonable Allison?

Ms. Barber: Perfect.

██████████ OK.

Ms. Barber: That's great. Thank you, sir.

██████████ And I think we've got about 15 minutes left here. And that way we'll have a good 15 minutes of questions.

Ms. Barber: Great.

██████████ Over to you.

Ms. Barber: Thanks. And with that I'll open it up for questions, please.

Q: Allison, Bob Maginnis. Question on shape (?) charge that we saw General Webster over in the 3rd I.D. He showed us one that he'd recovered. Do we have a working solution in that regard.

██████████ Let me just say one thing -- this is ██████████ -- before I put ██████████ on here. I'm -- you're going to find that I don't like to talk about technologies that defeat anything. I am a submarine officer myself, and there's an old expression from World War II that "Loose lips sink ships," and I'm not, quite frankly, interested in reading about shape charges, non-shape charges, techniques and technologies that defeat these devices.

That's where I am. And I just don't think it's healthy for our folks, because there's too much that gets put on the Internet, there's too much that gets distributed. So I'm not going to get in to any details, and neither is ██████████ on any of these types of discussions.

Even though you read it, and somebody may show it to you, you're going to find less and less of this is going to be shared with you because too much of it gets put in the press. And I need your help fellows, because we lose people as a result of spreading some of this. This is a very reactive enemy, and they use what they read in the press and interactively on the Internet to respond, in addition to watching our tactics. So it's very important to us not to get into these details. I am sorry but we won't do it.

Ms. Barber: Next question?

Q: Well, let me ask another question then Allison. The T-72s (sp) that went into the 9th Division, I heard ██████████ say that the T-55 went through successful tank gunnery, are we going to find those T-72s being used now? That's been almost two months, hasn't it?

██████████ This is ██████████ The T-72s arrived last month and have been incorporated into the Iraqi Army. Those crews have not yet been fully trained and through the gunnery exercise similar to the one the T-55s have been. We fully expect that that will occur, but I don't have for you a timeline when that will occur.

Q: ██████████ Jed Babbin, going back to the issue -- I know you don't want to talk about technologies. Can you tell us how you're organizing with General Meigs to get new developments out into the field faster, get contracts done? You know, we hear about effects-based (sp) contracting and things like that but -- are you turning DARPA on full blast? How are you going to get this stuff out to the field fast?

██████████ Well, let me give you a couple of thoughts first. I am going to let ██████████ go through a couple of these with you, also. First of all, I talked to you about the line-item authority that ██████████ has as the head of the task force and that General Meigs will have to be able to sign up to \$25 million contracts. There are also -- even though we have a continuing resolution going on right now -- we

are making sure, like we do on a routine day-to-day basis, that the coffers are always filled so that the IED task force can draw on money without having to wait for the comptrollers to fill up some bin. That's typically not normal in everything we do. So we've cut the time down substantially to about what when you process a requirement Joe?

Usually we can get it within about 13 days.

So what I would tell you is that's like light speed here in the Pentagon to be able to get money out to put against almost any requirement we need. In addition to that, we have removed a number of the hurdles for this to get washed through the building once it's signed by

That's why this money gets squeezed out very rapidly. And, if anything exceeds that threshold of \$25 million, even in the short period of time – Joe or Monty Meigs will be able to bring it in to the Deputy – like they have been doing, and the Deputy will physically authorize the expenditure of that under his personal signature, because he has the line-item authority to do that. So there is no one in between them. So that is a really fast-track mechanism of getting these things out.

you want to talk about any other additions?

Yes, sir. Thank you. One of the things – I think you raised a very good point there about engaging the other Department of Defense, and quite honestly the other national assets in this particular effort, and one of the things that we are doing, in fact, our first session here is on Thursday, is we are sponsoring a national lab conference, where we have called in all the Department of Defense, Department of Energy, the federally funded research and development centers, to come in and (in a sense?) – what we're going to do in a classified setting is bring their scientists up to speed on where we are with the IED threat, inform them of how units are operating in Iraq -- and Afghanistan I might add -- and tell them where we need their help.

And this is the second time we've done this with the national jobs. And it was very, very fruitful last time, and so this is how we reach out to these type of organizations. And of course, we have a very good long-term effort with them. We have stood up a joint lab board. Secretary England has asked us to look at the mid- and long-term research and development science and technology efforts associated with this, recognizing this is going to be a long-term threat that we are going to deal with. So we have leveraged those organizations in that manner.

Let me just finally add that the other key partner out here with us is industry. One of the things we are doing and we will be sponsoring in January downtown Washington is an industry conference, where will bring members of industry in in both classified and unclassified settings, and again, bring them up to speed on where we are with the threat, how we are operating, and then where we need their help to help us address current and future evolving threats.

Guys, if I could just add to the industry piece, you should not take from what Joe said that we haven't been dealing directly with industry. Let me just tell you that I have had folks like IBM come in to see me, but other major companies like that, and when they talk to me, the single thing that I want them to work on is on IED defeat from an end-to-end perspective – Northrup, Raytheon, all kinds of these companies have come in to see me; they go in to see Joe Votel constantly. And we have them focusing in this area, and have a whole wide variety of initiatives going on. We don't just restrict this to U.S. industry and U.S. partners; we're also working with foreign partners who have some fairly good ideas and who have dealt with this in the past.

Finally, we've also expanded this effort to bring a number of our federally funded research and development operations. The Institute for Defense Analysis has just conducted about an eight-week study for us on operations aspects, and they've supervised two other FFRDCs (sp) that we've brought in to assist in that – the Center for Naval Analysis – CNA, and also RAND Corporation.

Ms. Barber: Great. Next question.

Q: This is Gordon Cucullu. I have one that I get all the time from audiences. And I don't know that this falls into the technological or intel area that you prefer not to discuss but, most Americans are somewhat mystified that the success of the IEDs because they have it in their heads that we're the technologically superior force and that the terrorists are not. Do you all see that these guys are getting technological support from outside the country, or do you think that most of this is an indigenous development program?

█ Let me answer it this way. First of all, I think it's important, Gordon, that you recognize that these improvised explosive devices have been around in a variety of ways for a very long time.

They are just – in some cases they are another form of a mine; they are another form of a booby-trap. A vehicle-borne improvised explosive device during World War II was a kamikaze. We've had vehicle systems that have been used as you know in Beirut, Northern Ireland, Israel, and many other locations. So it isn't like these things are new.

Do we see some of the technologies coming in from other country or other areas? Absolutely. And that's why – and what I mean by other areas, we see this being proliferated on some of the web sites.

Q: Oh, okay, so that – in effect a virtual technological support for these thugs that's global in scope?

█ Exactly. And that's why you're seeing us being incredibly sensitive, and we're trying to make sure that our folks are sensitive to not talk about the specifics of weapons, the types of weapons, the form of their effects, or any of that stuff, because this stuff gets spread almost instantly.

Q: Yeah, I can see that. Thank you.

█ You're welcome.

Ms. Barber: Next question, please.

Q: Admiral, Chuck Nash. Got a question about the makeup of the folks who are working in this whole CID (?) task force. Is this a primary job? Is this their full focus? Or are a lot of these folks working collateral duties?

█ Let me say to you this way, Chuck, the purpose of this task force is – their job is to wake up every morning and work on this full time, no other collateral assignments; they are supposed to go to bed every night worrying about what the hell they didn't accomplish during the day. Joe Votel here has got very significant personnel control over the assignments; he can expend people – that's part of these set of authorities. Joe probably – how many times was somebody going to transfer you, Joe, a detailer?

█ Too many to count.

█ Too many to count. He's a Ranger, and he'd like to be back with the Rangers, but he's been dedicated to this now, what – two years now?

█ Two and a half years.

█ Two and a half years doing this. And this is – just about nothing else that I see that's more important than this job. In fact, we joke with Joe, the Deputy and I, that if we weren't doing

our jobs, we'd be doing his job, because that's how important we think this is. And that's the way this task force is supposed to deal with this.

So we want personnel stability, full-time dedication to it, and we want continuity and longevity in the assignments. Joe?

█ Sir I think you've covered most of it. I would just add that the most important resource that we have in here – although we are taken care of very well with our financial aspects – is the people that we have working on the task force. And we have been in a constant and consistent search for people who have expertise in the various areas that are involved in this, and they reside not just in the Army but in the other joint Services out there, and in some of our retired community as well, as we're seeing with General Meigs here.

And we are reaching out to get the very, very best people that we can, get them involved in this and then keep them involved in this so that we do preserve continuity of the effort.

█ Guys, one last comment on this particular area. You may be interested just to read a little bit about Monty Meigs background, but he wrote a book when he was at National Defense University, called *Slide Rules and Submarines*. And I know it's available, but if you read it, you'll probably learn one of the reasons why we hired him to come back and do this in addition to him being a four star, in addition to him having served as a combatant commander in Korea, in addition to him commanding troops and large formations and the rest, you'll see his analytic skills and the rest, and that's one of the reasons we why brought him back. So if you're interested, you might pick that book up; you'll learn a few things.

Ms. Barber: Great. And we probably have time for one or two more questions if there's anything else on your mind on the call?

Q: Allison, one last question. Bob Maginnis. The IED task force on the ground in Iraq providing timely feedback on the most recent – (inaudible) are we capturing that and will that be linked in to what Joe Votel is doing there on the ground in Fort Irwin and feed back right away? What's the sort of sense of timeliness and collecting, expertise we've been able to dip in to over in Iraq?

█ Look Bob, that is exactly right. And the cornerstone of the whole effort really are - is the forward teams that we have in Iraq and Afghanistan who are out there working with units, gathering information, helping disseminate first within theater and then disseminating back here to us. And we use a variety of means to do that – simple soldier solutions like newsletters that can get out very quickly to disseminate information in theater, and then of course all the way to the use of the classified net that we have available to us to send information straight to the combat training centers.

Interestingly, I had an opportunity to talk to Bob Cohen (sp), the commander out at NTC, last week. One of the things we are working is making sure that we get some of his observer controllers embedded into our teams to help facilitate that process and move information very, very quickly.

We hold ourselves to very high standards moving money, and we want to do the same thing with moving good practices as well. That's a very, very important aspect to what we're trying to do.

█ I might mention one last thing. I failed to mention before in including industry in (and) the rest of it. This is now government. But we also are using a significant amount of the Joint Center for Operational Analysis lessons learned group that's down in Joint Forces Command in Norfolk, my old command. They are working with these federally funded research and development operations, CNA, RAND and IDA, to help do the operational analysis on this piece.

Ms. Barber: Great. And with that -

Q: Chuck Nash. To follow up on that admiral – the analysis piece to this. There are some technologies out there that probably have non-kinetic collateral effects. And when you look at the analysis, and moving forward with some of the new technologies that are presenting, rules of engagement, things like that, could you address how those will be developed and then worked into the training process?

██████████ I think the way to describe that, Chuck, is that you'll see us work through concepts out at NTC, between there and places like the Yuma Proving Ground, where we put those together in a way that we can test them out, we can train to them, and then we deploy.

We've done some of that already. I should say Joe has done that with his IED task force, and has deployed items to theater in that fashion in using that basic construct already. Joe you want to add anything to that?

██████████ No, I think that's exactly the idea. And I think that's the power of what we're trying to use the combat training centers to help us with. You know, each of the Services do have combat training centers. They can provide expertise into this and so our intention is to work through those very type issues that you raised – the rules of engagement, the escalation of force, other type issues associated with these solutions in a training environment so that we can provide not only good technologies, but a good concept of operations to the fielded force.

Ms. Barber: Great. And with that we'll close for today. Folks, thanks for calling in. Admiral, thank you for your time.

██████████ Thank you very much. Good talking to you guys.

(end)