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**Presenter: Iraqi Minister of State Kasim Daoud**

**Thursday, January 27, 2005 10:02 a.m. EST**

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### **DoD Video-teleconference with Iraqi Minister of State Kasim Daoud**

Moderator: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, Bryan Whitman

MR. WHITMAN: Mr. Daoud, can you hear me?

MIN. DAOUD: I'm hearing you.

MR. WHITMAN: Very good, sir. Well, good morning and thank you for joining us today. I know you can't see us. This is Bryan Whitman at the Pentagon. And we have a rather large number of Pentagon correspondents here that appreciate the opportunity, of course, to talk to you. They can see you. And let me just briefly introduce you.

This is Minister Kasim Daoud, the interim Iraqi government's minister of State for National Security. And he's here today to talk a little bit about the upcoming elections. And he has a -- as I understand it, sir -- a brief opening statement, and then we're going to get right into some questions.

Because you can't see us, we'll identify ourselves and our news organization when we're talking to you.

So with that, I'll turn it over to you.

MIN. DAOUD: I think I will start to give a general statement, and then I will leave a time for the media for their questions.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like actually, first of all, to send our condolences to the families of our brave American people who joined the Iraqis in their fight and in their struggle toward democracy and toward the liberation of the civilized world from the evils. These 31 people who were killed day before yesterday by an incident I think probably due to a technical or due to the condition -- weather condition -- were killed. I just came from the office of Prime Minister Allawi and I understand that he also sent a telegram to President Bush to -- for -- condolences -- him of these losses.

I would like actually to brief the ladies and gentlemen about the security situation in Iraq.

Before this, I would like to concentrate on the achievement that my government was made with the support of our greatest friend, the United States and the United Kingdom and the other allies. We are now

achieving and approaching -- actually, sorry -- we are approaching now the day of election. There will be only three more days and we will see the Iraqis for the first time will -- queuing toward the polls and selecting their representative in an absolutely free democratic atmosphere. This is a practice the Iraqis never see these things before more than six decades.

We, as ministers concerning to the security affairs, met our best with our colleagues in the multinational forces to create such a plan and implementing -- we are going to implement this plan to secure the process of election, bearing in your mind that this process is extremely targeted by the insurgent, by the terrorists. We know that the aim of the terrorists always is to stop the democratic process in my country, so they are doing whatsoever to stop this process. These measures concentrating on implementing our forces, whether they are in the police or in the National Guards or in the army. And again, all these forces are going to be backed by the multinational forces as a second-line supporter.

These measures probably distributed in different levels. We are going to adopt a curfew in certain hours. We are put some sort of restriction on the movement of the vehicles. We are going to prevent the movement of the civilian from one province to another province. We are going to ban any holding of arms with everybody, even the people that they have a license. We are going to exempt some vehicles from this, of course, which they are these cars that they are doing -- ambulances or fire cars or the cars which they are carrying some humanitarian aid or some oil products. All these measures actually are going to be implemented from 28th of January, this month, and it will continue one day after the election, which will be on the 31st of January.

I would like to use this opportunity actually to concentrate on many facts. Fact number one, that as the government which was formed on the 28th of June, 2004, got one duty that we have to prepare the healthy atmosphere for the election, which we're already working on. And as I mentioned before, it's only three days before the election.

Number two, we started to build the skeleton or the structure of our security forces, whether in the police forces or the army or in the intelligence services. The training is going on. The quality of arms, with the time, is improved. We are trying to reach our target to give a leading part of these forces for controlling the security affairs in our cities prior to really taking the full file of the security and keep it with ourselves as Iraqis. So far, I can say that we succeeded beautifully and nicely in forming these organizations, military organization and police organizations. We are looking forward for a very enthusiastic plan to reconsolidate and pushing more lives, pushing more leaders in our security forces.

I think I will leave you now for your question, and I'm ready to answer any question or any clarification that you may need in this conference. Thank you.

MR. WHITMAN: Minister, thank you.

And we'll start with some questions starting with Charlie.

Q Mr. Minister, can you hear me?

MIN. DAOUD: Yes. Go ahead.

Q Charles Aldinger with Reuters. There seems to be some confusion and, in fact, controversy in this country over how many security forces in your country have been adequately trained. Could you tell us how many security forces have been trained and equipped, well enough equipped now to fight the insurgency without the help of the U.S. military? That would include, of course, police, army. How many personnel, in your estimate, are now adequately trained and equipped?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, I mean, if I would like to give you a rough estimation, we are nearly having a number which form probably a couple of brigades who is distributed in the ordinary army. We have a special forces in the army. We have National Guards. We have the police forces. The number of the police forces in Iraq right now is something like 90,000. The number of the army itself, around 55,000. But our plans that we have to reach in our army a number of 150,000 by the year of 2006.

Q And you think that these 90,000 police forces and the 55,000 in the army are all now adequately trained and equipped to fight the insurgency by themselves?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, not really. I mean, we have to be very clear regarding to this issue. We are doing our best to consolidate to defend the security. Definitely we are looking for the quality rather than looking for the quantity. Our concentration is to create an army and security forces with the quality side. So this is our achievement. But you appreciate that after the dissolving of the Iraqi army and the Iraqi forces, we have to rely in such a way on the Iraqi people to defend the country and the security of the society. But definitely in our plan that we are going, as I mentioned, to concentrate on the quality.

Q Mr. Minister, it's Carl Rochelle, NBC News. Are there provinces in Iraq that will not be able to vote because of the security situation? And can you also give us a sense of what kind of voter turnout you do expect throughout the country?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, probably I'm an optimistic man, actually. You know, among 18 provinces, the insurgent -- let me put it in this way -- are active in mainly two provinces, Al Anbar and Mosul, which they are in the northwest of Iraq. There are a couple of hot areas in Salah ad Din province and in Diyala province. Otherwise, the whole country is more or less safe country. The people are practicing their normal life. So I can say that the activities of the insurgent, the activities of the terrorist are concentrating on these areas. And we are dealing with this indeed by consolidating our forces over there. We started our clearing operation in Mosul before two weeks, which gave a great result and remarkable result. The intimidation of the insurgent in the Mosul -- on the Mosul people reduced. The confident in the people increased.

I can say we are touching now a new, changed or turning on for the election within the Sunni community. We probably daily holding two, three meeting with the representative from these provinces. During the last week we found them more flexible, and I'm confident that there will be a good percent of these provinces' society -- or people, sorry -- are going to participate in the election.

MR. WHITMAN: Bob?

Q This is Bob Burns from Associated Press.

After the elections, is it your expectation that the -- once a new government is in place, that it will insist on establishing a timetable for the transfer of security responsibilities to Iraqis and for the -- for a reduction in the U.S. forces?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, this was already actually was accepted and introduced by the prime minister. The recommendation to the new Iraqi government is concentrating on this plan that the withdrawal of the multinational forces will be conditioned by the ability of the Iraqi forces to keep the order, to defend the security of the society, to eliminate the terrorists and the insurgents in the country. So definitely we are looking forward to implement this, but I cannot give you a timetable regarding date or day or month or year. It's quite clear that this is a very conditional program.

Q Sir, this is Joe Tabet with Al Hurrah TV. First of all, could you tell us about the situation on the

Syrian and Iranian border? And how much do you think Damascus and Tehran are cooperating to enforce security with the Iraqi borders?

MIN. DAOUD: Unfortunately, we have two, if I can put it in this way, naughty boys, neighbors, Iran and Syria. The insurgents mainly are crossing the border from the west. We enter political dialogue with the Syrian and we form, actually, trilateral comity between our friend the American and the Syrian and ourself. We start -- we already started to put pressure on them, and until now we didn't get any good response from the Syrian, although that our intelligence information, with a very solid document, shows the involvement of some of the security forces -- Syrian security forces authorities' involvement in these activities.

We hope that with the support of our friends, the civilized countries, will put more pressure on the Syrian to eliminate the presence of the supporter of the insurgent in Iraq. Mainly these people are of two sectors: the Saddamists, which they are the loyalists to Saddam regime, and the fundamentalist -- Islamist fundamentalist, which they are really together doing a very, very destructive role in our society.

From the other side, it's quite clear that there is a sort of clear interference from Iran toward Iraq, especially in the provinces' edges until the border line. We are monitoring the penetration of many insurgents crossing the border, and again, we are using our diplomatic measures to treat this matter.

And we hope that both countries may reach a sort of conclusion that the instability in Iraq will reflect negatively and badly toward the stability not of the Syrian and Iran only, but to the whole area.

Q Sir, this is Donna Miles with the American Forces Press Service. In light of speculation that violence will increase on election day and polling sites could potentially be targeted, what steps are you taking to encourage people to, nonetheless, come out and go to the polls?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, I wonder if you can repeat the question because actually I couldn't really understand it.

MR. WHITMAN: I think, if I can paraphrase, what the government is doing to encourage voting.

MIN. DAOUD: Okay, this is a very good question. Well, first of all, actually, I must say that the whole election process is controlled by the independent commission for the -- as an administrator for the election process and organizer. The Iraqi government met -- we are doing our best to facilitate all the needs of the independent commission, starting from the security to any, any logistic things within the chain of the election. Then, the political parties already played a very important role to attract the people for their participation in this process. The INGs are doing also their best to pushing the society toward that purpose. And the government, always in our conferences and our speeches and our declaration, we are encouraging our people, and we announced clearly that one of the legitimacy of our government is to implement the election on its timetable. So all these factors indeed pushing our society.

There is another factor which encouraged the people, that even the tribal leader, the social figures, the religious figures, all of them really pushing the society toward this election. And I can say that the only exemption from this, what the follower of the regime, of the old regime, the Saddamists, and the terrorists are practicing to stop this process, and definitely we are going to succeed and they are going to defeat.

Q Mr. Minister, it's Al Pessin from Voice of America. Two related questions, if I may. First of all, General Zebari is quoted this morning as saying that Iraqi forces should be ready within six months to take over protection of cities and villages, and within a year to take over everything, including the borders. Do you think that's accurate, and if so, why? And secondly, there has been a lot of talk about increasing the U.S. efforts to train the Iraqi forces. First of all, do you think that's necessary? And secondly, exactly what type of training,

what type of activities would you like to see intensified in order to prepare the Iraqi forces?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, number one, as long as you said six months, so you are talking about time. And I introduced my brief and statement saying that the withdrawal will be conditional on the consolidation of the security and on the taking seriously the security affairs in a good capacity. So I already answer, I think, this question.

Second thing, I forget it. What did you say?

Q The question was, what -- exactly what type of intensified training do you need to prepare your forces as quickly as possible? And I'd just add that the reference to six months and one year was not mine; it was General Zebari's. And I wondered if you could respond a little more specifically on that?

MIN. DAOUD: Regarding to the training, as you ask, actually I said that we are now reaching a stage that we are looking for the quality, not quantity. We are looking for new, fresh leaders. And the key figure in developing of the structure of the security forces is the leadership, which we are really in need of these things, bearing in your mind that we are looking for the mentality of these leaders. I mean, the military trainees in Iraq are huge, but we are concentrating on the quality not just from the military side, but again from the loyalty to the new, democratic Iraq. This is the key figure in our selection and in our choices.

We would like to create a new army which they are believing in the loyalty to the state, not the loyalty to the individual or loyalty to the minister or loyalty to the prime minister or to the government. This mentality, we have to create it in the ideology of our new army. So our plan concentrating on this aspect, and hopefully the program of next 12 months quite optimistic regarding to this issue.

Q Mr. Minister, David Wood from Newhouse News Service. Sir, I wanted to ask you, following the election, about your plans for winning the insurgency. Is it your view that you have to kill every single one of the insurgents in order to stamp this out, or can you convince many of them to give up? And if so, do you plan to offer an amnesty?

MIN. DAOUD: Thank you. Actually, my understanding toward the security term is not as naked word "security." I think there are a criteria or factors which form the security: improvement of the economy, getting the families regular income through the absorbence of the unemployment, providing the society with good health services, social security, jobs, reconstruction process, good educational system, social system -- all these really enhancing the security criteria.

So I'm sure that I cannot assure you that after election we will finalize and eliminate the insurgency. No. But I can say that we are going to work on all these aspects in a parallel way to achieve our target, and bearing in mind that now, as Iraqis and multinational forces, we are working and defending ourselves on behalf of all the civilized world against the evil.

Q Mr. Minister, it's Nick Simeone at Fox News. You mentioned that only four of Iraq's 18 provinces are troublesome, but that's where almost half of all Iraqis live. By what measure will you determine whether Sunday's elections are successful?

MIN. DAOUD: By what measure? Could you say it again, please?

Q How will you determine whether areas where most Iraqis live -- the vote's been successful there or not if there's violence, as everybody expects? How will you judge whether polling in those areas has been a success or not?

MIN. DAOUD: Well, probably I'm understanding your question in such a way that I'm going to give you the answer. I would like to draw your kind attention toward Al-Fajr operation which the Iraqi government and multinational forces implemented before probably six, seven weeks ago during last year. The society of Fallujah probably left Fallujah in a percent of more than 90 percent. The offensive started, probably it took us five days solid operation and then after that followed by a clearing operation.

Now if you go to the society of Fallujah, you will see most of them looking forward to participate in the election process. Day before yesterday I had a meeting with a representative from Fallujah and really I -- surprised when I saw that they are looking forward to participate. This means that they are accepting the new Iraq system, they are accepting the new democratic system. The nature of the human being is always toward the stability and the security. So it seemed to me that fighting the terrorists, and at the same time offering the society the civilized condition to live, will eliminate the operation of the -- or it will eliminate the terrorists from these areas.

I don't know whether I'm answering your question or not.

Q Well, I just wanted to know if there was any sort of benchmark way you'll determine, if after Sunday a lot of people stay away or if there's a level of violence anticipated, where you'll judge whether it's been a success or not, how will you know? Will it be based on the amount of turnout at the polls? Will it be based on lowering violence? A combination thereof? Or what measurement will you use to say that in the areas of Iraq where the insurgency is strongest the election was a success?

MIN. DAOUD: Okay. Well, let me just give you a brief example about some of the polls. Number one, the independent commission put in its planning and consideration the fact that we don't want the polling center become a crowded place. This is for security-wise. So we allocate each polling center contains only a voting box accommodating 500 people.

Number two, we are not going to allow the vehicles to reach directly to these polls. The vehicles will stay away in certain -- in such a distance from the polls.

Number three, that nobody allowed to hold any weapon whatsoever.

Number four, the very restricted system to control the traffic in the cities.

Other point, that the curfew which we already adopted -- all these are measures to protect the people who they are going to participate. And I think the people convinced. And probably there is another challenge, that the people, the Iraqi people are challenging now the terrorists toward these things. When we can hear it even in the TV program, the society can see this in the TV programs, in the newspaper, more so ever then there is a sort of challenge, big challenge, between the whole Iraqi people who suffered from the dictatorship regime and they are looking for a new stage in their life, the democratic system. So it seems to me that with these measures and with the mentality of the people, I'm sure that the Iraqi people are convinced to go and participate in this process.

MR. WHITMAN: Mr. Minister, we know we've come to the end of our time, and we want to thank you for taking the time to join us this morning and thank you for your leadership. And as all the eyes of the world are upon you, we wish you the best in these elections in the next couple days.

Thank you.

MIN. DAOUD: Thank you, sir. ####

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