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Presenter: Chief of Staff, Multinational Corps Iraq, Brig. Gen Donald Campbell

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DoD News Briefing with Brig. Gen. Campbell from Baghdad, Iraq

(Note: General Campbell appears via video teleconference from Iraq.)

BRYAN WHITMAN (Pentagon spokesman): Well, good morning. Let me see if we've got a good connection here.

General, this is Bryan Whitman at the Pentagon. Can you hear me okay?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Yes, sir. This is Brigadier General Don Campbell. I can hear you.

MR. WHITMAN: Very good. Well, General, thank you for spending some time with us this evening.

And good morning to the press corps here. I know that we've changed the schedule on you a little bit, but I know that there has been a lot of interest in the core warrior values training that's taking place in theater, and so General Campbell has offered some of his time to come talk to you about that. And we'll have Colonel Shields back at another time; we'll find another time for him to come back and brief you.

Our briefer today is U.S. Army Brigadier General Donald Campbell, who is the deputy commanding general of the Multinational Corps Iraq. And he has a few comments that he'd like to start off with, and then is prepared to take some of your questions.

GEN. CAMPBELL: Sir, just for the record, let me correct you and say that I'm the chief of staff of the Multinational Corps Iraq.

MR. WHITMAN: I'm sorry. How did I introduce you, sir?

GEN. CAMPBELL: And thank you for attending this morning's update briefing.

I know there's been a great deal of interest in the core warrior values training that was announced yesterday. I'd like to give you some information about the training and how it will be conducted, and then briefly take your questions.

Let me first say that the incidents receiving a great deal of media attention lately do not reflect the honorable service of nearly 150,000 coalition forces currently serving in Iraq. Almost without exception, the

dedicated men and women who serve as part of the Multinational Corps perform their duties in an exemplary manner every day. In the face of difficult and often dangerous circumstances, they demonstrate the discipline, sound judgment, and high moral standards that are hallmarks of the military profession.

While the bulk of our forces, 99.9 percent, serve with honor, there are a small number of individuals who sometimes choose the wrong path. While we understand the stresses and pressures inherent in combat operations, we cannot and will not accept behavior that is legally, morally or ethically questionable.

In order to reinforce the training that all forces received prior to their deployment, Lieutenant General Chiarelli directed the commanders to conduct core warrior values training in their units. During this training, leaders will focus their subordinates on the need to strictly adhere to the legal, moral and ethical standards on the battlefield.

This training really is a continuation of many of the initiatives that were currently occurring in corps. From the time we arrived, we have emphasized the importance of raising cultural awareness and working to find ways to decrease escalation of force incidents. Our forces receive this type of training prior to deployment, but many of us have been here from five to nine months, and we felt it was prudent to conduct reinforcement training at this time.

We have provided commanders with a training package, which they can adapt to their area of operations. The slide package covers topics such as the importance of values, laws that govern our conduct in combat, the Iraqi culture and training vignettes. Commanders can tailor the vignettes to more closely resemble the situations their units face on a daily basis.

The package is designed to generate an interactive discussion of potential situations and what decisions and actions would be required. But it does not -- but it has not -- correction -- but it is done in an environment where the stress of the actual situation is not present.

This training applies to all forces assigned to the Multinational Corps Iraq, including the corps staff, and will be conducted over the next 30 days.

The behavior of our forces is a key component in the overall success of our mission. The credibility of our coalition forces is too valuable a commodity to squander needlessly, and every incident and allegation, no matter how small, strikes a blow against that credibility.

And I'll be happy to take your questions.

MR. WHITMAN: All right, let's go ahead and get started. Remember, the general can't see you, so if you could identify yourself. Bob?

Q General, this is Bob Burns with AP. Yesterday, I believe, General Caldwell said in his briefing that in addition to Haditha, there are three or four other cases of alleged unjustified killings that are being investigated. And I'm wondering if you could tell us what those cases are. And do they include the latest allegation of killing 11 civilians in the town of Ishaqi?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Sir, I'm familiar with any number of investigations. Just let me say that we investigate all allegations of soldier misconduct and allegations that we may have killed an Iraqi civilian or seriously injured. I couldn't comment specifically on the investigation you just inquired about. I do know it has been completed, but I'm unaware of the status of that investigation at this time.

Q Can I follow up quickly?

MR. WHITMAN: Go ahead.

Q Are you referring to the Ishaqi case when you say it's been completed? And what is the status of -- go ahead.

GEN. CAMPBELL: I'm saying that I'm unaware of that investigation at this time, the status of the investigation, what I'm saying.

Q Which one is completed?

Q Yes, you said it was completed.

Q Which was completed?

MR. WHITMAN: General, I think the question they've been trying to ask is, is Ishaqi, is that one of the incidents that the Corps has investigated or is investigating?

Q And which one is completed?

GEN. CAMPBELL: That is one of the incidents that has been investigated by the Multinational Force.

Q Does that mean it's past tense?

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go one at a time here.

MR. WHITMAN: And the follow-on to that was, is this one that's been completed?

GEN. CAMPBELL: I couldn't give you the answer to the status of that investigation.

You'd have to check with the PAO from the force.

MR. WHITMAN: Thank you, general. Let's go to the next question.

Pam.

Q General, just to follow that up, you mentioned that an investigation has been completed. Could you tell us which one you're talking about because we're a little confused. And then on the program that you're doing, how long does it take to go through the slides? Is it -- do they do something every day for 30 days or is it just some time in the next 30 days you need to do this? And how are the soldiers and Marines receiving it because, as you said, 99 percent of them do obey the laws of war and uphold the standards you expect of them. So do they feel like they're being punished for the infractions of a few?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Let me go back and correct the record. When I said completed, I misspoke. What I was trying to refer to was the first investigation you asked about. I don't know the status of it. You'd have to check with the PAO.

The second question with respect to the timing of the training, I would say it's about a two-to-four hour block of training. It depends on how the commander in the field tailors it, but he has 30 days to get this done throughout his command, from division level all the way down to every soldier on the -- in the theater. But we estimate it'll take about two to four hours to get that training completed.

As far as soldiers and how they feel, obviously when you have 99.9 percent of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines doing absolutely great work in theater and doing the right things, you feel -- you're upset, you're frustrated, but this is a part of something that you look at yourselves on a continual basis in the military and any profession that really takes itself and wants to get better at it. So we look at it as an opportunity to continue to get closer to that 100-percent goal.

MR. WHITMAN: Over here to Jonathan.

Q Yeah. Jonathan Karl with ABC News. So does the fact that this core value training is happening now represent an acknowledgment that something that should have been done before was not done?

GEN. CAMPBELL: It represents the fact that General Chiarelli did an assessment in the field, talked with his commanders, talked to troops and determined that this was a tremendous course of action, or a course of action that he wanted to go. I don't think you should focus in on any specific incident or incidents. He assessed where it is in the field. He assessed where it is in theater and five months into theater and made the determination that based on what he was seeing and where he wanted to go, this was necessary.

But let me just add that once again, it's only necessary in that we've got to make sure that soldiers understand what is right and what is wrong. And 99 percent of them -- point-9 -- do it correctly every day in the field here in Iraq.

MR. WHITMAN: Will.

Q This is Will Dunham with Reuters. What is causing these small number of incidents of misconduct that you're seeing by the troops? Is it the stress of the situation? Is it -- well, actually, I'm asking you what is causing it.

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, I'd say it's difficult to pin down specifically. But, obviously, when you're in the combat theater dealing with enemy combatants who don't abide by the law of war, who do acts of indecency, soldiers become stressed, they become fearful. It's very difficult to determine in some cases on this battlefield who is a combatant and who is a civilian. It doesn't excuse the acts that have occurred, and we're going to look into them. But I would say it's stress, fear, isolation, and in some cases they're just upset. They see their buddies getting blown up on occasion and they could snap.

But let me just say that 99.9 percent of the soldiers in the field are doing tremendous work every day and we're very, very proud of them.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go over here to Joe.

Q General, this is Joe Tabet with Al Hurra Television. My question is, how much do you think incidents such as Haditha or Hamandiyah or today Ishaqi, are hurting the morale or are hurting your reputation among the Iraqi society?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, let me just say that the forces here in theater have tremendous morale and they take these allegations very seriously, I will say from General Chiarelli all the way down to the soldier, sailor, airman and Marine on the field. And it is disturbing. As I said earlier, it is frustrating.

But I think if you point to all the good that is occurring in Iraq, the fact that we have a new government and it is moving positively forward, and their security forces are doing absolutely superb, I will tell you that when our soldiers look at that, their morale remains very high and they continue to do the right thing day in and day

out.

Q Just to follow up, General, what's your opinion when you see a picture showing a child, a 3-years-old child, shot in the head?

What's your reaction?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Sir, I couldn't quite understand the question. Could you repeat it, please?

MR. WHITMAN: Try again, Joe, and then I'll do it.

Q Okay. Let me try again. I mean, I would like to know your reaction as a general on the ground. What is your reaction when you see a picture showing a child, a 3-years-old child, shot in the head?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, obviously we express our condolences to all the Iraqis who may have lost their life, or their family members who have suffered in this conflict. And it's very, very tragic that on occasion Iraqi civilians are injured or killed, and we take that very seriously.

So we don't like it, but we shouldn't jump to judgment or rush to judgment on every incident that we see. As I said earlier, we investigate all acts or allegations of misconduct by our soldiers, to include seriously wounding Iraqi civilians or killing them. So we will investigate those incidents as they're brought to our attention or as our soldiers bring them to our attention.

MR. WHITMAN: (Inaudible.)

Q Phil Dine, St. Louis Post-Dispatch. American public support for the war in Iraq is steadily declining. Most people now think it was a mistake to go into Iraq. Can you win this war without public support? And are you concerned that these kinds of incidents will further erode support?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Sir, you're asking me a question that's probably outside my lane. I could tell you that we can win this war in -- the war that we're fighting right now, because we have a tremendous group of service members, over 150,000 coalition members, on the -- in theater right now.

What is going on back home -- I will tell you many of the soldiers don't focus on that. They focus on the mission at hand, in theater, and really go at that very hard. So that's our focus, and that's where we stay with it.

And we believe that the support is high for us from the States.

MR. WHITMAN: Jeff Schogol?

Q General, Jeff Schogol with Stars and Stripes. You mentioned this training will give service members scenarios and then talk about reactions. Can you talk about some of the scenarios that they'll be talking about and what some of the appropriate reactions might be?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, I think you have to put it in context. There are five scenarios that we work through in the training package, and they range from anything from encountering an IED on the road to being engaged from a mosque or a school, and what the reaction would be.

And it basically focuses on the values piece of it and making sure that our soldiers react in the proper manner. And it's used to be led by the commanders and their leaders to talk the soldiers through what could occur. You can't, obviously, script or train for every incident that would occur on the battlefield, but we do our

best to prepare our soldiers with the package that we've given them. We've also given the commanders the liberty to adjust and to use other vignettes, as they see necessary, throughout the training package.

Q To follow up. When you use terms like "values," that sounds fairly abstract. How do you make it information that they can use on the battlefield?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, you focus on some of the training that they got before they deployed, which is the law of armed conflict, ROE, and then basically decisions that they'll be faced with. As I said earlier, you can't hit every decision that they'll face on the battlefield. But you try to instill in them values, standards that are common to the military and our profession, which is about leadership, duty, honor and integrity. And if you do that, 99.9 percent of our soldiers will go to 100 percent and they'll all do the right thing.

MR. WHITMAN: Courtney.

Q General, this is Courtney Kube with NBC News. You mention that the soldiers and Marines receive extensive sensitivity training, legal, ethical, moral training before they go to Iraq. So do you really think that sitting them down for a three-hour PowerPoint presentation is going to stop incidents like Haditha and Hamandiyah in the future, if they've already received this training before they even went in?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, I think -- I believe that it will. And here's the way that it will do it. It takes leadership to make these type of incidents go away. And the leaders here are doing a tremendous job -- as I said, 99.9 percent -- I keep hitting that theme. As we sit down and talk to our service members and provide them the coaching, teaching and mentoring through these vignettes, it's not a PowerPoint presentation per se, it's there as a guide, it's there as a tool, and they can use it to scope and design the training that they need. So I don't think it's truly a PowerPoint that they sit down and just go through in detail and then check the box. This is not checking-the-box training. This is too important to call it checking the box. This is serious business, and we're going to focus on doing the right thing.

Q Good morning, General. This is Sabrina Fang with Tribune Broadcasting.

We heard today that the Iraqi government is launching their own investigation into the Haditha incident. Do you think incidents like Haditha and the other ones we've heard of will drive a wedge between the U.S. and the new Iraqi government?

GEN. CAMPBELL: No, I don't believe so. General Chiarelli and General Casey continually talk to the Iraqi government, and we continually assess where we are with them. And we're very confident that the new prime minister and his government will work with us through the investigation. And we'll work with the Iraqis to make sure that everything comes out. And we're going to give them whatever assistance they need as a part of this investigation.

Q They just don't trust our own investigation, that they feel they need to launch their own?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, you have to understand Iraq is a sovereign nation. They have the inalienable right to do that if they choose. And we'll support that investigation thoroughly.

Q This is Kathleen Koch with CNN. General, as a follow-up to that, does that mean that the United States -- the U.S. military is ready and willing to turn over its investigative files to the Iraqi government, the investigative files on the Haditha incident?

GEN. CAMPBELL: I would say that I couldn't answer that right now because that's at a level that is not something I could discuss or that I'm not privy to. So you'd probably have to talk to the PAO from the force on

those negotiations.

Q Sir, this is Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. I have a non-Haditha question. It's on IEDs. You've mentioned one of the five scenarios. Can you give us a broad sense of the trends both in the number of weekly attacks, either increases or consistency, their sophistication, and the success of the U.S. at detecting IEDs before they are detonated?

GEN. CAMPBELL: I don't have specific numbers, but I can tell you that we are finding more and more every week, and the numbers bear that out. And I think General Caldwell may have shown you numbers yesterday. I don't have those in front of me right now. But we find more and more because our soldiers are getting better trained and our equipment that we are using allows us to do that.

Q One follow-up, though. Can you give us a sense of the trends in increases and sophistication of the attacks themselves, or the number of IEDs?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, I couldn't give you specifics, but I can just tell you that the enemy obviously adapts or tries to change as they go through this process, as we do. And it's a continual struggle. But I can tell you the numbers bear out that we're meeting with success, because we find more and more week after week.

Q You're finding more and more week after week, but are they able to implant more week after week, you're keeping up with it, but they're also increasing?

GEN. CAMPBELL: No, but I -- it would be difficult to sit here and run through the numbers with you. I can just tell you that we find more and more. I couldn't give you specific numbers on how many they're planting right now. I can just tell you that the ones they do plant, we meet with greater success day in and day out and week after week.

MR. WHITMAN: (Off mike) -- has not had a chance. Go ahead, please.

Q Hi. I'm Jennifer Demasio from Inside the Army. I wanted to get some more details on the training itself. Is it a PowerPoint presentation? What's sort of the curriculum for the training? And you know, as you said, it's going to be three or four hours long. What are you going to be doing during that time?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, it is in fact PowerPoint, and it leads with an introduction that talks through why this is a tremendous profession and what we're doing. Then it leads through what we view values, why we hold values and doing things legally and ethically correct. And then it gets to a series of interaction discussion questions and then, finally, the vignettes. And as I said, the leaders can adapt the training for what they need to do in theater, so that their soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines get the most training out of it.

MR. WHITMAN: Nick.

Q General, it's Nick Simeone at Fox News. I'd like to get your reaction to something that the new prime minister, Maliki, said, complaining that U.S. troops are involved in killing civilians -- Iraqi civilians on almost a daily basis and that this might affect the Iraqi government's desire to have U.S. troops remain in the country. What is your reaction to those comments?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, obviously, as I said earlier, any loss of life that the Iraqis suffer or serious injury is tragic, and it's very, very -- it hits our hearts. I didn't get to hear what the prime minister said, so it'd be difficult for me to quote. But we do everything we can to avoid casualties, and I know that General Chiarelli and General Casey, when they discussed this with the government of Iraq, very, very frequently, expressed that same interest.

Q General, it's Pam Hess from UPI again. Can we have the slides that you're using to train the troops? And could you also talk about if there are any concerns that you're going to oversensitize them in a way that puts them at risk, where they will question before they take a shot when that sometimes needs not to happen?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, if you'd like a copy of the training package, all I'd ask you to do is contact our PAO, and they will make it available to you.

I don't think and I don't believe that this training package will overly sensitize our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines, because everyone has the inherent right to self-defense. And it's -- I want to emphasize that it's not rules of engagement training. It talks to the core values -- hence, core values -- core warrior values training, and why we must do ethically, morally and legally what is correct when we're out on the battlefield.

Q Sir, was this written specifically for this instance, or are you rehashing an existing training program?

GEN. CAMPBELL: No, we developed the package over the last few weeks, using a number of different tools and a number of different staff sections. So it's really focused at General -- what General Chiarelli wanted to get at, which was get back to the core warrior values training and reinforce everything that we are about in the military, which is a profession of arms that does things ethically, legally and morally correct on the battlefield.

MR. WHITMAN: Maybe one or two more and we'll bring this to a close, general.

Jon?

Q Yes, Jon Karl with ABC News again. Can you clarify the status of forces agreement? I mean, now that the Iraqis want to do their own investigation, if they wanted to bring up charges in Iraqi courts against U.S. service members, what would the position of the U.S. be on that?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Well, I couldn't comment on the position of the U.S. I'm just a soldier. But I know that we don't have a SOFA yet, and that will be worked out by the government of Iraq and, I'm sure, the United States government, in due time.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's finish up.

Q I had a quick question, a quick one. (Off mike.)

MR. WHITMAN: Okay. We'll go with Will and then a real quick one, Bob, and close it.

Q This is Will Dunham with Reuters. Do you have any feel, general, for when the 15-6 inquiry and NCIS investigations into Haditha may be complete?

GEN. CAMPBELL: Sir, I couldn't give you an answer to that right now. I know that they're working diligently on the 15-6 to get it completed. I don't have a status on the NCIS investigation at this time.

MR. WHITMAN: Okay. And I think Bob just has one clarification or a quick question here, and we'll make it the last one.

Q My question was somewhat similar, but let me ask it this way. On the case of the General Bargewell report, I understood that the intention or the plan was to deliver it to General Chiarelli today. Can you

say whether that has happened?

GEN. CAMPBELL: I couldn't -- I could not comment on that, sir.

Q Is that yes or no?

MR. WHITMAN: I think it's, he could not comment.

This is Bryan Whitman again. I'd just like to thank you for making yourself available on very short notice to talk about this training that's taking place. There's been some interest back here, as you know. And we appreciate your flexibility in taking the time to do that.

Let me turn it back to you and see if you've got anything you want to close with.

GEN. CAMPBELL: Yes, sir. Thank you. I'd like to make just a short statement.

Our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines are facing a hostile and terrorist threat that refuses to abide by the established rules of decency and laws of armed conflict. Their mission is difficult, and they daily place their lives at risk to protect the people of Iraq. We should take great pride in the hundreds and thousands of service members who honor us daily with their courage, their competence and their sacrifice.

Thank you.

Q Thank you, General.

MR. WHITMAN: Thank you.

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