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**Presenter: Spokesman, Multinational Force Iraq, Maj. Gen. William Caldwell**

**June 9, 2006**

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## DoD News Briefing with Maj. Gen. Caldwell from Iraq

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BRYAN WHITMAN (Pentagon spokesman): Well thank you, General Caldwell, for taking some time this morning. And good morning to the press corps here. We know that you've been very busy, but there's still an awful lot of interest in the activities and the operations that have been taking place in Iraq, and so we appreciate you taking some time to talk to us back here in the Pentagon today.

This is -- I don't think you need any introduction, but this Major General William Caldwell, and he's speaking to us today from Baghdad.

And with that, General, why don't I turn it right over to you.

GEN. CALDWELL: Okay. Well thanks, Bryan.

Listen, to everybody there, I'm glad to be here today to help clarify and further elaborate on anything that's gone on in the last 48 hours here in Iraq.

As we stated the other day, and it's very, very important for everybody to understand, the elimination of Zarqawi is not going to stop the violence here in Iraq. I mean clearly, as General Casey stated -- and he's correct -- it is an important step forward, it's a big one, but at the same time, we still have some tough times ahead of us. The Iraqi people are going to assume a great responsibility here. The prime minister himself has stated, those who elected and put them into power are the same ones now that have to rid Iraq of the violence, of the violence like Zarqawi. And so the people have a big part to play. But there's a government in place, duly elected; we've appointed the minister of Defense, Interior and National Security. The prime minister now has a full Cabinet. He's got a plan for Baghdad he's announced, Baghdad security plan. And we're actually very optimistic as we move forward here, having set a lot of conditions that give them that opportunity to take greater control of their country, with us working in support of them.

So really, with that, I'll just take whatever questions you all have.

MR. WHITMAN: Well thank you. We'll get right into it.

Bob, why don't you go ahead.

Q General Caldwell, this is Bob Burns from AP. Could you first give us --

GEN. CALDWELL: Hi, Bob.

Q Hi.

Could you give us the definitive word on how many -- just the delay, I believe -- can you hear me?

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah, I can hear you now, Bob.

Q Could you give us the definitive word on how many people were killed in the air strike, and also give us the rationale for choosing to take Zarqawi out, kill him outright rather than try to capture him and exploit the intelligence value, capture him alive?

GEN. CALDWELL: Okay. I just came from -- I just flew back in here about two hours ago from a location where I was getting some of the debriefing material to look at so I can better answer some of your all's questions.

What I would tell you is I have not sat and talked to them and asked them exactly why the decision was made to attempt to take him utilizing an air strike. I'll have to go back and ask that question. But clearly, that was a decision that was made by the commander on the ground.

I would assume that if we were going to have gone in there and tried to have capture him, that would have taken some of kind of overwhelming force at that point in time, and that perhaps they didn't have it ready. But we'll have to check on that. I'm not sure what the process was that went into that decision.

Q And the first question -- General, how many people were killed in the attack? And who was the commander on the ground that you referred to?

GEN. CALDWELL: The attack casualties I was asking again about today. They'll clarify that. I was told that they're still giving me the final confirmation.

As with any operation that ever occurs, first reports are never 100 percent correct, and we do continue to follow up to make sure we have established exactly what the facts were on the ground.

I do know from what they told me that this afternoon that there were six people that were killed in that air strike -- three males, three females -- different than what I was read in the report yesterday. And so I had asked them to go back and double-check it one more time so that we can be definitively sure exactly what it was. But the report that they were reading today in the back brief with me was three males and three females.

MR. WHITMAN: Barbara, go ahead.

Q General Caldwell, Barbara Starr from CNN.

Also, can you give us the definitive word now -- do you have any information that Zarqawi initially survived the air strike, that he was alive at any point in the hands of either Iraqi or U.S. forces? And can you tell us if one of the women was identified as one of Zarqawi's wives or someone related to him?

GEN. CALDWELL: Barbara, what I can tell you is that, again, from the debriefs this morning, which gave us greater clarity than what we had before, is Zarqawi in fact did survive the airstrike. The report specifically

states that nobody else did survive, though, from what they know.

The first people on the scene were the Iraqi police. They had found him and put him into some kind of gurney stretcher kind of thing, and then American -- coalition forces arrived immediately thereafter on site. They immediately went to the person in the stretcher, were able to start to identify him by some distinguishing marks on his body. They had some kind of visual facial recognition.

According to the person on the ground, Zarqawi attempted to sort of turn away off the stretcher. They -- everybody resecured him back onto the stretcher, but he died almost immediately thereafter from the wounds he had received from the airstrike. As far as anybody else, again, the report says nobody else survived.

Q To clarify, then, you can confirm that U.S. troops themselves saw and can confirm to you that Zarqawi was alive. That is confirmed by U.S. troops on the ground. And his attempt to turn away, would you describe that as an attempt, even in the state he was in, to escape at that point? Why did you have -- was he strong enough for anyone to have to resecure him?

GEN. CALDWELL: Again, I'm reading the report. I did not talk specifically to any uniformed person, but according to the report, we did, in fact, see him alive. There was some kind of movement he had on the stretcher, and he died shortly thereafter. But yes, it was confirmed by other than the Iraqi police that he was alive initially.

Q Sorry; did anyone render medical assistance to him? Did U.S. troops try and render medical assistance?

GEN. CALDWELL: Again, Barbara, as I was reading the report, they went into the process to provide medical care to him.

MR. WHITMAN: Will?

Q General, this is Will Dunham with Reuters. How long, how many minutes, was Zarqawi alive after the bombing and before he eventually expired? And had he been shot?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, when I was there today, it became apparent that this kind of question would be asked. We're trying to put that exact minutes together from the time that we saw the Iraqi police arrive on site to when the first coalition forces arrived on site, and when they were able to report that they thought he had died there. And we'll provide that -- we can put that together, we just don't have it at the moment.

Q Sir, had he been shot?

GEN. CALDWELL: There is nothing that I saw in the report. But I'll get back and specifically ask that. But no, there was nothing in the report that said he had received any wounds from some kind of weapon system like that.

Q Bryan, Jim Miklaszewski with NBC -- or General -- I'm sorry. Will there be an autopsy performed, number one. And number two, was Zarqawi able to speak? Did he say anything either to the Iraqi police or the American soldiers?

GEN. CALDWELL: If he said something to the Iraqi police, I'm not aware of it. According to the reports by the coalition forces that arrived on site, he mumbled a little something, but it was indistinguishable and it was very short.

Q An autopsy, will an autopsy be performed?

GEN. CALDWELL: They in fact have done some analysis of his body. I'll have to get -- make sure I have the proper definition of what was done with Zarqawi's body, but I know they have done some kind of analysis, and I'll get that for you.

MR. WHITMAN: Jeff, go ahead.

Q General, Jeff Schogol with Stars and Stripes. Two quick questions. How can you be sure that he died -- that Zarqawi died as a result of the wounds he received from the explosion without a formal autopsy? And secondly, when you were cleaning him up, did you have to Photoshop his face or anything to make him more recognizable for the picture?

GEN. CALDWELL: To take the second question first, yes, Jeff, his face was very, very bloodied. And we made a conscious decision that if we were going to take photographs of him and make them available publicly, like we did in the press conference, that we were going to clean him up. Despite the fact that this person actually had no regard for human life, we were not going to treat him in the same manner, and so they did clean his face up for the shots that were shown publicly.

As far as the autopsy goes, there was -- I know -- quote -- was an "autopsy" done, but I'm going to go back to make sure that it was performed by whatever the certified kind of person that we're supposed to have so we can call it an autopsy, and make sure I'm exactly correct before I tell you that.

Q Follow-up. Did you have to digitally enhance the photos at all to clean them up to show them to the world?

GEN. CALDWELL: No. The photographs there are the straight photographs. We did no digital enhancement from this end.

Q General, this is Pam Hess with UPI. What's going to happen to Zarqawi's body after the autopsy? Does it get returned to Jordan to his family? And do you have anything on the identity of the others killed in the strike? Was it six victims total, including Zarqawi, or was it seven?

GEN. CALDWELL: Right now we are in consultation with the government of Iraq as far as the disposition of Zarqawi's body. I know the dialogue has been going on since after the -- shortly after the strike and he was brought under coalition forces control. So that's still being deliberated. They may have made a decision late here this afternoon. They had not as of noon today.

As far as the identification of the other personnel goes, I know they're still working it. The only two that have been positively identified at this point, of course, is Zarqawi and Al Rahman. And again, those we were able to do through fingerprint identification. DNA results have still not come back as of noon today, and we're waiting for those results, though, too. The other four, they are trying to attempt to identify, but as of noon today, again, we had not.

Q There was a report yesterday that a child was killed in that. Are you saying that that's not the case right now?

GEN. CALDWELL: I'm saying I'm not certain at the moment, because the initial report that I was provided in fact said there was a child, and then when I went through the after-action review today -- again, as with any military operations, you get the first reports in, they're fairly accurate but they're never complete. Then you do follow-on work to establish exactly what the factual facts are. And the report today says it was six people

-- three males and three females, no children.

MR. WHITMAN: Jonathan.

Q General, Jonathan Karl with ABC News. You mentioned yesterday that there were 17 raids conducted simultaneously in and around Baghdad after Zarqawi was confirmed dead. Can you give us any more information on this treasure trove of documents and information you got? And how many people were detained as a result of those raids?

GEN. CALDWELL: We obviously did conduct those 17 raids. And then last night we conducted an additional 39 operations across Iraq, some directly related to the information we had received, others have not direct relationship.

I can show you some pictures from one of the raids. We did get some digital photos back from one site where they went in and they found a cache of things.

In fact, if you wouldn't mind -- technical guys back there, can you throw that up?

All right, this is some pictures that just came back in this morning from that raid the other night. You can see this is a floor element here, underneath the floor in the house they were putting a lot of military gear and suicide gear. We'll pull it out here in the couple of following photographs, lay it out and show it to you.

Next slide, please.

You can see they had everything from passports, identification cards. On the top right there you'll see a night observation device.

Next slide.

On the left side over here you'll see they had some Iraqi army uniforms in this cache.

Next slide.

Again, some more of the armament.

Next slide.

That's it laid out so you can see the amount of stuff. You'll see they have some license plates for cars there, too, about in the top middle. And a lot of vests. Those vests primarily over there are just ammunition vests.

Next slide.

Again, more of the armament.

Next slide.

A close-up of the ammunition vest and then the uniforms on the right side, the Iraqi army uniforms.

Next slide.

Next slide.

A close-up -- ammunition belt.

Next slide.

Not sure -- it's either a flak vest or some type of bulletproof vest there that they could wear.

On the far right, that white thing -- and I'll show you another picture of it here in a second -- is a suicide belt.

Next slide.

That's a more close-up view of the suicide belt. I have another picture of it.

Next slide.

And that's a close-up of it. You can see the activation device there in the center. I think that's it.

Next slide.

Okay, another picture of it.

Next slide.

And again, that's the hole there in that house where they went in and conducted the raid and found all that underneath the floorboard. I think that's it, right?

Q Sir, where is that raid, please?

GEN. CALDWELL: I'll have to get that location for you. It's in and around the Baghdad area. I looked at the 17 sites today. All of them either inside Baghdad or within about a 15-mile radius right around Baghdad, but centered -- all 17 around the Baghdad area.

Q (Off mike) -- how many people you detained as a result of these raids?

GEN. CALDWELL: I will get you that exact number. I was going through the figures today. I saw two different numbers; one showed a detention of 25 personnel with one killed, another one had a different number. But I'll give you that number. That's the lower of the two until I can confirm it -- 25 detained, one KIA. That's not a friendly, that's an enemy.

MR. WHITMAN: Nick, go ahead.

Q General, it's Nick Simeone at Fox.

I was unclear whether you said it was six including Zarqawi that was killed or whether Zarqawi made seven.

And secondly, was there any plastic surgery used to reconstruct his face to make it more presentable before yesterday's news conference?

GEN. CALDWELL: That number is six, which includes Zarqawi, so it's not seven, but just six total.

There was none that I know of. I'll verify that by going back and asking the question, but I did not see it stated anywhere that in fact that it occurred, so I don't think it did. But I'll verify that for you.

Q And, General, everybody's asking the question how possibly could he have survived seemingly intact after two 500-pound bombs were dropped on that facility.

Was he outside? Was he thrown clear? Is there any visibility on why he was able to survive those two bombs?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, that's the exact same question I asked today when I sat down with several Air Force officers, to include some that were associated with the whole operation. And they assured me that there are cases when people, in fact, can survive even an attack like that on a building structure. Obviously, the other five in the building did not, but he did, for some reason. And we do not know, and I have looked through the reports, as to whether or not it was because he might have been right outside or whatever. We just don't have that granularity.

MR. WHITMAN: Tony.

Q Hi, sir. Tony Capaccio with Bloomberg News. Two questions. One, the \$25 million tip reward, what's the latest thinking on will anybody receive that?

GEN. CALDWELL: Okay. Just one question?

Q (Off mike) -- but I'm not going to give you the second -- (laughter).

GEN. CALDWELL: Okay. All right. What I think that everybody needs to understand is that when the coalition forces put together the information that led to this strike the other day, it was a painstaking effort, very focused over about three weeks. And during that time period there was a lot of information that came in allowing us to build that puzzle that led us to that evening where we were able to ascertain that Zarqawi was in that -- and Rahman were in that building together.

The information we had was never somebody coming forth and saying, "At this time at this place you will find Zarqawi in this building." That did not occur. In fact, it was the result of some tremendous work by coalition forces, intelligence agencies, partners in our global war on terrorism, that all came together, feeding different parts and pieces to allow us to build that puzzle, to establish the patterns, the methods, the techniques which allowed us to track and then monitor things which led us to that building that night to find Zarqawi in there. I won't -- get involved with that.

Q In the planning that went into this, was there any going-in assumption that you would try to take Zarqawi alive rather than kill him, or was it always the assumption, we'll have to kill him rather than try to use any force to capture him?

GEN. CALDWELL: I did not specifically talk to the operational commander on the ground about that question. But I do know that if in fact U.S. military or coalition forces feel that in the execution of a target that it's going to lead to exorbitant American or coalition forces losses, that we'll use proportional force and rather than put young men and women's lives at risk.

So I'll have to go back and ask the logic that went in behind that.

But I think what they did was very appropriate and proportional to the fact that Zarqawi is the number one terrorist in Iraq. He has proven to be a brutal murderer that has absolutely no consideration for civilian life.

So their actions that night -- and you have to ask yourself, is it worth putting American men and women's lives at risk to go into what was probably a heavily fortified and guarded thing, in order to grab him.

Q It was the local commander's call? It wasn't General Casey's call or General Chiarelli's call, it was the local commander's call?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, as we talked yesterday, you know, General Casey has done a tremendous job empowering his commanders in the field here to make those kind of tactical decisions that are necessary to prosecute this war against terrorists and to work in support of the government of Iraq.

At the lowest level possible that decision was made by an operations officer down there, based on what he was operating with, with many factors being utilized. And just before executing, went ahead and ensured that his commanders above him had situation awareness of what was about to go down. So they had just a couple of minutes there as they called that F-16 in -- because they had two of them up there flying. One was sitting at tanker. So as they called in and asked for the operation to be executed, the other one couldn't come off the tanker. So that single bird came in on a single ship and executed that, which gave them a few minutes to do the notification up that they were about to take down Zarqawi.

MR. WHITMAN: We've got time for one or two more.

Let's go to Pam real quick.

Q It's Pam Hess again. Would you tell us a little bit more about these 17 raids? You hinted yesterday in your opening statement that you'd been watching people in order to lead you to Zarqawi. So did the 17 raids go back and focus on the people that you'd been watching to lead you to Zarqawi?

And would you tell us more about al-Masri, who you identified yesterday as being the guy you expect to take over?

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah, the 17 raids -- there was obviously more operations that occurred in and around Iraq yesterday than just -- or the day before -- than the 17.

Those were 17 focused ones that were directly related to the intense intelligence effort that had been going on in tracking Zarqawi.

There are certain personnel that we have been watching, that we have been monitoring, that the coalition forces had made the decision not to take down at that time because they were giving us key indicators at different points in time as to where Zarqawi might be. So they were just monitored, watched and tracked.

But once Zarqawi went down, then that enabled us to go in and conduct those operations, the 17 focused operations directly related to targeting Zarqawi.

I mean, if that helps them in painting that picture there --

Q Al-Masri -- what more can you tell us about him? And is he one of the 25 you detained?

GEN. CALDWELL: No. Unfortunately, he's not one of the ones we picked up.

What we do know about him -- he's Egyptian-born. We know that he and Zarqawi met each other at the al-Farouk training camp in Afghanistan probably sometime in the early 2001-2002 time period. We know that al-Masri was -- came to Iraq before Zarqawi did, probably located somewhere around the Baghdad area sometime in around 2003, established probably the first al Qaeda in Iraq cell here in the Baghdad area, and that they continued a very close relationship since that time.

MR. WHITMAN: Why don't we finish up here. Barbara, you want to take the last one?

Q General Caldwell, Barbara Starr from CNN.

Al-Masri -- does he, do your knowledge, have any relationship at this point for communication with Osama bin Laden or Zawahiri?

GEN. CALDWELL: We know he had communications with Zawahiri. Anything else beyond that would be in operational channels and probably not something that we should talk about. But it's very clear that, you know, he had very close contacts with Zarqawi.

Q Do you mean contact with Zawahiri? How long ago?

GEN. CALDWELL: I'm sorry.

Q How long ago was the contact you said that you know that he had with Zawahiri?

GEN. CALDWELL: The specifics of that I'd have to go back and get for you.

I'm not sure that's declassified yet.

Q The first name of al-Masri, please?

GEN. CALDWELL: What was the question on al-Masri?

Q His first name, please?

GEN. CALDWELL: Abu -- I'll spell it. A-y-y-u-b. So Abu, A-b-u; then next word is A-y-y-u-b; al; and then Masri is M-a-s-r-i.

Q Barbara Starr one last time. I'm very sorry, but with respect -- you say that he had communications with Zawahiri; does that not also really by definition mean he was in communication with bin Laden?

GEN. CALDWELL: Barbara, again, for operational reasons, I really can't discuss any contact he had with anybody else at this point.

MR. WHITMAN: All right. That will really come to the end of our time and a little bit beyond, I know. So we just again want to thank you.

And let me turn it back to you in case you have anything you wanted to say as we close this up.

GEN. CALDWELL: I guess the only thing I would say is, you know, for the first time in three years, the Iraqi people really do have a real chance here. They have a duly elected government. They now have the ministers of Interior, Defense and National Security, which they have not had previously, which gives that prime minister a cabinet now he can work with.

The government of Iraq has taken the lead. The statements you hear coming from the prime minister are very encouraging as he talks about unity, security and prosperity within the country of Iraq. I mean, we're all extremely optimistic and hopeful as this government moves forward and the people will support it and that they have an opportunity for a future that they have not had before. And we're going to work in very close support with that government, giving them all the help we can.

MR. WHITMAN: Thank you very much.

Q Thanks, General.

Q Thank you.

Q Thank you.

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