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**Presenter: Col. Rod Barham, commander, 49th Military Police Brigade, Iraq**

**April 28, 2006**

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**News Briefing with Col. Barham from Iraq**

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(Note: Colonel Barham briefs via video-teleconference from Iraq.)

MR. WHITMAN: Good morning. How are all of you this morning? I see that some of your colleagues are still returning, coming in from the trip, late arrival last night.

But let me see if we've got Colonel Barham, if he can hear us. Can you hear us, sir?

COL. BARHAM: Yes, I can. This is Colonel Barham.

MR. WHITMAN: Very good. Well, good evening, good afternoon to you. Good morning to the press corps here at the Pentagon.

Today our briefer is Colonel Rod Barham. He is the commander of the 49th Military Police Brigade. It's his forces that are responsible for training of the Iraqi police. And given that this has been declared the Year of the Police in Iraq, we thought that it would be of interest to you to talk to somebody on the ground that is involved in that training every day and making a difference with respect to the entire Iraqi security forces.

Colonel Barham is going to give you a brief overview and then we'll get into some questions. So with that, Colonel, let me turn it over to you.

COL. BARHAM: Okay. Thank you, Tom (sic).

Good morning. I'd like to thank the Pentagon Press Corps for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today about police development in Iraq. As some of you know, 2006 is the Year of Police in Iraq. Our goal in theater is to have 135,000 trained and resourced Iraqi police officers working on the streets within the 18 provinces by the end of the year. Currently we have close to 90,000 Iraqi police trained.

Before I go into the 49th Military Police Brigade's mission, let me give you a background on the Iraqi police, what it is and what it is not. The Iraqi police have a complex structure. At its base are the station police, who work out of the police stations conducting basic investigations and other police functions. There is a parallel force, the patrol police, who patrol the streets and respond to emergencies. There are also the traffic police, the

river police, checkpoint police. Highway patrol is tasked to secure critical roadways. The major crimes unit conducts high-end investigations such as kidnapping.

These police forces are the responsibility of the minister of interior, and they're overseen by the deputy minister of interior for police affairs. The Iraqi police is not the national police, which was the commandos and the public order brigades, nor the Facility Production Service, the FPS. CPAT, the Coalition Police Assistance Training Teams, have the responsibility for training and equipping individual Iraqi police, and they run the police academies. The 49th MP Brigade has the responsibility for station-level operational training.

While, we have accomplished a number of goals since we arrived in Iraq, I believe our greatest accomplishment so far has been assessing the needs of the Iraqi police. The 49th Military Police Brigade has the responsibility to: A, find out what the Iraqi police assets are in the 18 provinces that make up Iraq; and B, train those Iraqis in the police departments and make sure that the recruits from the 13 academies in Iraq go to the provinces that need them.

The fact of the matter is, this is probably not just the most important job right now in Iraq, it is also the most difficult. It's no secret that we have challenges in the Iraqi Police Department. I'd like to address some of those challenges.

For one, corruption is very hard to calibrate right now. In defining what we mean by corruption, we mean police officers adhering to something other than the directives set by the Iraqi Police Department. An example is a militia group. And we believe that the only way to really fix this problem is through diplomatic and governmental means.

Now I'd like to talk about police transition teams. What makes our PTT teams -- or P-T-T teams -- special is that they consist of three components, and they're all vital to the police transition team.

First, you have the international police liaison officer, or IPLOs. These are civilian law enforcement agents from the U.S. who teach the Iraqis the skills needed to become community-based police officers.

Another important element of the PTTs are the Military Police. This is where you find the technical experts as military police share their knowledge with Iraqis regarding law enforcement matters. One reason why the MPs are needed is to provide security. Obviously, it's not easy to move around here, especially in Baghdad, so it's important that the IPLOs are with the Army.

Rounding out the team are our linguists, who provide the link between the MPs, the IPLOs and the Iraqi police.

As the 49th Military Police Brigade, we have three levels that we train at: The station level, which is the lowest level; the district, which is the next one up; and the provincial level. We have seen professionals emerge at all levels. Many of the Iraqis understand what it takes to build the infrastructure of the Iraqi Police Department. I'm talking about the ability to generate recruits, train recruits, get them to the station and equip those officers.

Another challenge we have right now is how to control the sheer size of Iraq. We're here in Baghdad, and our PTT teams, over 140 of them, are spread out throughout 14 of 18 provinces in Iraq. So it really becomes important to those PTT team chiefs to be independent and to operate without guidance.

We give the technical guidance on how to train the Iraqi police, but at the end of the day, it's going to be that young sergeant or captain who has to get the job done.

The way we calibrate readiness for each station is the police station management report. This is a detailed report card that each PTT team completes on each Iraqi police station. This report measures three

areas of effectiveness -- systems, resources and effects. We believe attention to detail brings credibility when we've reached a certain level of training with the Iraqi police.

Our goal here is to empower each station to operate independently within its community. We want to make sure that our PTT teams get out there with their Iraqi counterparts, provide them essential training and then move on to the next station.

In closing, despite the challenges that come with the job, I believe that we are doing -- what we are doing right now to train the Iraqi police will have a lasting effect on this country's future. Each day we see little victories on the streets of Iraq with the police becoming more confident and more competent in their jobs.

I'm proud of our soldiers from all over the U.S. who are risking their lives to help Iraq emerge as a free and sovereign nation. I'm also impressed with the many brave Iraqis who are signing up by the hundreds each week to become police officers. Many consider the job of Iraqi police officer one of the most dangerous in the world, and these brave men and women of Iraq should be commended for having the courage to help Iraq in this time of need.

The Deputy Minister of Interior for Police Affairs, Major General Ali Ghalib, and I recently traveled to Nahawan Police Station. This is an urban area just east of Baghdad, which experienced and has experienced increased violence over the last few months. Major General Ghalib gave an inspirational guidance to his police force and community leaders telling them, "You are fighting for Iraq. We must unite as one family, leaving our religious differences behind. A peaceful Iraq depends on it."

At this time, I'd be happy to answer any questions that you have about training Iraqi police.

MR. WHITMAN: Well thank you for that overview, Colonel. And we'll get into some questions, maybe with somebody who was in Iraq yesterday.

Q Colonel, this is Bob Burns from AP. With the latest progress in forming a new Iraqi government, there's a lot of attention on the question of militias and disarming them or integrating them into the police and military forces. I'm wondering -- you touched on this in your opening statement, and I think you said that this is a matter that needs to be dealt with by diplomatic and governmental means. I'm wondering if you could explain a little bit more what you mean by that, and how viable do you think it is to integrate militias into the police?

COL. BARHAM: Well, take the first part. The new minister or nominated minister came out with a statement a few days ago, I believe, who said that -- he said that dealing with the militias would be one of the first issues that the government had to deal with. And that's important, because the militias are -- they're part of the culture in this country. And they're also part of how really a democracy grows. If we take a look back on our birth as a country, and look back in the 1860s -- I always like to point out the movie "Gangs of New York" -- you can see how gangs and militia-type of organizations over the years expand into political parties and such.

Here it will be the same. A lot of what we call militias are political parties. And those political parties or those militias groups and their political parties will come into power, and they'll add to the government.

As far as how those militias will be incorporated into the police department, or if it's dangerous to incorporate them into the police department, in all parts of the Iraqi government culture, Iraqi army, Iraqi police, you have members of militia.

The key here is to ensure that the loyalty is to the country and not necessarily to or as strong to that militia group.

We've seen, since we've been here, that the recruits that go to the academy and come back from a police

academy are much more loyal to the central government than they are to the militia group or to any part of the existing culture of Iraq.

So I think that as time goes by, we're going to see that centralized loyalty build and build.

MR. WHITMAN: Go ahead.

Q Sir, this is Kathy Rhem from American Forces Press Service. Can you tell us a little bit about the recruits that you're seeing? Is there a typical trend? Do they have previous law enforcement experience? Are they very young? What kind of people are coming in off the street to join the Iraqi police forces?

COL. BARHAM: Okay. Thank you. The typical Iraqi policeman -- well, one thing -- an Iraqi policeman has to be between 19 and 35. That's the age, male or female.

And we see all types of recruits.

We've seen existing policemen come back. We've seen Iraqi army from the old regime come and join the Iraqi police. We've seen people just decide one day that they're going to be an Iraqi policeman and serve their country. It's all types of people -- are joining the Iraqi police force, and every day people line up to join, despite the dangerousness of the job.

Q (Off mike) -- women play in that force? What role do women play in that force? I was surprised to hear you say women.

COL. BARHAM: Okay. Yes, we do have women in the Iraqi police force. There aren't many, but there are a few, and we see them especially during the elections. Every polling center had to have a woman, whether she was a governmental worker or in the police force. They do all types of roles. You see them with the men patrolling streets. You see them inside the stations doing clerical. They provide all services. There are no limits to what a woman can do in the Iraqi Police Department.

Q Thank you.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go to Wendy.

Q Wendy Wang with Talk Radio News Service. That brings to mind a question of how easy was it to integrate women into the police force, how were they greeted by their male counterparts. And also, of the 90,000 police officers that are currently trained, are they operating independently? How much oversight do you need to give them? Can you talk a bit more on that?

COL. BARHAM: Okay. The first part's about -- I think what you're asking is the acceptability by their male counterparts into the police force. Is that correct?

Q Exactly.

COL. BARHAM: Okay. We see them accepted just like the various religious factions, the Sunnis, the Shi'as, the Kurds. In the police force, there don't seem to be any dividing lines. We really see them all accepted.

Now, on the 90,000 that are trained, that's just the number that are trained. The actual Iraqi police service is well over 150,000-plus. You know, one of the things that happened here in Iraq after the fall of the regime is that the police service -- parts of it was left intact, such as the traffic police.

That had very little -- they didn't go to the four winds, so to speak. They pretty much stayed in place during the battle stages of the war, so it was very easy for that part of the police force to come back together.

The other parts, the patrol police, the station police, those have had to be rebuilt. And we've seen over this past year where they're working together, and in a lot of cases, such as Baghdad, up in Mosul, they have very, very strong police departments. You do have some weak areas, which are some newer areas. The highway patrol is something new to this country that we brought in, and it's something that we're building up. It's a concept that they didn't have before here.

But for the most part, the Iraqi police is moving right along, and we believe that they will meet the goals by the end of the year that have been set for them.

Q Thank you.

MR. WHITMAN: Go ahead -- (off mike).

Q This is Joe Tabet with Al Hurra. Would you give us more details about the corruption that you talked about in the beginning? And how much do you think it is hurting the police forces department?

COL. BARHAM: Okay. On the corruption, one of the things that's difficult here, especially for us, is that we really don't see a lot of corruption when we're out with our PTT teams out at the stations. Most of the corruption per se is something that we hear about. It will be something like somebody will say, "Well, so and so is taking their weapons and they're selling them on the market," and then we'll go to that person or we'll have the Iraqi leadership bring that person in and talk to them, and ask them, "Let us see your weapon," and match up a serial number or something like that. Those types of things.

So it's minor levels of corruption, but it something that through the culture of Iraq is going to have to -- and through the laws of Iraq -- it's going to have to be worked out of this police system.

Now, the second part of your question was?

Q How much the corruption is hurting the police forces.

COL. BARHAM: Which corruption -- what type of corruption is hurting the police force?

Q How much?

MR. WHITMAN: I think the question goes to the effect which the corruption is having on -- what effect is it having on the police force overall.

COL. BARHAM: Okay, thank you. What we've seen as far as corruption and how it affects the morale and the operational level of the different police stations is that it really doesn't, in that the Iraqi police has an internal affairs office; whenever there's some hint of some kind of corruption, that department is contacted, and they'll investigate.

If it's something that comes up to their level, such as money being misused, vehicles being misused for certain things, they'll get involved and they'll investigate.

Iraqi leadership and especially Ali Ghalib, Major General Ali Ghalib, the deputy minister for police affairs, has said that he will not tolerate corruption in his forces. And they do a very, very good job of -- once they find out about it -- of weeding those individuals that they have problems with out of the force.

MR. WHITMAN: Go ahead.

Q Colonel, I'm Carl Osgood. I write for Executive Intelligence Review. I got the impression from something you said in your opening statement that you are spread very thinly across the country, but I didn't get all the details down that you said. Can you talk a little bit about how many people you have, both military and civilian, and how you're structured?

COL. BARHAM: Yes. We have about 3,700 or so military police, about 400 IPLOs and about 250 linguists.

We have around 140 PTTs or PTT teams. We're in 14 of the 18 provinces, in all the major cities. We have teams on all 14 provincial headquarters. We are in all district headquarters. And we are in a majority of the police stations in those 10 key cities. We also are spread throughout in some of the non-key cities, but in cities that the -- either the Iraqi leadership would like us to be in training, or the coalition leadership would like us to be in training. We cover approximately 450 stations of various types. In this country there are -- not including the four southern provinces -- there are about 600 to 700 stations.

Q Shall I follow up?

MR. WHITMAN: Yes.

Q Yes, if I could follow up on a related question. The number of 135,000 police that you -- Iraqi police that you mentioned as your goal, can you -- first of all, do you know how that number was arrived at? And secondly, is that considered a sufficient number of police for a country the size of Iraq?

COL. BARHAM: That number was arrived at between the coalition and the Iraqi government at the time. That was a number that the coalition said that they would man, train and equip, and the Iraqi government agreed to that.

Now, that number was derived by a ratio, depending on which region of the country you're talking about and which city you're talking about, a ratio of how many citizens to how many police. Just like in the United States or any other country, there's a ratio of police to citizens, and it varies depending on the crime, the type of crime, the geographical dispersion of the people in that region, those such demographics.

The provinces working with the minister of Interior are allowed to have more police in their province and in their city, but those would have to be trained by the Iraqis at their police academies, and they would have to be equipped by the Iraqi government.

Q Thank you.

Q Sir, Kathy Rhem again. To what extent do you work with other nationalities in training the Iraqi police?

COL. BARHAM: Are you talking about other coalition members?

Q Yes.

COL. BARHAM: Well, I'll talk about the other coalition members that are involved in the training. We're not alone in this. In the Wasat and Qadisiyah area, we work with the Polish and the Italians. In the four southern provinces that are -- have oversight by the British, the British work and have their own PTT teams in those four areas. We have -- the 49th has overall responsibility to ensure that the training at the station level is standardized and that the reporting is standardized, but there are many other members of the coalition that are

involved in this. And also, as far as U.S. forces are concerned, all the major divisions and military organizations are also involved in this. This is truly the tip of the spear, the main emphasis for this year in Iraq, the year of the police.

Q Colonel, it's Bob Burns. Could you address the question of absenteeism as a problem in the police forces? Secretary Rumsfeld was told yesterday that there was a considerable problem with that and attributed it to a degree to cultural issues. But do you have any figures on that?

COL. BARHAM: I don't have any figures on that. That's not really something that we track because we haven't seen that as a tremendous problem when we go out to the stations and train. The Iraqis work different than we do. They work -- the police work much more like our fire department in that they come in for three or four days, and they'll work 24 hours for those three or four days, and then they'll go home for three or four days.

When they're on duty, they'll work a 12-hour shift.

Now, when we go to train, we have to work around their workings. It's much unlike training the Iraqi army where you had them dedicated to what you're doing. The Iraqi police are doing a job -- they're patrolling the streets, they're doing reports, they're doing investigations. So when we're training, we train whoever is available at the station. And we keep track -- keep logs of who we train and how much training they get. But we're looking at the station level and how ready is that station operationally to do its job, and we're not really tracking individuals per se.

We have seen over this year, once again going back to the academy training, those 90,000 Iraqi policemen that have gone to the academy are much more loyal, much more dedicated to the job that they're in. And we really don't see them absent from duty.

MR. WHITMAN: Colonel, we've reached about the end of our time. I thought I'd throw it back to you to see if you have any closing comments that you'd like to make before we bring this to an end.

COL. BARHAM: Well, I'd like to thank you all, and I appreciate the opportunity to come before you and talk about the Iraqi police and how the 49th Military Police Brigade is developing and training them.

I'd also like to tell you that the mission is moving along very well. We've seen tremendous progress since we've been on ground. We believe that the mission will be accomplished by the end of this year. Things are going very, very well with the Iraqi police.

MR. WHITMAN: Well thank you, and thank you again for your time. We hope to talk to you again sometime soon. And we thank you for your service and that of your men also.

COL. BARHAM: Thank you very much.

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