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USUN PRESS RELEASE # 15007)

June 13, 2007



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United States Mission to the United Nations
140 East 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10017

AS DELIVERED

Remarks by Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, U.S. Permanent Representative, on Multi-National Forces in Iraq, in the Security Council, June 13, 2007

I am pleased to report to the Security Council on behalf of the Multinational Forces in Iraq (MNF-I). I warmly welcome Iraqi Foreign Minister Zebari, and am pleased he could be here with us today. I also want to thank Special Representative Qazi for his work and his report on UNAMI's important efforts in Iraq.

Mr. President, it is clear that the Iraqi government confronts significant security challenges as it strives to promote stability and consolidate Iraq's young democracy. Success will depend not only on progress in the security sector, where MNF-I plays an important supporting role, but also on advances in the economic field, and, most importantly, movement in the political arena. We welcome the efforts expended over the last three months, while noting that much work remains to be done.

Mr. President, with your permission I will now provide an update on these efforts, which include activities in Iraq's political, economic, and security sectors, as well as in the region and with the international community. In the political arena, progress on national reconciliation is essential to ensure that security efforts underway will result in long-term stability in the country and the region. To that end, we welcome efforts by Iraqi leaders who are engaged in activities designed to promote national reconciliation. For example, as Mr. Qazi mentioned, the Constitutional Review Committee continues its work to address outstanding constitutional matters. Last month, the Committee announced that it had prepared a draft plan to reform the constitution. The Committee's work will provide a solid foundation for a successful Iraq, and we look forward to its sustained effort on this fundamental matter.

We also welcome the selection of the new commissioners to the Independent High Election Commission, and the work underway to prepare for provincial elections. Additional legislation is being formulated that will outline the powers of provincial councils and their relations to national government institutions. We welcome these efforts, as well as the work of the newly created Demobilization, Disarmament, and Re-Integration Committee dealing with militias and other unauthorized military formations, and look forward to the achievement of other benchmarks on reconciliation, such as passage of a law to reform de-Baathification processes.

Turning to the economic front, we welcome the launch of the International Compact with Iraq on May 3, and appreciate the support of Secretary-General Ban. The emphasis now is on implementing the economic initiatives that the Government of Iraq has committed to undertake. International community support for Iraq will be important for the Compact's success. The cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations has been key to successful launch of this initiative, and will remain critical during the implementation phase. Further advances in Iraq's economic reform, however, will require passage of legislation on the hydrocarbons sector with regulations governing oil revenue sharing. Iraq must also press ahead with its effort to improve budget execution, particularly for reconstruction projects initiated by key ministries and the provincial governments, and for essential support in service delivery.

On the security front, insurgents, militias, terrorists, and criminals continue their destabilizing actions. We strongly condemn this

morning's vicious attack on the holy Shrines of Imam Ali Al-Hadi and Imam Hassan Al-Askari in Samarra, and share the outrage of the Iraqi people against this crime. It is another deliberate attempt by terrorists to sow dissent and inflame sectarian strife among the people of Iraq. We call on all Iraqis to reject this provocation.

Most of the attacks in Iraq have occurred in Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala provinces, and the majority of the victims are Iraqi civilians. We regret the suffering of the Iraqi people and the many innocent lives lost.

Those seeking to undermine Iraq continue to use a variety of methods to kill and maim, as witnessed in the use of lethal vehicle-borne improvised explosive bombings in the Baghdad area in April. Also in April, a suicide bomber blew himself up in the Iraqi Council of Representatives building, killing one member and wounding several other people. In a demonstration of the Council's resolve to stand up to terrorists, the Council met the following day. We applaud this courageous act and commitment to serving the interests of the Iraqi people.

Operation Fardh Al-Qanun (or, "Imposing the Law") continues to work to improve security in Baghdad area in order to provide the time and space for political and economic progress. The Operation is entering its fifth month, and although it is still too early to project results, there have been signs of a significant shift in the distribution of violence. While attacks against Coalition Forces and high-profile terrorist attacks are still frequent, attacks against civilians and sectarian murders in Baghdad have decreased from the levels seen in January. We are also seeing significant increases in the number of weapons caches found. Iraqi and Multinational Forces continue to establish joint security stations and combat outposts in the city and surrounding areas. The performance of the Iraqi Security Forces is critical to the success of these efforts.

There are other developments in Iraq's stand against the insurgency. Opposition to Al-Qaeda in Al-Anbar Province is growing, aided by combined operations in Ramadi with Iraqi Security and Multinational Forces that include the establishment of Iraqi police stations and joint security stations throughout the city of Ramadi. Iraqi Security Forces are recruiting in greater numbers in Al-Anbar Province, demonstrating the determination of the people to participate in the fight against insurgents and Al-Qaeda and to assist with the security of the country. We see considerable interest and activity in other provinces to extend the success of popular resistance to Al-Qaeda that has been demonstrated in the Anbar Province.

Iraqi Security Forces are undertaking a greater role in Iraq's security, taking the lead in raids and other operations to combat the insurgents, militias, terrorists and criminals. In the month of May, the Iraqi Special Operations Force Brigade alone conducted more than 48 operations, targeting terrorists, regardless of their sect. Iraqi forces continue to conduct operations throughout the country.

As part of the continuing process of handing over the security lead to Iraqi Security Forces, Multinational Forces transferred security responsibility for the southern Iraq province of Maysan in April, and the northern provinces of Sulaymaniyah, Erbil, and Dohuk on May 30. Iraqi Security Forces have now assumed the security lead in seven provinces. We are working steadily to achieve further transfers, as the Iraqi Security Forces and Iraqi Provincial governments build their capacity to take on this responsibility.

On May 4, the Egyptian government hosted an Expanded Neighbors meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh to facilitate greater regional dialogue and support for Iraqi efforts to rebuild the country. Follow-up, particularly by the working groups established in Sharm, is needed to continue the momentum begun by this initiative. Iraqi leaders also continue their bilateral outreach to strengthen relations with Iraq's neighbors, and we encourage all parties to expand those efforts. We welcome Turkey's offer to host the next expanded Neighbors Meeting later this year.

Securing Iraq's borders is vital. Iraq cannot accomplish this task on its own; it will require the good will and efforts of Iraq's neighbors, as well. Not all of Iraq's neighbors have been helpful. We remain concerned that certain countries continue to support violent extremists who seek to undermine Iraq's political progress. The flow of foreign terrorists and weapons into Iraq is particularly destabilizing. We call upon member states to repudiate this behavior and to endorse Prime Minister Maliki's repeated requests for an end to foreign interference in Iraq's political process.

We laud the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI), which remains firm in its ongoing commitment to help the Iraqi people despite the difficult security environment. The UN's specialized assistance will be critical to Iraq's long-term development and stability, and we look forward to upcoming discussions on how to revise UNAMI's mandate so as to encourage a robust presence to assist Iraq's political and economic progress and to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced people.

We welcome the contributions made in support of the UN's security efforts in Iraq. Georgia, South Korea, and Romania have provided security forces for UNAMI that have been essential to the UN's operations in Iraq. Fiji continues to provide UN guard protection. Sustained international support for the UN in Iraq, including through contributions to the fund for security expenses, as well as the provision of forces for UN security, will enable the United Nations to remain focused on its core assistance objectives in Iraq. MNF-I is ready to assist with UN security as necessary.

We extend our sincere appreciation to Special Representative Qazi for his efforts over the last three years to assist the Iraqi government and people in their rebuilding efforts. Special Representative Qazi has worked closely with the Government of Iraq, the Iraqi people, the Multinational Forces, and regional governments in support of Iraq, and we thank him for his dedication and service.

Mr. President, in closing let me confirm that the Multinational Forces remain dedicated to helping the Iraqi Security Forces build their capabilities so that they may assume full responsibility for securing and defending their country. The international community shares a common interest in ensuring the success of the Iraqi effort to create a peaceful, stable and prosperous country, which is important not only for the peoples of Iraq, but for the region and the entire world.

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