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The Situation in Iraq

Ambassador John R. Bolton, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Remarks to the Security Council
Washington, DC
September 14, 2006

USUN PRESS RELEASE #228

As requested by the UN Security Council in Resolutions 1546 and 1637, I am pleased to report to the Security Council on behalf of the 29 countries making up the Multinational Forces-Iraq (MNF-I), on the Force's progress towards fulfilling its mandate.

Mr. President, this most recent reporting period coincides with the first 90 days of a democratically elected, representative unity government -- a substantial break from Iraq's past. In early June, the formation of a national unity government was completed with the appointments of the Ministers of Interior, Defense and State for National Security Affairs. On June 25, Prime Minister al-Maliki presented a "National Reconciliation and Dialogue Project" to the Council of Representatives (CoR). This Project seeks to reconcile past inequities and rally Iraqis around the principle of equality without sectarian divisions. It looks to establish the basis for national unity through the democratic process and create the conditions for Iraq to assume a leading regional and international role. In addition, the Council of Representatives adopted an accelerated schedule of sessions. Most of the 24 Council Committees have formed and named chairs. The Council is making progress on key legislation required to implement the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution.

In late July, the Government of Iraq and the United Nations, with the strong support of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other donor states and international financial institutions, launched an International Compact with Iraq. The International Compact will, over the next five years, bring together the international community and multilateral organizations to help Iraq achieve its vision of a united, federal, and democratic country, at peace with its neighbors and itself, and economically self-sufficient and prosperous.

Since 2003, there have been significant successes in the development of legitimate political, economic, and

governmental institutions in Iraq. The unfolding of the democratic electoral process that we have witnessed in recent years has been a crucial success in building the foundations of a new free and democratic Iraq. Despite these achievements, obstacles remain. Setbacks in the level and nature of violence in Iraq continue to create significant challenges to stability, reconstruction, and transition. Sectarian tensions, purposely incited by insurgents and extremists, increased over the last quarter, resulting in increased killings, kidnappings, attacks on civilians, and increasing numbers of internally displaced persons. Extremists are increasingly interlocked in retaliatory violence and seeking to expand their existing areas of influence. The sustained level of ethno-sectarian violence is one of the most significant threats to security and stability in Iraq.

Nonetheless, the Iraqi people continue to reject overwhelmingly violence as a means to drive political change. The international community remains steadfast with the people of Iraq in their determined drive for a secure, stable and democratic country. We honor the memory and sacrifice of all who have lost their lives in the struggle for a federal, democratic, pluralistic, and unified Iraq.

Security Situation

Mr. President, the insurgents, extremists and terrorists remain capable of and intent on carrying out attacks against Iraqi civilians, officials, and security forces, with a goal of destabilizing the legitimately elected government of Iraq and denying the Iraqi people the democracy and promise of a better future that they have chosen through free and fair elections.

During this period, four of Iraq's 18 provinces -- Baghdad, Al Anbar, Salah ad Din, and Diyala -- continued to experience more than 81 percent of all attacks. Al Anbar and Baghdad are the most seriously affected, accounting for 55 percent of all attacks. Ninewa and Tamim provinces also saw significant increases in attacks over the previous quarter. Twelve provinces, containing more than 50 percent of the population, experienced only 5 percent of all attacks.

Attacks and civilian casualties have risen, characterized by ethno-sectarian attacks and reprisals. Violence escalated notably in Baghdad, which, as the political, population, and media center of the country, is a high value target for the terrorists. Nonetheless, terrorists have failed to advance their primary objectives, which include derailing Iraq's political process and widening their political support among the Iraqi people. The Iraqi people continue to express confidence in the Iraqi Army to provide for their security and to reject the extremists' vision of Iraq's future.

The average number of weekly attacks increased 15 percent over the previous reporting period's average, and Iraqi casualties increased by 51 percent compared to the previous quarter. MNF-I and the Iraqi Government continued to make progress, improving the security environment in Fallujah and some parts of northern Iraq. The Iraqi Army has taken the lead in more counter-insurgency operations and assumed security responsibility in more areas.

The insurgency remains potent and viable, although its visibility has been overshadowed by the increase in sectarian violence it has sought to foment. This rising sectarian strife defines the emerging nature of violence in mid-2006.

On June 14, Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki announced the government's plan to provide improved security conditions in Baghdad. Operation Together Forward is an Iraqi-planned and led operation to ensure the security of Baghdad against attacks designed to uproot democracy and derail Iraq's commitment to progress. As part of this operation, Iraqi police, the Iraqi Army, and National Police, supported by the Multinational Forces, increased patrols and checkpoints

in all areas of Baghdad, while concentrating on areas of the city that have witnessed increases in violence and sectarian killings. Security forces also worked to block terrorist entry into the capital city.

In July, during the Prime Minister's first visit to the United States, Prime Minister al-Maliki and President Bush announced an adjustment to the Baghdad Security Plan. Multinational and Iraqi units were repositioned from less active areas of the country. Although in progress only a short time, this effort appears to have reduced Baghdad violence in the month of August. Initial press reports indicate these adjustments to the Baghdad Security Plan have been welcomed by many Baghdad residents.

Attacks on Iraq's infrastructure continue to adversely affect oil revenues and the availability of electricity. The average weekly number of attacks on critical infrastructure continued to decline, decreasing from an average of five per week to an average of two per week. Although the number of attacks is decreasing, the essential services infrastructure will continue to be a high-value target for enemy elements. The Multinational Force will continue to work with the Iraqi government and other international partners to strengthen further infrastructure security.

Although Baghdad remains the focus for sectarian and terrorist violence in Iraq, violence tied to the Rejectionist insurgency, terrorist intimidation, political and tribal tensions and criminality continue in other regions. Sectarian violence is gradually spreading north into Diyala Province and Kirkuk as Sunni, Shi'a, and Kurdish groups compete for provincial influence. Conflict in Al Anbar province remains centered on the Sunni insurgency. Al Qaida in Iraq continues its intimidation to coerce passive Sunni support, although tribes are pushing back to eject al Qaida and to re-establish their dominant role. In the southern, predominantly Shi'a region of the country, political and tribal rivalries are a growing motive behind violence, particularly in Basra, with limited anti-Coalition attacks likely undertaken by rogue Shi'a militia with Iranian support.

Iraqi Security Forces

Mr. President, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) continue to grow, improve, and conduct more and more independent operations each day. Multinational Forces continue to train, equip, and mentor the ISF and to transition security responsibilities of areas to the Iraqi forces as proficiency allows and conditions permit. Transitions are evaluated area-by-area, region-by-region, and are incremental to ensure an effective and successful transition of security responsibilities.

Iraq achieved another historic milestone on July 13, with the transfer of security responsibility in Muthanna Province from MNF-I to the Provincial Governor and civilian-controlled Iraqi Police Service (IPS). Moreover, since May 2006, MNF-I has transferred an additional 10 Forward Operating Bases (FOBS) to the Government of Iraq. Fifty-one of 110 FOBS are now under Iraqi control. Dhi Qar province appears ready to assume security independence shortly and several other provinces should meet the transition criteria before the end of the year.

In August, the Fourth Iraqi Army Division Headquarters officially assumed the lead in its area of responsibility from the 101st Airborne Division. This achievement represents the halfway mark of our joint goal of putting all Iraqi Security Forces in the lead of coordinating, planning, and conducting security operations in Iraq.

Iraqi Security Forces are increasingly taking the lead in operations and assuming primary responsibility for Iraq's security,

as Iraqi army and police forces demonstrate an increased capability to plan and execute counter-insurgency operations. As of September 4, 5 Iraqi Army divisions, 26 brigades, 85 battalions, and two National Police battalions assumed lead responsibility for security in their areas of operation. 106 Iraqi Army combat battalions and 17 Strategic Infrastructure Battalions are conducting operations at varying levels of capability. Another three combat battalions are in the process of forming. In addition, 27 National Police battalions are now operational and active. Although these units lead security operations, most still receive support from the Multinational Forces for their logistics and operations.

Institutional capability within the Ministries of Defense and Interior is an increasingly important factor in the transition to Iraqi security self-reliance. As these ministries continue to staff, train, and equip forces, efforts have focused on strengthening their capacity to direct, support, and sustain themselves. With more than two-thirds of the Iraqi Army combat units now in the lead, MNF-I's focus is shifting toward helping the Iraqis develop stronger logistics and command and control capabilities. MNF-I will also continue to assist developing and mentoring the capacity of the Ministry of Defense to organize, train, equip and modernize its forces.

In the first week of September, the Ministry of Defense and the Joint Headquarters assumed operational control of the Iraqi Ground Forces Command, Iraqi Navy, and Iraqi Air Force. The Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC) assumed operational control of the 8th Iraqi Army Division. The Government of Iraq will determine when the IGFC is ready to assume more control, but this transfer demonstrates Iraq's increasing capabilities.

Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior forces now total over 298,000 trained personnel. This includes over 115,000 Ministry of Defense personnel, over 118,000 police, and over 65,000 other Ministry of Interior forces.

The Joint Committee to Achieve Iraq Security Self-Reliance announced by Prime Minister Maliki and President Bush on July 25 will develop a conditions-based roadmap for full transition of security responsibility.

Security For the United Nations in Iraq

Mr. President, the UN's contributions in Iraq are vital. We urge the UN to continue to fulfill its mandate under Security Council resolution 1546. On August 10, the Security Council adopted resolution 1700, renewing the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq for another 12 months and reaffirming its commitment to assisting the Iraqi people and government in building a productive and prosperous nation. The United Nations' role in supporting and co-chairing the International Compact for Iraq is a key new component of the UN's role, which was noted in this resolution. The United Nations now has representatives in its compound in Irbil, and a UN Military Liaison Adviser is currently in Kirkuk.

Multinational Forces, notably the Georgian, Romanian, and South Korean contingents, continue to provide security for the United Nations in Baghdad, Basra, and Irbil, respectively. These troops provide static site security, reconnaissance, security patrols, convoy escorts, checkpoints, and, when necessary, MEDEVAC and emergency evacuation. Also, Fijian troops provide static and close-in protection for UN personnel and facilities in Baghdad.

Conclusion

Mr. President, the evolution of a fully free, secure, and prosperous Iraq remains a work in progress. Training Iraqi Security Forces to assume primary responsibility for security is essential. Since taking the reins of government in June,

Prime Minister Maliki's government has taken promising steps toward national reconciliation as well as economic development, reform, and reconstruction through the launch of the International Compact for Iraq. The Multinational Force and the international community stand with the Iraqi people as Prime Minister Maliki's government continues its efforts to promote national dialogue and inclusion, and strive tirelessly to deliver improvements in security, stability, and quality of life to the Iraqi people.

Iraq's neighbors share some responsibility for Iraq's internal security. Syria should prevent financial and material support, particularly arms, from entering Iraq. Iran should stop providing munitions and other support to extremist groups in Iraq. Iraq's regional neighbors should do more to help Iraq's democratically elected government by following through on pledges to provide economic assistance and debt relief. We applaud the Kingdom of Jordan for recently sending an Ambassador to Baghdad, and hope that other Arab states will soon do the same. Moreover, we renew our call to the entire international community to support Iraq's sovereign government and redouble its assistance efforts. In conclusion, Mr. President, the MNF and combined MNF-ISF efforts continue to support an environment that will allow Iraq's democratically elected government to succeed and for the Iraqi people to realize a brighter, secure and more prosperous future.

Released on September 14, 2006



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