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## Briefing on Reconstruction Progress in Iraq

**James Soriano, al-Anbar Provincial Reconstruction Team Leader**

**Brigadier General John Allen, U.S. Marine Corps Deputy Commander of Multi National Force-West**

Washington, DC

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(9:05 a.m. EDT)

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Good morning, pleasure to see you guys. We've got plenty of time this morning. We've moved the gaggle, in case any of you haven't seen, till 10:00 a.m. So I have the pleasure of introducing James Soriano, our team leader of our Provincial Reconstruction team in the Anbar Province and Brigadier General John Allen --

**BGEN ALLEN:** Good morning.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** -- who is the Deputy Commanding General of the Second Marine Expeditionary Force and the Commanding General, Second Marine Expeditionary Brigade.

Gentlemen?

**MR. SORIANO:** Good morning. My name is Jim Soriano. As you just heard, I'm the PRT leader out in Anbar for the entire province. By way of context, let me just say some opening remarks and then we can go into Qs and As.

There are four PRTs out in Anbar, three embedded at the brigade level, if I could put it that way, and then there's the one at the provincial level and that's the one I lead up. We engage the provincial government, the provincial council, the governor and -- at that level. EPRTs, by their nature, work with municipalities. General Allen is my military counterpart. We are the civilian military two lobes of a brain, if you will, out there in Anbar and we have a civil military partnership moving forward on several tracks, from reconstruction to governance reconciliation and the rest.

I've been there for 14 months. I arrived in September '06. It's my second tour in Iraq. The General and I are here because

we are escorting a group of Anbari notables. You may have seen some press on that. We have the governor of the province with us, the provincial council chairman Sheikh Ahmed Abu Risha, who is the -- as you may know, the brother of the late Sattar Abu Risha, who was killed in September and the leader of the awakening movement in Anbar, and several other members of the provincial council and the mayor of Ramadi. They are doing press this morning at their hotel, a lot of Arabic press and also some American press.

That's who we are and that's generally the context. Let me just say a few words about Anbar, then and now, and then I'll stop talking and take questions because I think I -- after two tours in Iraq and I've been there almost 14 months in Anbar specifically, let me just say a few things about what I have seen in the last 14 months in Ramadi, which is where I live, and the rest of the province.

14 months ago, local government was in disarray. The provincial council had fled, literally, to Baghdad in March of '06 because of the insurgency. They used to hold meetings at the Rashid Hotel in Baghdad. Municipal governments, municipal councils had broken apart, dissolved because of the insurgency. Today, the provincial government is back in Ramadi as of July. They are meeting openly in the government center, a cluster of about 10 buildings in the heart of Ramadi, which are badly war-damaged. And virtually every city in town in the province now has a functioning local council and a mayor. That was not the case when I arrived in September of '06.

I will defer all questions on security to the professionals and to General Allen. I'm sure you have many questions on that. But at this time last year, there were about 11,000 police in the province, perhaps 4,000 earlier in '06. By this time last year, 12 months ago, about 11,000. Today, there are 12,000 and growing. And if there's one factor that you can -- one can point to that has caused the windfall of good news on the security front, it's the increase in police recruitment. Police recruitment drives in the province in the summer of '06 would typically attract a dozen or so would-be police officers.

Today, there are more applicants than there are seats at the police academy to train them, then and now. Then, the tribes were ambivalent. Many tribal leaders were on the fence. The battle was raging. In the last nine months or so, virtually all of them have come off the fence and come on to our side. That's also a key factor in the change of security, the positive change of security in Anbar. There were no criminal courts, no trials in Anbar 12 months ago. Civil courts and family matters were moving forward even during the insurgency, but criminal trials were not being held. The judges went underground. They just refused to entertain or hear cases from the bench. Criminal trials, since I think about August, are now ongoing and verdicts are being rendered, so the court system is now functioning, then and now.

Twelve months ago, 24 months ago, all manner of venom spewed forth from mosque sermons on Fridays. Today, if you go to a mosque in Ramadi or Fallujah on a Friday, the sermons have returned to more traditional themes and topics of one's relationship to God and morality and so forth. But that -- those calls to arms and the appeal to insurgency is now absent. The moderate clerics have taken back the mosques that have fallen into the hands of radical preachers.

Civil servants had disappeared 12 months ago. They went underground. Some of them worked out of their houses. Only the governor himself, if I can exaggerate this point, would show up regularly at the -- at his office, at his -- at the government center in Ramadi, which has just been renovated with military funds, SERP funds as we call it. A big mortar hole in the ceiling is now covered up. But he is protected by a platoon of marines, one to the office on a daily basis, a very strong-willed man and -- but the other civil servants had just gone underground. They are now back. They meet regularly. There's about 30 or 40 senior civil servants in the province. Let me describe them like that. And they meet regularly with the governor.

If you walk through the government center, as I did about 10 days ago, I see now women and children walking up and down the halls, making applications for this or that, in this office or that office, which offices did not exist six months ago. The building was pretty much -- very badly damaged. It was -- it's been renovated with military funds.

And my last point, and then I'll stop and turn it over to the General, the city -- let me just say the city of Ramadi, a battlefield six months ago, is no longer under insurgent control. Anbar Province is leaving the long night of battle and entering into a post-conflict period. There are rising expectations among the citizens for better services, transparent government, accountable government. And typically, in the meetings that we've had with the Anbar aid, if you want to call them that, the delegation we're here with, the conversations with, you know, the president and all the others are not so much about security anymore. It's about reconstruction and economic recovery. So there's been a psychological shift to think about the challenges that -- of the period we're now entering, the post-conflict period.

And my last point is one of the immediate results of the increased stability in the province has been the reconnection of government. And that goes from the central government down to the provincial level and also from the provincial government down the municipalities. Those linkages had been broken from '04 to '0 -- early '07. And money did not flow from the central government into the province for several years. It started flowing again in '06. We spend -- he and I spend a lot of our time lobbying central government ministries to support the provincial government with policy support on such things as police recruitment and also financial flows. So government is being reconnected. There's a gradual return to normal -- normal economic and political life and I'll leave it at that.

General, please.

**BGEN ALLEN:** I'll just make a few very brief comments. Beyond being the Deputy Commander of the Coalition Forces, about 36,000 or so in the province, my portfolio as well contains governmental capacity, economic development, rule of law, and really, almost a full-time job, travel engagement.

And as Mr. Soriano correctly pointed out, one of the immediate offshoots, one of the immediate benefits of a very aggressive travel engagement program was that about April or so, as the tribes, in general, had concluded that they were going to take a separate path from al-Qaida and began to oppose al-Qaida, the immediate benefit of that was that the sheikhs told the young men of Anbar, whom they called the sons of Anbar, that they were now clear to join the army and join the police.

And they've come by the hundreds. We are backed up in the numbers that we can train for the army. Both of the two army divisions in the province which were respectively at about 50 percent strength when we arrived, when our unit arrived, which was February of this year -- I came in January, so I've been there ten months -- about 50 percent strength and 30 percent strength are now at over 100 percent strength. And as Jim correctly pointed out, about a year ago, the police in the province were at about 4,600. When we arrived in January, it was 11,000. Today we're capped at 24,000, just paid 21,000 on the last list and we have about 4,900 on the waiting list.

This has really been the most profound offshoot of our relationship with the Anbaris, the Iraqis, the tribes, because where conventional military operations undertaken by the coalition forces could achieve only a certain amount in terms of kinetic operations, we were simply limited in numbers and we would clear an area. And as we would move on to the next area, al-Qaida would flow back in behind us. Now, with 21,000 police and as I said, moving to 24,000 very shortly,

we hope eventually to have somewhere along the line of 27-30,000. Virtually every single one of the populated areas has its own police element. They're all centrally trained. They're all linked to the Ministry of Interior. They are all blue-shirted police, in other words, official police. These now -- these Anbaris from their own neighborhoods and their own towns have controlled the population centers, which has made it very, very difficult for al-Qaida to reassert itself in the population centers.

The other piece that I would tell you is that we're in a time of transition now in the province. And as I told you, my portfolio was a governmental capacity economic development rule of law, tribal engagement. Those were things that the military did because until about April/May, it was very, very difficult for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams to actually get out into the battlefields, security situation just precluded it.

Now, with the violence levels at historic levels -- low levels -- for example, the last week of Ramadan, which is typically a period of significant violence, a spike in violence annually -- it was the lowest measurable number of incidents that we've experienced since we kept records. Now, there is the opportunity for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams who represent the Department of State and the interagency to do those kinds of important reconstruction efforts and efforts to build capacity in government and the rule of law and be able to do that. Now, we escort them across the battlefield and we help them in that regard. But now we're transitioning those kinds of functions from a military capacity to appropriately the hands of the civilian interagency. And we're very excited about that and we think that transition's going smoothly. So let me end my remarks here and we can get into specifics if you like, as we go along. And Mr. Soriano and I will answer questions.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** General Allen, what makes you believe that the alliances that you have struck with the tribal sheikhs will be enduring and that they will not turn, should they choose to in the future?

**BGEN ALLEN:** I've gotten that question a lot. And I think it's a good question. I think probably the best way to answer this would be to look at the events of the last two years through the eyes of the sheikhs. When al-Qaida entered the province, it had been able to successfully portray itself as the force which would liberate the province from the coalition forces. And in very short order, al-Qaida inflicted an ideology upon the people of Anbar, which is at its heart, and this is an important thing to recognize, a tribal society, a traditional society, a society that is faithful to the faith of Islam, but is not extremist in its beliefs. And very quickly, al-Qaida attempted to inflict those extremist beliefs upon the population.

And when the population resisted, then began the murder and intimidation campaigns, which we read about, across Iraq but in particular, in the Anbar Province. They attacked what we called the traditional anchor points of the societies; they attacked the police; they attacked the tribal leaderships, the sheikhs the sub-tribal sheikhs; they attacked the medical capacity, they attacked the doctors and the teachers; they blew up and destroyed a lot of the infrastructure to include the communications infrastructure to really isolate the population from the traditional anchor points that define them as a tribal society.

Most of al-Qaida began to muscle very heavily into the tribal business, the commerce, the movement of whatever the commerce might be for that particular tribe. So in many respects al-Qaida was supplanting in a fairly violent way the traditional lines of authority within the tribes. It didn't take long for them to recognize this wasn't going to work for the tribes. In latter part of '05 up in the northwest corner of the province, in an area called al-Qaim, the Albu Mahal tribe

made their first decision of all the tribes to shoulder up with the coalition forces during Operation Steel Curtain. Shortly after that, the Abu Nimr tribes, down the Euphrates River, began to shoulder up with the coalition. And the latter part of '05, early '06, a group of sheikhs in and around Ramadi, called the Anbar people's committee, formed an organization -- about 11 sheikhs -- to oppose al-Qaida. And al-Qaida recognized that if they could not control the tribes, could not control the people, then their cause was lost. They counterattacked against the Anbar people's committee, and in a very short period of time killed 6 of the 11 sheikhs, to include members of the family. In some cases, dumped the bodies in the desert, which of course was a tremendous offense against the faith of Islam.

That was the point where we began to see the emergence of a young sheikh in Ramadi by the name of Abdul Sattar Abu Risha and the formation of something called the Anbar Salvation Council, which was an umbrella organization in the province that was widely signed onto by the principal lineal sheikhs of the province, all the way from al-Qaim in the northwest extreme of the province, down to the southeast extreme of the province with the Abu Issa tribe and the Jamali tribe and so on. So there was widespread consensus among the tribal leaders that they would oppose al-Qaida.

The second part of the decision, though, to saddle up with the coalition forces, followed shortly thereafter because our connection with the tribes had been relatively limited for obvious reasons. Al-Qaida had an effective murder and intimidation campaign and the tribes frankly didn't know what to make of this. But as we uncovered large parts of the ground, through both kinetic operations and allied operations with the tribes, and we very quickly thereafter sought to improve the quality of life of the people within the tribal areas by working with the sheikhs to restore water treatment or to get the schools back on line or to refurbish a medical clinic, the tribes suddenly realized that there was a great deal of value beyond the kinetic alliance that was possible with the coalition forces. And that really gave us a relationship with the tribes that was something that transcended simply a security relationship. It was a relationship with the tribes that helped to restore the tribal leadership's authority over the tribes and gave the -- that leadership the ability to improve the quality of life for the people.

Now that question -- to go back to your question -- will they ever turn on us. Well, what would we believe to be the longevity of the alliance. From a personal standpoint, having now spent a great deal of time with many of these tribal leaders, their sense of camaraderie at the most basic level, the young Marines and soldiers who treat their people with respect and who they now view, the tribal leaders view, as being the defenders of the Anbari people against al-Qaida, has I think created a long-lasting relationship with them that will in many ways ever preclude their willingness to make a decision ultimately to side against us again. And that's a very close relationship. It's something we're very proud of and it is something that we think is going to be enduring. And that relationship also gives the tribes, as you may have seen recently, the comfort and the sense of security that they could reach out to their tribal brothers in the Shia communities as well. Many of these tribes have large Shia populations. They might be Sunni in Anbar, but the Abu Issa tribe, for example, have about half its tribal population in the Shia south, and they are Shia. And these are opportunities for them at a tribal level to begin reconciliation. So many of these positive offshoots have come from our relationship.

And the last point is: When the sheikhs said to their sons, "Join the police and join the army;" we're the ones who were training them. So it continues to create a long-lasting relationship, a long-lasting camaraderie that has, at its most basic level we think, all that's necessary to knit closely their fabric of society with what we're doing for them.

I hope that answers your question. Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** What's the -- I mean, we heard similar optimism before Sattar's killing in September.

**BGEN ALLEN:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** And do you think that this is an isolated incident? And what are the circumstances under which the shooting took place in relation to the -- to al-Qaida insurgents? Are they still around? Or which is the closest place in which the al-Qaida insurgents have consolidated?

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sattar was killed on the first day of Ramadan and you can count on it that al-Qaida, who was down, is not out. Al-Qaida will seek, in every way possible, to achieve a victory and some of those victories will simply be public relations victories, spectacular attacks. They, during Ramadan, made it very clear that they were going to attack the tribal leadership throughout Iraq. Abdul Sattar was killed by an IED. He was not shot. He was killed by an IED in which there was very clear al-Qaida complicity in that.

So many of these leaders have to recognize that they're going to be targets for a long time because the fact that they have emerged to lead their tribes again puts them in direct opposition to al-Qaida. So we anticipate that. We recognize that. It's -- there's an issue of security that we always deal with, with regard to those leaders. But as long as we are continuing the process of improving security, it makes it very difficult for al-Qaida to reestablish itself in the population centers.

Now you asked me, where are they amassing today; by and large, in the province itself, al-Qaida is outside the population centers. You might find agents inside the population centers, but the police intelligence and police activities are constantly seeking to identify and to detain those individuals in the population centers. We also know that they are out in the desert, in the wadies. Wadi Horan is about a 250-mile long canyon, a mini Grand Canyon that stretches from roughly west of Rupa to about the Euphrates River. And they're deep in the Wadi Horan, which is a thousand-year smuggling route.

So we're tracking them down in there and we're -- that's where the coalition forces are spending a lot of time. They're in Wadi Sakran, which is north of the Euphrates. It points up towards the Tigris. But in terms of where they are in mass, as a military unit today, in the northeast, about 5 percent of our province in the areas to the east of Lake Tharthar, which is really the junction of three coalition force military regions: Multi-National Division-North, Multi-National Division-Baghdad and Multi-National Force-West, my unit, that's where they have gone. And it is in that confluence of three military areas that we're conducting active operations right now to drive them out of the province.

But we don't want to drive them into another province where they'll have effectiveness. So we're in active cooperation with those other military districts and with our corps headquarters to create an environment where they cannot mass, they cannot plan, and they cannot operate from there effectively in the province. So with our violence levels at historically low levels, we are optimistic, but we're also not, you know, wild-eyed optimists. We recognize that this is an implacable enemy that has designs on this population, on this province. It has come as a very hard sting to them that they lost the capital of the Islamic state of Iraq and Ramadi. It was a decisive defeat for them and those are words I'm happy to use.

And in many respects, we know that al-Qaida has simply written off the Anbar Province to try to achieve its ends elsewhere. So we're going to stay on them and we're going to track them down in the desert. Meanwhile, we'll continue to build police capacity in the urban areas, in the populated areas so they can't reestablish themselves there. I hope

that answers your question.

**MR. SORIANO:** John, may I comment on it?

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sure.

**MR. SORIANO:** Let me comment on a security question from a civilian point of view. I think your question is, what is the probability of having the good news on security reversed by al-Qaida and I don't think anyone can foretell the future, but it does look unlikely. What's different today than, say, 12 months ago is the presence of the police forces, as General Allen just mentioned, and improved performance by the Iraqi army and in joint operations with the U.S. military.

By and large, the insurgency is on the defensive. The enemy's been pushed out of city and town. Public opinion has turned against them. The tribes are mobilized to fight them. These are factors that are on the battlefield today that were not there 12 months ago, so there's a lot of momentum in favor of the counterinsurgent that will, I think, mitigate any -- against any kind of a resurgence of al-Qaida in the province.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) what Arshad was asking earlier, to ask you about this idea of enduring alliances. What's the plan to make sure that -- I mean, this is an area of shifting alliances, as you guys both know.

**MR. SORIANO:** You mean --

**QUESTION:** What's the plan to keep these guys on your side and what -- and what -- whether this trip to Washington and Texas has anything to do with that.

**MR. SORIANO:** Well, the alliance, I think, in that question was of the relationship of tribal sheikhs to coalition forces and I'll defer to the General on that.

**QUESTION:** But there was the political alliance as well.

**MR. SORIANO:** But --

**QUESTION:** I mean, there's the --

**MR. SORIANO:** Yes, there is. The coalition of forces that we're trying to bring together does not depend on tribal sheikhs alone. Of course, we have to work with legal authority, legitimate government and that's what we do.

One thing that we try to do in Anbar is something we call helicopter engagement. Because the distances are so far, we try to reconnect various parts of the province by shuttling officials from one city to another and also tribal sheikhs. Recently, three times in the last four weeks, groups of Shia sheikhs from Karbala and Najaf have come up to Ramadi to meet with Sunni sheikhs. Coalition forces, of course, have contributed the helicopters. State Department doesn't have helicopters.

But let me answer it this way. He -- General Allen and I are engaged in promoting reconciliation. We took our governor, the Governor of Anbar, to meet the Governor of Karbala last July. It was an idea that sprung forth from the PRT. And my colleagues down in the PRT in Karbala, which is located, by the way, in Hillah, a different city, but that's a detail. And after many weeks of back and forth e-mails, we tried to get our two governors together. Karbala, Anbar share a same boundary. There's security problems on both sides. And both sides fear overreaching from the other party across that border. And so we did organize a meeting between Governor Mamoun of Anbar, Governor Aqil of Karbala.

In July, they had a follow-up meeting just a few weeks ago in Ramadi. We, the General and I, would like to set up a -- promote a bilateral coordination committee between the two provinces on various aspects, such as security, but economic development would be one of the boundary issues, the Hajj tribal affairs.

So to answer your question, how do you keep an alliance going, and I would describe that alliance as a pro-coalition and counterinsurgent, what the counterinsurgent is presented with is a problem that he must solve in bringing together parties with common interests to oppose the insurgent and that's basically we do promote reconciliation on a local level. They don't do it at the national level, of course. We are provincial, after all.

But in the future, we'd like to get Mamoun to meet with other Shia governors and keep this momentum going. And the General mentioned about many tribes have Shia and Sunni Muslim branches and that's true in Anbar -- as perhaps in other provinces as well -- bringing the tribal leaders together at the grassroots level to get them talking the same language as with each other, opposing extremists, opposing extremist messages at mosques, which is really a key element, disarming militias and so forth.

**BGEN ALLEN:** Let me add this.

**MR. SORIANO:** Yeah.

**BGEN ALLEN:** And this goes to your question specifically. We -- much of what we accomplished in the province at the early part of our deployment which, as I said, for me, began in January and our headquarters rotated in right behind my arrival, when we came to the province, we thought we thought we'd be fighting the entire year in the manner that they had been fighting in 2006. And we arrived at the time that the sheikhs were really beginning to make decisions about coming over. There was really no functional civil government in the Anbar Province.

As Jim properly said, the Governor was a gubernatorial element of one and the Provincial Council was in Baghdad. There was no real functioning government in any of the districts in any of the cities. We like to say that Anbaris like to be led by sheikhs and governed by technocrats, you know, politicians and people who are educated technically to be able to manage government. What happened about April or so was the ability to create the emergence of government again. And as we have discovered and as we have partnered up with the Iraqis, as we have attempted to link Baghdad with Ramadi and Ramadi within municipalities, that in almost all of the cities now in the province, there are functioning city councils with a functioning mayor, functioning police forces, all working together very closely.

And as is the case, both in the provincial council and in the city councils, there are seats that are set aside and this is the wisdom of this old government whether it was, you know, the Saddamist government, et cetera. The way they have been organized there for generations is that on the city councils and the provincial councils, there are seats for the

lineal tribes on these councils as well. So in Fallujah, for example, there are four seats out of 20 that are given to the principle tribes around Fallujah. It's the same in Ramadi. It's the same in Hit and Haditha.

So when the government actually is working, when it's up and functioning and sanctioned and able to really work to flow resources to people by affecting projects and completing projects and that sort of thing, the sheikhs are actually a part of it. The tribes are drawn into the process of government at the local district or provincial level. And that's really what we've been doing, working very, very hard to get those governments up and functioning, tying the tribes in with government so that the government, participatory government, really looks out for the interests of the people.

**QUESTION:** But doesn't it take a lot of U.S. taxpayer dollars?

**BGEN ALLEN:** It doesn't take a lot of U.S. taxpayer dollars dollars. For example, this year, the province wasn't open for business until '07. So the money which is coming to the province this year, discretionary money, for reconstruction is \$107 million in the year '07. Their fiscal year is calendar year. Virtually all of that, all of it's been budgeted. Virtually all of it has been obligated into projects throughout the province, those projects identified by district governments and municipal governments.

And as a direct sign of outreach, the national government in this event called the Anbar Forum II -- two being Roman numeral two -- in 6 September gave another \$80 million to the province because they were able to obligate their 107 million. The province is now able to receive a funding stream from the Central Government, develop a strategy for reconstruction, to obligate that money, oversee the disbursement of those funds, judge the quality of the project and continue the process of strategic planning.

This group that's here with Mr. Soriano leaves and goes directly to Amman, Jordan to join up with other Anbaris to finish up about a year-long program on the ability to develop a comprehensive provincial development strategy, to do strategic planning. So these many things associated with what makes governmental capacity effective, which is to pass laws, to possess a monopoly of power for the purposes of enforcement of laws, and to receive and stream and supervise the flow of resources, all of that is coming. All of that is underway right now.

And really, in the end, that's the measure of success. It isn't violence levels, because as that becomes more effective, violence levels simply take care of themselves. And that's really what we're working very hard to do right now. Security delivered us only to a certain point. And elections are somewhere off in the future. And in the absence of elections, we've got to do all we can to build participatory government and that's what we've been doing. The ability for the helicopters to land in remote areas of the province, where governors have never been seen before, and have the governor and their provincial council chairman, the provincial chief of police, the director general for religious matters to get off and meet with their counterparts and have discussions about what that locality needs is unique in their history. And this is our effort to create participatory government until the process of elections can ultimately take place to build equilibrium in the province amongst the people.

**QUESTION:** Can I ask two very brief things? One, why do you think that Anbar was such a mess when you got there in the first place? And two, and this is purely a numbers question, when you're hoping to double the -- basically, maybe even a little bit more than double the current size of the police force, if I understood you correctly.

**BGEN ALLEN:** There were 21,000 now.

**QUESTION:** And you want it up to 40-something, right?

**BGEN ALLEN:** No, no, no. The maximum we ever wanted was 30. We think 27 will probably about do it for us.

**QUESTION:** Okay. How will that compare when you get to that 27 to what there was during -- again, this is just a numbers question --

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** -- to what was there before the invasion?

**BGEN ALLEN:** Oh, it's -- I can't begin to tell you what was there before the invasion. And I wouldn't attempt to draw a comparison between the two because the police force before the invasion was a mechanism of social control as opposed to law enforcement, and in the context that we understand law enforcement: to serve and protect. It's just a very different philosophical approach.

**QUESTION:** That's why I said it was just a numbers question. (Laughter.)

Can you explain -- give us your thoughts as to why it was such a disaster when you got there?

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sure. There was the perfect storm that had occurred in the immediate aftermath of the war: The state-owned enterprises, the factories, the heavy industry that employed thousands of people were all closed; the army had been disbanded; and we experienced the end result of de-Baathification. So many of the people who had either been in government or had been employed were now unemployed. We were occupying that particular part of the country and al-Qaida parachutes in on top of all of this to inflict their Salafist ideology on the tribes and left the tribal society in complete disarray as they fought the coalition forces. So it was really the perfect storm.

And in so many ways, the activities of '06 which the coalition forces had to deal with -- the fighting to consolidate the urban centers, which had been going on and on and on -- they weren't helped by the fact that the Iraqis themselves took no vested interest or had no ability to take a vested interest in their own security.

And the unit before us had put in motion a large number of measures: outreach to the tribes and had fought alongside the tribes, as I said, at the end of '05 and early '06; had attempted to help in Ramadi when the Anbar Peoples Committee was attacked by al-Qaida. It had put a lot of balls in motion which, as we arrived at the very beginning of '07, permitted us to very quickly begin to harvest the goodwill which was emerging from the tribes.

So that's really what we began to discover. The momentum that they had put into motion immediately began to pay itself off with the sheikhs saying to their sons, "Join the police, join the army." That gave us -- as I told you, we're about 36,000 -- 20,000-21,000 police plus two more divisions of about 19,000 each. So when you've got that many Iraqis who are now invested in their own security, that just changes the quality of everything. The police in Hit, for example, can pick up in

a second someone with a foreign accent, and that person is going to get detained in an instant. Those kinds of things have helped us to both create and to sustain security.

**QUESTION:** Before this -- the group that immediately preceded you, and since March 2003, basically one of the main reasons for this perfect storm was U.S. policy there, (inaudible)?

**BGEN ALLEN:** I can't comment on U.S. policy. I can only comment on the tactical situation we had in front of us. We had no capacity to get to the tribes. The tribes were distant from us because they were under the sway of al-Qaida. Once we were able to convince the tribes, once the tribes convinced themselves that al-Qaida wasn't any part of their useful future, and we could then reach out to the tribes and connect with the tribes, that was the ultimate change for us on the ground.

**QUESTION:** The four things you ticked off -- the state enterprises being closed, the army being disbanded, the -- you know, the fact that we were occupying itself, and the de-Baathification -- I mean, those were all aspects of deliberate American Government policy in Iraq.

**BGEN ALLEN:** And those were all, in the end, what created the situation for unemployment and that sort of thing in the Anbar Province, which we had to deal with.

**QUESTION:** Could I ask you two -- actually, one for each of you? How many men have you lost this year? What happens when the American funding which gives the sheikhs, just as local mayors like getting state and federal funds to be able to bring jobs for the boys and provide services -- what happens when that money dries up? What happens when our soldiers leave?

You know, and from your point of view -- you've been there for most of the year -- do you think this all dissolves? Is this going to require a presence of multiple years, of a decade? What's your best guess on how long you'll need to be there for an umbrella?

And then, Mr. Soriano, I'm interested in what you think about -- I mean, you've served two tours in Iraq. What do you think about the unhappiness of some of your colleagues, not all since 1,500 people have served in Iraq since the war, but to the idea of the forced assignments there? Do you have any sympathy for that? Do you -- would you encourage people to come and serve, as you have now twice, in Iraq?

**MR. SORIANO:** I'll let the general go first.

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sure. First, we don't discuss American casualties, but they're much lower this year.

Our number one goal right now in the province is what we call transition. It is one of the missions that we have assumed. We have several that we call lines of operations. Transition is one of those. And that is to create within both the police and the Iraqi army the capacity for them to conduct operations or to conduct law enforcement, as necessary, initially for counterinsurgency operations; and in the case of the army, protect the territorial integrity and the sovereignty of Iraq and ultimately such other functions as the government may direct. With regard to the police, they are largely involved in counterinsurgency now, but ultimately will transition to law enforcement once the counterinsurgents -- or once

the insurgency has been dealt with.

For our purposes now, we have about 1,700 of our forces involved directly inside Iraqi army and Iraqi police units as advisors, and we also have in the case of the Iraqi army from battalions and up partnerships with U.S. forces. And this is all about the process of creating capacity, professionalization, and to get them ready to be able to operate once we have begun to draw down our strength and ultimately when we leave.

The weakness at this point is in the area of logistics. We think any army can conduct conventional operations on the ground, but logistics, a credible logistics capacity, is always the one which takes the longest times to build. The Iraqi army is about it; it's working very hard to do that, but it's going to take time. It's difficult to put a particular timeline on there, but I think in the case of this Administration the expectation is that there will need to be an advisory capacity with the Iraqi police and Iraqi army for some period of time, probably years.

How many of those -- how much that has to be represented in large-scale American conventional force units, as opposed to specifically structured advisory units, I think that remains to be determined. And we've got some time over this next year for us to fine-tune that force mixture to be able to make sure that we get it right.

**QUESTION:** (Inaudible) you need to add large-scale American forced deployments for years?

**BGEN ALLEN:** We have said in our area that we think we probably need a couple more years at least in that area in order to achieve what we think is the necessary capacity within the police and the Iraqi army. It's very, very difficult at this particular juncture to try to put a date on the calendar, and I know many people would like to know that. But it's really a measure of years. It's not a measure of months.

**QUESTION:** And do you find that -- you know, there are widespread reporting about the corruption and complicity of Iraqi police forces elsewhere in the country. To what extent do you find corruption -- this could be for both of you -- but corruption in the police, in the army and in the civil administration? And the way you describe sort of the way that they're able to do strategic planning and so on, it sounded like, you know, the best run city in, like, Norway, you know. And I wonder to what extent -- I mean, you know, because we don't see that even in the United States. But often --

**BGEN ALLEN:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** So how much corruption do you see in these institutions and in the civil administration?

**BGEN ALLEN:** I deal less with the civil administration, although as it's gaining its own traction one of its own objectives is to ensure that it ferrets out corruption where it can find it and, as it begins to build capacity, build capacity that is not corrupt. And that's a positive thing. I mean, they're absolutely committed to that.

You don't go from roughly 4,600 police to 24,000 police in a year in a wild expansion like that without the possibility that you're going to have some corrupt individuals in the police force. Let me just tell you some of the measures that we take, though, to try to ensure that we maintain control of this.

First of all, the sheikhs themselves are the ones who encourage their sons to join the police, so the honor of the tribe is

often at stake when an individual joins the police force.

Second, they are vetted. Every single individual that joins the police is vetted against our databases for criminal behavior or some form of former insurgent behavior that would preclude their participating in the police.

Depending on the capacity of the police training center that we have at Habbaniyah, which was built specifically for the Anbar Province, about 750 police every ten weeks, every single policeman will attend the formal training program, which contains in it, obviously, instruction on human rights, instruction on ethics. As well, we have instructional programs -- again, all of this is new within the last year -- for the police executives themselves, the police chiefs, the police officers, and all of them are linked to the Ministry of Interior. We have -- all of our police are on the payroll of the Ministry of Interior, so they're tied to the government, they can be held accountable for the government.

And when we have found police Shurta, the police on the beat, those kinds of police who are corrupt, we'll expel them from the police force -- the Iraqis will do it and they'll hold their police officials accountable for malfeasance or incompetence. For example, the provincial chief of police of the province was recently removed from his position because the provincial council did an investigation and found that he was incompetent, so they removed him. So we're in the process now of working with them to find someone.

And very importantly, there is now an internal affairs directorate that has been created within the police -- the provincial chief of police office with the idea of maintaining the ethical integrity of the police force. So we're transitioning now. These are important times. These are all measures that are foreign to this police force, but we're confident that we have the pieces in place with our advisors actually in the police stations, with our advisors in the police training centers, with our constant consultation with the internal affairs, that where we can and how we can, we'll deal with the issue of corruption.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** Mr. Soriano's response is going to have to be the last one. We're bumping on the gaggle time, so --

**MR. SORIANO:** On the subject of directed assignments to Iraq, I know it's a very difficult issue, there are very strong feelings about that issue. There was a town hall meeting on this, I think, a couple of days ago here. I just read about it in the paper. I wasn't there. But that's why we have town hall meetings, is to air the views of the Service before the management of the State Department with regard to controversial issues such as this. As to my own feelings, I don't think I want to speculate about how I would feel about somebody who would decline service in an Iraq. That's kind of an abstract question.

But I would say something about people I do serve with in Iraq, which is more concrete and tangible because I see them every day and they're really fine officers and I'm very proud to serve with them. Just to let you know, the next time I call on the governor, which is what I do for a living, I will go see him in an up-armored Humvee convoy with crew-served weapons and I'll be in full body armor. It's not your average American commute to work. So service in Iraq is a little bit different than most other Foreign Service assignments.

**MR. GALLEGOS:** I want to thank the gentlemen.

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