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January 29, 2004

Combined Joint Task Force 7 Briefing from Baghdad

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Sanchez: Good afternoon. Good to be back here again after a couple weeks.

A great deal has happened since my last press conference. And we continue to make great progress here in Iraq trying to create this secure and stable environment. We've completed a significant number of projects in the ongoing program of reconstructing the infrastructure and the economy of the country.

Staff: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: It's not being translated?

Staff: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: It is now? Okay.

Staff: Too fast, huh? Okay, I'll slow down. (Laughs.)

Q: From the beginning.

Sanchez: From the beginning again?

Q: Yeah.

Sanchez: Okay. (Laughs.)

Q: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: Sure.

As I said, a lot has happened since we were last present here in front of you. The coalition has continued to make great progress in creating the secure and stable environment that's necessary for the country to move toward sovereignty. We've completed a significant amount of projects in the ongoing reconstruction of the

economy of the country and we've made great progress in the infrastructure as well.

Our aggressive efforts to kill or capture former regime elements and other noncompliant forces, foreign fighters and other threats that are out there that are continuing to attack the Iraqi people have been particularly successful this past week. Among the captured was Hassan Ghul, who reported directly to Khalid Sheik Mohammed, the mastermind of the September 11th, 2001 attacks in the United States.

For months I've been saying that al Qaeda's fingerprints have been here in Iraq. Those are showing themselves in the techniques that were being employed by foreign fighters, and this included the tactics being employed by suicide bombers against innocent Iraqis and against coalition forces.

Of course, the capture of Ghul is pretty strong proof that al Qaeda is trying to gain a foothold here to continue their murderous campaigns. Ghul's capture is great news for both the Iraqis, for the coalition and for the international community's war against terror. As we have noted previously, the enemies of Iraq are changing their tactics. Increasingly, Iraqi citizens and civil servants are the targets. More than 20 Iraqi citizens died and 60 were wounded in the attack near Assassin's Gate last week. Those who died were mainly workers helping to build a new country. It's important to note that these Iraqis were attacked because they supported a free and a democratic country. They were killed by those who want to see this country turn back towards terrorism, dictatorship, and those who have a fear of moving forward towards democracy in this part of the world.

As domestic terrorists and foreign fighters attempt to advance their cause at the expense of the Iraqi people, more and more Iraqis are rejecting the old regime and joining the future of this country. Earlier this week in Mosul, more than 5,300 former Ba'athists took an oath denouncing the Ba'ath Party, denouncing violence and terrorism, and declared their support for a new free and democratic future. This follows earlier mass denunciations in the areas south and northwest of Mosul. These denunciations are positive developments. I encourage those supporters of the failed Saddam Hussein regime to reconsider their personal allegiances and take their place in the new Iraq by continuing to renounce violence and terrorism, and by separating themselves from those who seek a return to state-sponsored repression. Embrace the future and join your countrymen in building a new Iraq.

Every week we are seeing more and more Iraqis make a contribution to the future. Many are doing so by joining their nation's security forces. Today, there are more Iraqis providing security for their country in any of the security forces than there are coalition forces here in Iraq. Last Saturday, the size of the Iraqi army increased by nearly 60 percent when the third battalion graduated from their training in Kirkush. The Iraqi military will serve as a unifying national force for people of all religions and ethnic backgrounds.

Additionally, there are now also more than 19,000 personnel in the Iraqi civil defense corps, with over 3,200 still in training. In Baghdad earlier this month, 596 applied to enter the Iraqi police academy. In addition, the Iraqi police and ICDC have begun to take on more and more responsibility for the internal security of Iraq. Today, the first class of Iraqi police graduates came from -- completed their training in Jordan. They will be used here in Baghdad, and we graduated a total of 466 professional policemen.

Now, if I may, some of the more significant results of independent ICDC operations this week included the capture of anti-coalition elements in Asanayah (sp), Abeji (sp), and Jazaralaklak (sp). These are individuals that were suspected of conducting attacks against the coalition and against the people. The ICDC confiscated an array of weapons and ammunition.

And then last Saturday, in the first joint raid not involving coalition forces, but being supervised by coalition forces, the ICDC and the Iraqi police captured anti-coalition forces responsible for hostile activities and robberies in the Husaybah area.

Iraqi security forces also provided security on the hajj travel routes and rest areas, in support of the pilgrims.

As Iraq moves forward, the CJTF is rotating our forces, and we will replace them with a tailored force that is capable of dealing with the current and foreseen requirements. The inbound force will be fully up to the task of providing a safe and secure environment in the country and will be able to continue effectively and efficiently the reconstruction of the nation's infrastructure.

This process, which started in November, will be completed by May. And we appreciate the support of the Iraqi people, who have been quite patient as we rotate those forces in and out of the country by air and land convoys.

The transition is going extremely well. It is under way, and it will continue, essentially, on a daily basis, until the May time frame.

In the area of civil-military operations, we continue to make progress restoring critical infrastructure and public services throughout Iraq. And this week we completed another 233 projects and executed over \$2.6 million in programs funded by the Commanders' Emergency Response Fund. And to date, we have used CERP to support more than \$151 million on over 1,500 -- or -- correction -- 15,000 projects throughout the country. While it doesn't always make the news, good developments in Iraq far outweigh the bad, and day by day, Iraqis continue to progress towards their destiny as a prosperous, free and democratic people.

I'll now take your questions. Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) The new Iraqi army, do you think -- will he be able to undertake the responsibilities after the withdrawal of the American forces? Thank you.

Sanchez: Will the new Iraqi army be able to assume the security responsibilities once the coalition forces depart? That is exactly what we are working towards so that Iraqi security forces, to include the army and the police, will be able to maintain law and order in the country upon the departure of the coalition when that time is right.

In the back, sir?

Q: Rod Nordland from Newsweek. General, to follow up on that, will that mean that once sovereignty is turned over to the Iraqis, that the coalition forces will retain command of Iraqi forces until they leave?

Sanchez: Retain command -- sir, what we're doing at this point in time is the Iraqi security forces are under the tactical control of the coalition forces, and as we continue to build the capacity of the Iraqi security forces across the spectrum, the Iraqis will, in fact, assume command and retain command of those forces. We will continue to operate with them in coordination and synchronizing operations with them over time. And as the army builds its capacities and is capable of conducting its independent operations, they'll be able to make those decisions within their own national command authority structures.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) (Name and affiliation inaudible.) You mentioned that you managed to capture Hassan Ghul. (Inaudible) -- and did you have an idea of the areas where terrorists prevail, especially in Baghdad or any other governates in Iraq? And did you have any information from him regarding the terrorists in the areas of Iraq? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question is, did we get any information from Hassan Ghul on where the terrorists are prevailing across the country. Obviously, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to give you that sort of specific intelligence and detail, but I think it's fairly clear where the terrorists are operating here in the country just from looking at where the majority of incidents are occurring.

Ma'am, in the back?

Q: Anne Garrels, National Public Radio. Do you have any more information on the nationalities of the suicide bombers? Is there any indication that Iraqis may, in fact, now be doing this?

Sanchez: No, ma'am, we do not. We have not been able to establish the identity of any of the suicide bombers that have been successful. We do know that those that we have prevented for the most part have been foreigners. And we had a Yemeni that was specifically caught in the first day of Ramadan.

Yes, sir? In the back, on the left. You, sir.

Q: Quil Lawrence from the BBC. About the al Qaeda operations here in the country -- what do you know about their infrastructure? Have they been operating here for a long time? Do you see them cooperating with former regime elements? And do you know how long that cooperation, if any, has been going on? Thanks.

Sanchez: Well, as I've been stating -- and now it's a little bit clearer for us -- their tactics, their techniques and their procedures have been here for a while. The extent of the infrastructure and the extent of their operations here is still evolving, and we're pretty intensely focused on establishing that.

Q: (Off mike) -- been here for quite a long time? Months? Years?

Sanchez: Well, as I've stated, it's their tactics, their techniques and procedures that have been here for -- at least dating back to the Italian bombing, possibly even before that. But in terms of a specific date, I couldn't give you that, and it wouldn't be appropriate to give you that level of detail.

All the way in the back. Sir?

Q: Thanks, General. Just to clarify that a little more, do you have any evidence that al Qaeda cells are actually operating here? And do you have any idea what Ghul was doing here? Was he recruiting? Did he have orders that he was carrying out?

And also part of that question: Are any -- have any of these suicide bombings we've seen here been carried out by al Qaeda?

Sanchez: Ghul is a courier, as I stated, for Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and -- suspect that that's what he was doing. And in terms of do we specifically know what operations they have done, it would be inappropriate for me to discuss that --

Q: But active cells? Do you know -- does al Qaeda have active cells in Baghdad right now?

Sanchez: Yeah, that would also be inappropriate for me to discuss.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) From Al Farat (sp) international newspaper. You mentioned that there is progress in the security issue and in the reconstruction of the infrastructure or economy infrastructure. So in Dora (ph), company -- there were three generating plants working, and when the American troops came in, only one plant is now working. Have you made any achievements or steps regarding the rebuilding of these three or the other two generating plants? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question is that in Dora, there used to be three generating plants; and when the Americans

came, only one was working after that. Okay.

I think what we have is a significant effort that's ongoing across the whole country to reestablish the infrastructure for providing electrical power to the people of the country. We have reestablished hundreds of kilometers of transmission power lines in the country. We have moved and started the reconstruction of generators. Some of you may have even seen this generator that moved through Baghdad here in the last few days, moving at 10 kilometers an hour because it's such a huge piece of equipment, trying to get additional generating capacity for the country. Also, we embarked on a major maintenance program back in the October time frame, maintenance that had not been conducted on those generating plants for years.

That has taken us some time, and I think in the coming weeks we expect that some of that generating capacity will be back online. We will also have completed the 400-kilowatt power lines around the city, the super ring as they call it, and that will also begin to provide additional electrical power for the people of Baghdad. And then within probably about another couple of months, we will have completed the actual linking of the entire grid across the country. There are literally well over a billion dollars that are being invested, and that will come to fruition here within the coming months.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Mr. General, you have not told where did you guys arrest Mr. Ghul? Did you find him in a farm, or what kind of nature the arrest that took place?

Sanchez: How -- where was Mr. Ghul found -- whether we found him on a farm? No, sir. We caught him along the Iran-Iraq border, at crossing points.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Mr. Rahim (sp) from Zamandu Alir (ph). You mentioned in your speech that the security and stability, but the late days we found out there's a lot of suicide bombings, the one next to the Jordanian embassy and some other ones who they just found out about it. Is there a weakness in the security of the coalition forces? (Pause.) A weakness in security of the coalition forces.

Sanchez: Would you translate that again, please.

Interpreter: Weakness of not having the full security, not having full control for the security by the coalition forces.

Sanchez: Terrorism relies upon -- identifying and defeating a terrorist relies upon the intelligence and our ability to be able to prevent him before he strikes. And it's a very, very difficult problem. This takes cooperation of not just coalition intelligence capabilities, but of the people of the country. And I think we will get to a stage where we can, in fact, prevent the majority of the terrorist attacks.

But it is a very, very difficult problem, as we all know. Anyone who has been working counterterrorism for some time understands that the terrorist has the ability to choose his time and place in which to conduct his attacks. And when he has the ability to move freely in a population, that makes his operations much easier.

I don't think this reflects a lack of capability on the part of the coalition. We have had tremendous success in both preventing and defeating some of the terrorist attacks against the people of the country and also against the coalition forces. And working together, we can achieve even greater success in the coming months.

Yes, sir? In the back with the glasses.

Q: (Through interpreter.) (Name and affiliation inaudible) -- FM Broadcasting. The American forces claim that there are equipment and devices that are able to discover the places for the terrorists and how good are their equipment are, and what their actions for -- and lower the attacks against the coalition forces, how active the equipment are?

Sanchez: It's equipment that can do what?

Interpreter: Discover where the terrorists are located at and what kind of equipment they use and (are there?) IEDs.

Sanchez: (Off mike.) Certainly I could give you a rundown of the types of equipment that we're using to counter the different types of IEDs that are out there. But I'll tell you that there is a capacity that is deployed in the country, that helps us to defeat these kinds of attacks. We continue to build our capacity in that area.

But ultimately, as I've stated before, the key to defeating these anti-coalition forces and the people that are attacking us, both you and I, and my military forces, is the human intelligence, because we know where the strangers are. We know who these people are that are conducting these attacks, and we've got to work hard to prevent it from occurring.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) General, is it true that United States forces -- their losses has reached more than what they endured during Vietnam War, or the transition of authority between -- is it the transition authority (sic) between the Provisional Authority and current IGC, Iraqi Governing Council, that will ensure the stability?

(Off-mike conferral among staff.)

Sanchez: (Off mike.) -- KIAs, killed in action -- (Off mike.) -- country. And we've had --

Q: (Off mike.)

Sanchez: No. Well, the translator said "losses."

Okay. Can you all translate that again? Somebody up there?

Interpreter: Is it true our losses --

(Off-mike cross talk and conferral among staff.)

Sanchez: Can you restate your question, please?

Q: (Through interpreter.) General, the question was, there are reports that American forces, their losses in Iraq war is more than what endured during the Vietnam War and that's why the expediency in --

Sanchez: Okay, that's what was translated -- (Off mike.)

No, it's not true that the losses -- (Off mike.) -- incurred by the U.S. forces in Vietnam, not even close. At this point, we have had a little bit over 500 casualties, killed in action, and we've had about 2,300 wounded in action, and of those, it's a very low percentage that actually gets evacuated; most of them -- well over 85, 95 percent of them get returned to duty.

That is not the reason why we're moving towards accelerated sovereignty; it's that we need to go ahead and

get the Iraqi people beginning to take on some of that responsibility that rightfully belongs in their area.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) From -- (Inaudible.) -- newspaper. You have mentioned the Iraqi police and the new Iraqi army in providing the security here. Have you also taken the subject or the issue of equipping the Iraqi police and the Iraqi army in order to do its responsibilities? Thank you.

Sanchez: Yes, absolutely. We are working very hard to equip all of the security forces appropriately. I think those of you here in Baghdad have begun to see the Iraqi police cars that are out there; they've received their weapons. We're in the process of fielding their communications equipment, their body armor. And that's going to continue to increase and gain momentum over the course of the next month or so.

In terms of the ICDC, we've got their equipment also that's been contracted, and it will be deploying here within the next 30 to 45 days, and you'll begin to see that. And the same thing for the army. They are -- the army is equipped to conduct dismounted operations at this point; they have some vehicles to provide them the mobility, and that capability will increase now that the supplemental is beginning to flow, and you'll begin to see the effects of that money.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: Katherine Phelps (sp) from The Times. General, I wanted to ask you about a report in an Iraqi newspaper this morning that coalition forces were moving to close down an Islamic court that had been established in Najaf by -- (Name inaudible.) -- Sadr (ph). Could you comment on that, please?

Sanchez: Well, if there are any courts that are operating outside of the laws of Iraq, then, obviously, they're at risk of being shut down by the Iraqi security forces. And if Iraqi security forces require the support of the coalition, as we've stated repeatedly, that's the purpose for us being here, to enable them to be able to maintain law and order. If that's established, that there is an illegal court down there, then security forces will take the appropriate action.

Let's see here. Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Adnan (ph) from the Freedom TV. The CPA considers --

Interpreter: Could you repeat the question?

Interpreter: What he's saying that the CPA authority, they have used some of the Kurdish parties that are against Turkey. Are they considered to be alliance, or how are they going to be treated?

And I wish for him if he can repeat the question to be just sure about what he's saying.

Sanchez: (Off mike.)

Q: (Through interpreter.) Yes, sir, Mr. Ambassador declare that the Kurdish parties are against -- they are against the Turkish -- Turkish (part of that ?) -- against Turkey. They are considered to be against -- they are (to be?) terrorist organizations, or whether there's certain parties which are al-Halbiah (ph). How you guys are going to deal with them, as an alliance or as a terrorist?

Voice: (Inaudible.) -- does not understand the question -- (Inaudible.) --

Sanchez: (Off mike.) -- Kurdish, you know, that are opposed to Turkey or conducting operations against

Turkey. And your question is how are we going to deal with them, as allies or as terrorist organizations. Clearly -- yeah?

Q: Mr. Paul Bremer said these organizations as terrorism organizations, so they are -- (Off mike.) -- Turkey, not from Iraq, and -- (Off mike.) -- so how you will work with them? Thank you.

Sanchez: They are clearly -- if any -- any organization that has been declared a terrorist organization, we will treat as such. We will establish the right operational constructs to be able to take down those terrorist forces or organizations wherever it is that they're encountered, at the -- in their operating areas in the right time. There are some -- KADEK, as we all know, is operating in the northern part of the country. That is a terrorist -- a declared terrorist organization, and its operations are not going to be condoned here in the country.

Yes, sir, in the back?

Q: Tomas Etzler, CNN. First of all, post-May 1st, Iraqi civilian casualties and their compensation. I did some research, and it seems that under the rules and in regulations of military engagement, that the composition for Iraqi civilians' deaths are being routinely denied. There are cases of mistaken identity, cases of wrong time, wrong place. How does it fit your hearts and minds attempt in this country -- approach to this country?

Sanchez: Well, I think I'm not sure where you're getting your statistics from, but we've had 15,000 -- over 15,000 -- claims that have been made. We have settled over 11,000. We have paid out well in excess of \$2.2 million. And as we stated since early last summer, we have been working very hard that whenever there is an issue of this nature we will look into it and we will do what's right for the people. And we continue to do that. Okay?

Yes, sir, in the back?

Q: First one is have you found out any kind of evidence of cooperation between the former regime and al Qaeda in this country?

Second question is -- there is news about the intention of the CPA to reopen the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. Do you have some information about that, please?

Sanchez: I'm sorry. What was the second part? The minister of Defense and what?

Q: Intention of CPA to reopen the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. Thank you.

Sanchez: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Okay, sorry.

I think what is important for us to look at -- I have not been in the business of going back to recreate what may have existed before the JTF took over responsibilities here in the country. What I'll be able to tell you in response to your first question is what I've been saying repeatedly is that those tactics, techniques and procedures of al Qaeda are present.

We now with the Hassan Ghul arrest, we know that there are some couriers at least that were present -- are present -- here in the country. And we know, or we believe, that there is some fundamentalist terrorist linkage with the former regime at the tactical level. And we believe that there are some efforts to strengthen those linkages. And that's where I'll leave that at that point. Okay?

I'm sorry, your second question was -- tried to -- about -- directed --

Staff: The minister of Defense.

Sanchez: Yeah. The minister of Defense is, in fact, being -- the Ministry of Defense is, in fact, working to be stood up in the country. That is being worked by CPA. And there will be -- we are in the process of identifying some of the initial members that will work in that ministry. And there is some training going on to ensure that the individuals that are appointed to that ministry are in fact capable of accomplishing their tasks. And we are in fact looking to establish that ministry before the 1st of July and probably a little bit earlier than that.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Zena Basadi (sp), (affiliation inaudible). Mr. General, we are at the beginning of establishing the Iraqi army. Are we going to form the air force, the medical and the Iraqi intelligence? Is it possible? Is it possible to be formed again?

Sanchez: As far as -- what we're forming is the Iraqi armed forces. There is -- there has been a main focus on the army, because that's where the majority of the effort is going, to produce capacity.

As you know, the Civil Defense Corps has also been working. We've been working very, very hard to stand that up, and that will become a reserve component of the Iraqi armed forces and the army.

There is a small air component, air force component, that is going to be stood up in the timelines that we've laid out for the country. There's also a coastal defense capability that is being stood up, a naval component, if you will, that is also in the plan. And it is part of our effort, at this point in time, to be able to train and equip and field those forces. And the intelligence structures are also at some point going to be integrated into those forces.

In terms of the medical, that's already in process. We have medical capability for the army that is out at Taji, with the battalion that was fielded there. And that is operating out of Taji. So that is already in the process of standing itself up, along with the rest of the armed forces.

Yes, sir? In the back.

Q: In Arabic, please. (Through interpreter.) Mr. General, I have two questions. One, to supply the traffic police with right equipment, plus that -- some authority, so our traffic police wouldn't have to shoot to solve a problem.

The second question is, why not the Mujahideen-e-khalq Organization be expelled from Iraq, knowing that the United Nations -- they said that this organization is a terrorist organization.

Sanchez: If I could get you to clarify that, are you talking about the Mujahideen-e-khalq? You said the Mujahideen? Could you clarify that a little further for me?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Yes, yes, Mr. General. The Mujahideen-e-khalq Organization.

Sanchez: Yeah. Okay.

First of all, on the supplying of the traffic police, we are working to ensure that the Ministry of Interior and that the police have all of the capabilities and the equipment that is necessary and that is -- that we all expect for the police to have, so that you can respond gradually to incidents without going immediately to the use of deadly force or having to shoot to take care of a problem. Especially in the areas of demonstrations, having what we call non-lethal munitions and capabilities is exactly the right answer for those kinds of situations. And we're going to work to ensure that they have the right training and equipment to be able to respond accordingly.

In terms of the MEK, we are working at this point in time -- they are under the custody of the United States.

And we continue to work to get to an end state and determine what their disposition will be over the next few months.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) You mentioned that who does the terrorist act are foreigners. Is there a plan to protect the Iraqi borders? This is the first question. The second question, although the coalition forces are spread so much, the terrorist acts are continuing. You said that you will provide security for the Iraqi people. Do you consider the Iraqi forces will provide the security, although they have small numbers?

Sanchez: The first question is what is the plan to protect the borders. We have been building Iraqi security forces across the whole spectrum, with the border police being one of those elements that we've been building for some time. We do have pretty good control of the borders up in the north. We have just about all of the major border crossing points that are manned by border police.

What we do not have at this point is the border patrols and the capacity to conduct border patrols across the entire length of the border. But we're working to build that; we're working to provide them the equipment, both in terms of transportation and communications, to be able to conduct those patrols to control it.

In the meantime, the coalition is in fact conducting border control and surveillance operations to prevent the illegal infiltration of forces from both the Iranian and the Syrian side. And we believe that we are having an effect on that. What we do have to continue to improve on is the ability of the Iraqi border police forces to be able to detect false passports and illegal documents to prevent people from entering, and being able to control that infiltration. And we continue to work to improve that capacity.

In terms of the size of the Iraqi security forces, clearly today they're still too small to be able to assume responsibility for all of the security sectors in the country, but that capacity continues to build every day. You heard my comments that we have 3,400 ICDC in training today across the country, and we're building to 36 battalions of about 32,000 that will be in place by the April time frame. The Army continues to work on a timetable that is going to get it to 27 battalions, about 40,000, by the September time frame.

So we'll continue to build that capacity so that the Iraqi people will have what is necessary to provide their internal security. And then for external security, there will be some decisions that have to be made by the Iraqi people on how to proceed.

Okay? Yes, sir, in the back?

Q: Mike Aldridge of BBC. The debate is on, of course, about whether there could and should be direct elections before the transfer of sovereignty at the end of June. As you look at it from the security point of view, do you think that the coalition and Iraqi security forces could provide adequate security for such a direct general election by that time if a decision were taken to hold one?

Sanchez: Well, what we are preparing for is to provide security for whatever the political method is that is used to get towards that transitional assembly. Yes, I think we will be able to provide the security that is necessary across the country. If you're asking is it absolute security, of course not. But we will be able to provide security, and it will be targeted, and we will be working with the Coalition Provisional Authority and the Iraqi people to concentrate forces where they're necessary to be able to protect the process. And I think we can accomplish that mission.

Yes, ma'am?

Q Anne Garrels --

Q (Through interpreter.) Al-howza (ph) newspaper. There were reports about the arrest of Izzat al-Douri. How accurate are they?

Sanchez: You didn't see me up here. (Laughs.) You'll see me up here when we catch him. Okay?

Yes, ma'am?

Q: To follow up on Mike's question, have you been in discussions with U.N. officials now on security for their return in order to begin the discussions on what the process will be?

Sanchez: We are assisting and we will assist the U.N. in whatever it is they need to make their decisions about reintroduction of their capacities back into the country. And we will continue to support them in whatever manner we can.

Q: What kind of time frame, how long are these discussions going to go on before they go back?

Sanchez: Ma'am, I don't have any idea at this point. I couldn't tell you that. That would be a question that CPA could probably answer better for you.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) (Name and affiliation inaudible) What's your explanation -- provisional authority and showing increased number of their military individuals in the middle of the streets and with the current --

The second question: what's the relation between the bombings or the IEDs and the return of the U.N. mission?

Sanchez: Okay, you'll have to translate the first question again.

Q: (Through interpreter.) The first question: can you explain why we have so many coalition soldiers --

Interpreter: What he's saying, sir, that if you guys are providing the security for everybody, how come you're not able to provide security for the Iraqi employee who's working inside the CPA? Because you guys are leaving them out in the danger.

Sanchez: (To staff.) (Off mike.) I need your help up there because what I'm getting down here is that the American translation of the question -- or correction, the translations are not -- (inaudible).

Staff: Okay, go ahead and ask the question again.

Q: (Through interpreter.) What's your explanation -- (inaudible) -- the coalition forces to make the Iraqi workers who works in the CPA they -- (inaudible) -- exposing them to the terrorists without any coverage on the security, at the same time making the American soldiers -- giving them complete protection for the U.S. forces. And through too many months you guys not giving the proper protection for the Iraqi workers when they come in through the palace.

What's the relationship between all the explosion that's increased in the later days and between coming the United Nations representative?

Sanchez: First of all, on the protection that is provided to the Iraqis that are coming into the green zone, I think it's important for us to understand that this car bomb that exploded at gate number one last week, the Iraqis

that were in line to get into the gate were protected at the same level as my soldiers were, and those people survived for the most part the explosion. It was only 50 feet away from those barriers, and most of the people behind those walls survived. And I can't tell you if there any really that were in behind the wall that were killed, but I know that my soldiers were back there conducting their normal checks of the Iraqis coming through, and we had only three soldiers with minor wounds in that incident. So in terms of protecting people as they come in, that's being done. What we can't protect is an incident of the nature that occurred, where a bomb blows up right in the middle of the street and it's a major thoroughfare. There's no way you can protect against that.

In terms of a linkage between the IEDs and the return of the U.N. mission, there is no relationship at this point. We're not seeing an increase. We're at a steady state in the number of IEDs, and I don't believe that there is a linkage that we can establish at this point that I would be willing to stand up here and attribute that to the U.N. mission coming in.

Okay. Yes, sir? Yes, sir? Yes, sir, you? Mm-hmm.

Q: (Through interpreter.) From the Middle East, Egyptian -- have you made some negotiations with the Iraqis regarding the withdrawal of the American troops? And if there are any negotiations, when will they take place? Thank you.

Sanchez: Sir, no. At this point, those negotiations have not started, and our expectation is that within the next two to three months those security agreements will be resolved with the Iraqi people.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Ibrahim Hassan (sp) from Sensuferene (ph) newspaper. General, you mentioned before that many party members, Ba'ath Party members denounced, especially in Mosul. Do you think that if you contain these people and take them to help you will be better than being -- than just being there and they can be used by other terrorist groups to do what they need, the bad acts? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question, as I understood it, was whether these denunciations allow us an opportunity to get those individuals to cooperate with us versus being available as manpower for the insurgency or those that are conducting attacks against us.

Clearly, that is the idea, that we get those Iraqis that were former Ba'ath party members to buy in to the future of the country. It's not about cooperating and working with the coalition, it's about becoming a contributor to the future of their own country and working with the rest of the Iraqi people to bring stability and security and democracy and prosperity to Iraq. It's not about the coalition at all, it's about the people themselves and bringing a stable future for their children.

Yes, sir?

Q: Joseph Logan, Reuters. General, I wanted to ask you, is it still the position of the U.S. military that people posing as journalists fired on U.S. forces near Fallujah in early January? And also, what is the state of the investigation into the mistreatment of Reuters staff who were detained in connection with that?

Sanchez: First of all, your statement that is it the position of the U.S. military, those were the initial reports that were made by the soldiers on the ground, and that's why we launched an investigation. It was never stated as a position by the U.S. military. That's why we launched the investigation. And that investigation is ongoing, and we expect that to be completed here within the next -- within the week. Okay?

Q: And how about the second investigation as to the mistreatment of the people who were detained?

Sanchez: Yeah, that's the one that I'm referring to, the one that happened out in the 82nd. The previous one, that involved the death of the reporter, that Freedom of Information Act request has been acted on at our level and it is at the CENTCOM level for decision to release, and that will be released at the right time by Central Command.

Q: Okay.

Sanchez: But the investigation on the Kiowa incident, that one is right on the verge of being completed.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) (Name inaudible.) -- from the German Broadcast. Who will supply the protection and the security for the U.N. team or the U.N.? Will the protection be supplied by some American forces or Iraqi forces or what? Thank you.

Sanchez: The question is, who will supply the protection or security for the United Nations? That's a decision that they would have to make, and you'd have to ask a U.N. representative as to what their plans are. At this point, I have nothing that I could tell you to answer that question, ma'am.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Kazam al Zakari (sp) from -- (Inaudible.) -- Iraq newspaper. There are some courses made for the Iraqi police in the neighboring countries, where -- there is also another area, in Kurdistan. Where can we make use of that?

Second question: Regarding -- Saddam Hussein used to contain and welcome all terrorist elements. Have you managed to pursue some of those terrorists that were contained by the previous regime before? Thank you.

Sanchez: First of all, on the use of Kurdistan facilities for training, we do in fact have some training facilities up in the north that we're using to continue to train policemen. We have some training academies up there that are training the ICDC, and we'll continue to use those over time. And there's a -- as a matter of fact, in the north is the first location, in the Tall Afar area, where we're going to put the first brigade of the new Iraqi army. So we are continuing to use some of the northern facilities.

In terms of Saddam Hussein and previous regime elements that may still be operating out there, absolutely -- we are continuing to pursue them. We'll continue to pursue them relentlessly until it is that they have laid down their arms or they've been defeated.

Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter.) Osamara (sp) from the (Steward?) newspaper. There are -- there is a great number of Iraqi army that were put in prison, and their families do not know whether they be sentenced to court, or they will mention where are they prisoned. Thank you.

Sanchez: Okay. In terms of -- I think the question is a broader question, I believe, on detainee locations and charges. If there is a former Iraqi army member in prison, he's a prisoner of war at this point and will continue to be so until we have declared an end to hostilities.

In terms of locations, we've been working very hard to get the detainee lists out through the Red Cross and through the civil affairs and police elements across the country. And those lists are, in fact, available to identify any prisoner that may be out there in the custody of the coalition.

Yes, ma'am?

Q: (Through interpreter.) From Al-Abwa (ph) newspaper. You have talked about the border police. But some agencies mentioned that there are 20 people that were detained and were taken to other, different or far areas. The second question, regarding the plan of security, do you think there will be a time limit to solve this problem, or you will just continue doing your efforts? Thank you.

Sanchez: Okay. Let me restate the question and see if it's right. You say that there were 20 people that were detained that were taken to some other areas by the border police -- is that your question? -- and want to know where they are?

Interpreter: Sorry. (It's not?) the question.

Q: (Through interpreter.) Twenty Iranian visitors were detained at the Iranian border. Is that true? They were either detained or kidnapped. And the second question is regarding the security in Iraq. When will it be fulfilled? Thank you.

Sanchez: Okay. I'm sorry. That there were 20 Iranians that were detained, and where were they taken to.

Almost on a daily basis, we are detaining and turning around Iranian immigrants or travelers that are coming into the country. The 20 that you're talking about, I couldn't give you any clarity on those 20 unless you gave me some additional information on who they may be and when and where they were coming through. But I do know that it's in the hundreds almost every day that we detain them because they don't have proper paperwork, and they get turned around and sent back to Iran.

In terms of the time limit to solve the security situation here in the country, clearly I think we all want this to be solved as soon as we possibly can. That's what the people expect. That's what we desire. And that's what we're working very hard to do. But it requires a commitment of the same level and with the same intensity as the coalition has. We have no desire to be here conducting this low-intensity conflict. We want that to stop.

And I know the Iraqi people want it to stop just as bad as we do. So it's going to take our cooperation and working together to bring an end to that violence, and I ask all of the Iraqis in the country to contribute to that effort. It's time to do that.

Okay, one last question. Yes, sir?

Q: (Through interpreter) Abdullah Tiffel Omar (ph) from Kuwait TV. Did you manage to differentiate between the -- second question, were some detainees -- (inaudible) -- and arrest at Guatemala (sic)?

Voice: Guantanamo.

Interpreter: And the first question is that -- could you repeat it, please, because it was very fast? Okay.

Voice: Could you repeat the question, please? And be a little slower because --

Q: (Through interpreter) Could you differentiate between the sites that were targeted by those who are the former regime elements and the sites that were targeted by those -- the terrorists? And the second question is that have you sent some of the detainees to be detained in Guatemala (sic)? Thank you.

Voice: Guantanamo.

Interpreter: Guantanamo, sorry.

Sanchez: Okay. In terms of Kuwaiti -- or correction, in terms of differentiating between the targets that were engaged by former regime and by terrorists, we believe we have a pretty good idea where some of the terrorists have been operating. And we think that we're getting a better and better feel for where and how they're conducting their operations here in the country, and we think we can eventually get to the point where it will be very easy for us to do that. At this point, because we're still aggressively pursuing these elements -- both terrorist and former regime elements -- it probably wouldn't be appropriate for me to walk you through a list of those targets.

In terms of the detainees and where they're being held, obviously that also is something that, at this point in time, I would rather not discuss. We are in fact detaining individuals according to the authorities that we are provided by the Geneva Convention, and we will continue to do so regardless of location.

Okay. Thank you all very much.

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