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**Presenter: Army Maj. Gen. Charles H. Swannack, Jr.**

**March 10, 2004 9:00 AM EST**

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**82nd Airborne Division Commanding General's Briefing from Iraq**

**82nd Airborne Division Commanding General's Briefing from Iraq**

Staff: Good afternoon. Welcome to this evening's, or this afternoon's, press briefing, where Major General Swannack will update you on operations within the 82nd Airborne Division's zone of operation. He will make a longer statement and then take your questions.

This is a live broadcast to the Pentagon press and they will be given an opportunity to ask questions every third question. If you have a cell phone -- like this one -- and it's not turned off, please do so at this time. If you have a radio please turn it down. Cameramen, please do not walk in and among the journalists; you may work around to the sides and in the back, but not in and among the journalists. When you're given an opportunity to ask a question, please state your name and your network agency. Reach forward after you've asked the question, push the button, make sure the red light goes off.

Major General Swannack will address you on issues about the 82nd Airborne Division's operations only. He will not address policy issues or governmental issues. Please keep your questions to those related to the 82nd Airborne's zone of operations.

Also, following this press briefing at 6:00 p.m. Brigadier General Kimmitt and Mr. Dan Senior will hold a press briefing. I ask that if you wish you may remain seated, and following this press briefing there will be another one.

Shukran; thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, Major General Chuck Swannack.

Swannack: Well, good day to everyone here and also in Washington, D.C.

My opening statement will be a little bit long as this will most likely be my last press conference of commander of Multinational Division West. So I want to take the opportunity to tell a story of success out west during the past seven months.

First, let me congratulate Iraqis on the new interim constitution. This was a historic occasion for Iraq and the entire world and a critical step toward the establishment of your sovereignty. Up front, I'd also like to recognize the brave Iraqi security forces and innocent civilians that have recently given their lives in this fight for freedom,

some as patriots and others as bystanders. In particular, I want to offer my condolences to their families. These attacks by Iraqis on Iraqis or terrorists have killed and wounded innocent Iraqi citizens. We, too, have paid in blood with American killed and wounded. In Al Anbar, we, the Iraqis and coalition forces remain absolutely determined to stop this senseless violence which is intended to instill only fear and terror.

As some of you probably recall, for the past seven months Task Force All American has been composed of several very special combat-ready units consisting of over 18,000 troopers, which include armored cavalry, mechanized infantry and paratroopers from our active and reserve components, as well as a company from Azerbaijan. This was a remarkably diverse and uniquely qualified organization which came together as a team and made a significant, positive difference in the lives of over 1.5 million Iraqis. These highly motivated, highly trained and skilled warriors have defeated terrorists and those that harbor them in every engagement. Most remarkable, though, is their ability to demonstrate compassion and put the human touch in the relations with the Iraqi people.

Before I take some questions I want to take a few minutes to explain where I think we are today out west and what Task Force All American has contributed to the great province of Al Anbar. We assumed control of Multinational Division West last September. Let me give you a feel for the landscape back then. There was no Iraqi Civil Defense Corps -- had been recruited, trained or equipped. There was a lack of organized control over the borders. There were 92 large ammunition depots spread out all over the province. Police existed in the cities but had little to no training or equipment. Many schools could not open. Employment opportunities looked bleak for Iraqis. The majority of factories were non-operational. Minimal essential services. Minimal security. And most, if not all, cities were assessed as having high anti-coalition activity.

You can see how tough a task we had before us. It appeared almost insurmountable at first. However, our three-pronged strategy has paid off. First, our combat units set out to kill or capture anti-coalition forces, those former-regime elements, foreign fighters and extremists who facilitate and conduct acts of terror and violence against coalition forces, Iraqi security forces and innocent Iraqi citizens. We have conducted almost 600 company-size or higher operations, which resulted in killing or capturing over 30 high-value targets, numerous enemy directors, financiers, facilitators, as well as combatants. We conducted over 32,000 patrols and 500 coordinate searches, resulting in the questioning of over 3,500 suspects and the long-term detention of over 700 terrorists. Most important to establishing long-term security, Task Force All American sought to stand up ICDC battalions, border police, Iraqi police and the Facility Protection Services. This included not only the training but also the equipping of almost 10,000.

I can tell you today we have achieved our goal of recruiting and training all the required forces. We have trained 10 border police battalions, for a total of almost 2,100; six ICDC battalions and a brigade headquarters of just under 6,000; hired and trained almost 2,000 Facility Protective service; and retrained over 800 of the 5,000 local police in our security college. This is not only encouraging, but is evidence that the citizens of Al Anbar want to protect and secure innocent Iraqis and their families. Even given the most recent violence specifically attempting to frighten Iraqis dedicated to peace and sovereignty, there is no shortage of volunteers eagerly wanting to help defeat the threat, and this is certainly a great-news story.

Not only are the security forces bravely leading the fight against terrorists, they are in some cases insisting on doing it alone, not depending on coalition forces. They want to defeat these enemies of a new and free Iraq. If we had the equipment for these brave young men, we would be much farther along. We are still short a significant amount of vehicles, radios and body armor to properly equip them. But the good news is that most of this equipment is due in by the end of this month.

Jobs creation has been one of the essential pillars of our strategy. It didn't stop with recruitment of just these security forces. Our estimate of unemployment in September was approximately 60 percent of the employable population. Since that time, we've created 24,000 short-term and durable jobs, and our construction projects have employed thousands of other Iraqis temporarily. It is clearly evident that Iraqis want to work with us to

improve the infrastructure that has been neglected for many years here.

Some of the more significant programs are opening our employment offices in all major cities, initiating the adult literacy program and using unemployed teachers, and opening veterans' affairs offices. All these initiatives are creating jobs and opportunities for thousands of Iraqis.

Along the way, huge progress was also made in improving the economy of the local area, employing the formerly disenfranchised young men who would otherwise provide fertile ground for instigation of violence by extremist leaders. As part of this effort, we have expended over \$28 million of Commanders Emergency Relief Program funds and have committed another \$12 million to future and ongoing projects which will inevitably improve the economy. To those completed projects, \$6 million was spent specifically for water, sewage, electrical and utilities improvements to better the infrastructure on which a functioning economy is based.

We've also directly employed thousands of Iraqis through such innovative projects as the Al Anbar Trucking Initiative, contracting Iraqis to assist us in munitions reduction and consolidation, and through the civic improvement program that is employing Iraqis while cleaning up the streets and parks.

Finally, Task Force All-American placed tremendous energy into ensuring that Al Anbar would be safe for the Iraqi people by getting rid of the weapons and ammunition. The enormous amount of ammunition stockpiled in Al Anbar was staggering, and we initially estimated that it would take years to consolidate and reduce. Task Force All-American used innovative ways to increase the capacity and speed of this process. We started with 92 large ammunition supply points, and over the course of the last seven months destroyed or moved to a secure location over 48,000 short tons of ammunition. That's 97 million pounds. Today there are four locations remaining, fully secured, and this reduction effort will certainly provide a more secure province.

So what is it that we've done? Well, let me go ahead and tell you where I think we are. Iraqis are in control and running Al Anbar day to day. Certainly we still provide some assistance where required, and that is to be expected. However, businesses are operating. Schools are open. Children are receiving an education. Iraqi security forces are providing internal security and are respected more and more every day. This last week we opened the joint coordination center in Ar Ramadi, where all forces -- including coalition forces -- collectively manage security and emergency services. Soon, when we receive the needed body armor, radios and vehicles for these security forces, we'll turn the cities over to their local control.

Changes are evident every day. Iraqi leadership, professional engineers, doctors, lawyers and now politicians are involved in moving Iraqi forward, and it truly is a sight to see. One of the most telling signs that the tide is turning: recently 20 Imams issued a fatwa against violence. Also in Ar Ramadi, the local citizens had an anti-violence march. In fact, several demonstrations last week in Ar Ramadi brought the leadership together, preaching anti-violence and unity for all Iraqis. Bottom line is that the people are tired of the violence directed on them by terrorists. The assistance provided to coalition forces to stop these attackers has reached all-time high levels. Last October we were averaging only 20 calls per week, and now we are averaging over 300 tips per week. We've been forced to expand our telephone answering service to receive this volume of calls from local Iraqis attempting to assist in creating a safe and secure Iraq.

The outcome has never been in doubt, and the future has never been clearer than it is today. Those fighting against the Iraqi people and coalition need to listen, need to pay attention and understand that the Iraqi people want freedom, they want prosperity and they want democracy. We, the Iraqis and coalition forces, will not allow this progress toward democracy to stop.

Obviously, as commander of Task Force All American, I'm very proud of our over 18,000 troopers. I am equally proud of the brave Iraqis standing up for this cause. Democracy and freedom has never been cheap. The number of Iraqis willing to pay the price is growing faster than at any other time and place in history. For sure, Iraqis and coalition forces will stand strong and see this task through.

Now, the way ahead for the 82nd Airborne in Al Anbar. Task Force All American will depart and the United States Marines will take over MND West in the next couple of weeks. This transition has been well planned, rehearsed, synchronized, and will be seamless. The Marines are mostly combat veterans and know best, how and where to assist. They have a great plan to help the citizens of Al Anbar attain the next level. So the future for Al Anbar in Iraq remains very bright.

Now, before you depart today, we have some information packets and CDs for you to take with you. All the details on the progress that I've talked about today, and more, are available for you in this pamphlet and a CD that we'll provide for you.

Thank you. And I'll go ahead and take your questions right now. Any questions?

Right here, sir.

Q [Through interpreter.]: (Name and affiliation inaudible.) As you are leaving our country, what are your impressions about our people? What about the mission you have come to accomplish?

Swannack: Very good question about as I leave, what is my impression of the Iraqi people.

First of all, I appreciate very much the warm hospitality of the Iraqi people. I find them very much loving of their country, very much committed to go ahead and take care of their country and bring it to the future. Most impressive, though, I think, is their work ethic. They are very -- have a very strong work ethic and get the job done. That's why I'm very confident in the future of this country.

Over here.

Q: James Hider (sp) from The Times. General, what lessons have been learned from the attack last month on the ICDC position in Fallujah? Because in many ways that was one of the testing points for the new security forces and they didn't do particularly well. What lessons have you drawn from that experience?

Swannack: Okay, on the 14th of February there was an attack on both the police station and also the ICDC headquarters in Fallujah. Now, it is very tragic that about 15 police and several civilians were killed. But on the positive note, what was learned from that is the dedication of Iraqis to fight for their freedom. Specifically, the ICDC battalion there in Fallujah requested no assistance from coalition forces, other than additional ammunition and some heavy weapons, which we've provided them. They attacked -- counterattacked, actually, after securing their own base camp, counterattacked a couple of blocks away and re-secured the police station, killing nine enemy and driving off the rest.

And so what has come of this, I believe, is a sea change for Fallujah. That's when the 20 Imams issued the fatwa not to go ahead and have Iraqi-on-Iraqi violence. The community has come together to deter any violence, Iraqi on Iraqi. The council is working together better now for the future of Fallujah. And I'm very proud of the security forces in Fallujah.

The town also held a memorial ceremony for those fallen security forces and issued valorous awards and payments to the police who were wounded -- in ICDC who were wounded. So it's tragic that they had the deaths, but I believe it's a very positive step forward for Fallujah. And since that time there has been almost negligible anti-coalition or anti-Iraqi attacks.

Let's go one -- is there a question now from Washington, D.C.? Got one?

Q: Yes, General, this is Jim Mannion from Agence France- Presse. I wonder if you could say, you know, as

you're leaving now, what the state of the insurgency is; you know, how active it is and what you think will be required to eliminate it.

Swannack: Actually, in our varied responsibility out in the west, the insurgency is pretty much in disarray, I think is the best way to describe it. Systematically we have captured or killed the individuals directing the insurgency, most specifically with Khamis Sirhan being captured back in January. We continue to go ahead and remove the financiers and facilitators of the attacks by what I call anti-coalition factions out there trying to create and sustain this insurgency. And it's very minimal. Attacks are down. Attacks on coalition forces out there are down. Serious injuries and fatalities are down this month. And I just don't see much substance occurring in terms of the insurgency. So that's why I say it's in disarray.

More so, the popular support we're garnering daily is a definite way ahead to go ahead and break this insurgency. My greater concern right now is on terrorist organizations getting established out west. We do still work very hard to secure the borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. We still need some equipment and means to do that better, even though we stood up those border police. And I believe right now our biggest fight is in regards to disallowing terrorist organizations to get established out there in the west.

Any follow-up on that?

Q: No, sir.

Swannack: Okay, thank you.

Back in the back, back there.

Q [Through interpreter.]: Thank you, General. (Name inaudible.) -- from the BBC. I have two questions.

First question, concerning the operation of -- rotation of the division you are leading: There are -- (Inaudible.) -- and evidence that the operation zone is a very dangerous zone which needs very skilled forces, like the Marines, who have experience in fighting in Afghanistan and Kosovo.

A second question, concerning the zone of operations, which extends over three neighboring countries: These three countries, as you said -- (Inaudible.) -- most of the infiltration comes through these countries. What are your measures? What are the steps that you have taken during these months? Have you stopped these operations? Have you captured -- you have captured many detainees, but you didn't publish their names. You didn't reveal their names. Thank you.

Swannack: Okay. Regarding the future, out in the west, with the transition of force to the Marines, Marines are a very combat-capable force, as you've described. I'm very proud of the force that I've commanded out in the west, which include Afghanistan veterans and twice now Iraq veterans.

And so I just pray and hope that the Marines will have as much success and move Al Anbar province forward, as we have. I say that because we're going to go through a very systematic process of having the Marines replace us. Whereas they come in now, we will continue our operations, with them observing and participating. Then we will go ahead and have them, the Marines, actually undertake the operations under our tutelage and certification, and then, after they're certified, will we turn over the battle space to the Marines -- very systematic relief in place and transfer authority. We've gotten good in places like Bosnia, Afghanistan and Kosovo at this process.

And so I feel very, very good at turning over Al Anbar province and the security requirements out there to the United States Marine Corps and a good friend of mine, Major General Jim Mattis.

Right here.

Q: Luke Baker from Reuters. So you've overseen once of the most volatile regions of the country for a good long while. What sort of mistakes do you think you actually made in the last several months, and how have you learned from them? And what advice would you give to the commander who's taking over, considering he's also criticized some of the techniques you've used to police your area?

Swannack: Okay. First question. I would probably go ahead and start buying the body armor, the radios and the vehicles myself using CERP money. If I go ahead and take you from day one when we got here in September, I kept on expecting at that time for this equipment to equip the ICDC and the police to arrive in November. November came around, and I was told this equipment would arrive in January. Now it's postponed till the end of March. And so I've started as of January 1st procuring, within the resources I have, the radios, the body armor and some of the vehicles to provide this equipment to the security forces. I would have started that earlier. I wouldn't have bet on it coming, because it never came on my watch.

Your second question was about the techniques the Marine Corps will use and vis-a-vis what we do. Okay. First of all, the techniques that we have employed, as I've spoken here today, you've seen have been very, very successful. Different techniques will accomplish this mission. The Marines are very capable. I won't comment on the techniques that they'll use. I just will hope and pray, as I said before, that they're as successful in the next seven months as we have been in the past seven months.

Yes? Follow-up?

Q: Yeah. To be clear, then, what you're saying is the key mistake, perhaps, is more just in giving equipment to local Iraqi forces; your soldiers haven't made any mistakes.

Swannack: I will tell you that in terms of our soldiers, we are a human organization, we're not a perfect organization, and sure, we have made some mistakes. Every mistake we've had, we've gone ahead and investigated and followed through on. And with that, if it's been our fault we've compensated individuals for the mistakes we've made. We've been very ruthless in undertaking that.

Okay, next question. You had a question right here. And then I'll take the next question from Washington.

Q: General Swannack, Rajiv Chandrasekaran from The Washington Post. I want to go back to the insurgency and the terrorists, and maybe you could just define those terms, and the whole world of people who are fighting against coalition forces and Iraqi security forces. You mean the insurgents of the FREs and the terrorists as foreigners; and where do sort of indigenous Islamic extremists fit into this? And if you could just perhaps give us a bit of a picture of the whole sort of world of the people who are fighting against the coalition and the Iraqi security forces. To what degree is that group dominated by FREs and to what degree have indigenous extremists taken the lead role, and to what degree are you seeing foreign fighters, foreign extremists coming in, plugging into those networks and/or leading some of that activity in terms of the fighting?

And if I might, just on a separate subject, ask you in following up from my colleague in Reuters. The delay in getting this equipment for the ICDC and the Iraqi police, is that a U.S. military supply issue or were you expecting that to come from the CPA? Thank you.

Swannack: Okay. First of all, your question about the insurgency and the terrorist fight is a very good one in trying to put that in the right context. When we first got here, I felt very, very strongly about fighting the insurgency, and there was a very sophisticated insurgency here. Since that time, we've systematically taken away the leadership, the funding and the facilitation of that insurgency.

Now, as we -- seven months later from when we got here, I think primarily there are individuals out there who

are more fundamentalist in terms of their dislike of Americans, other individuals who for some reason still have hope of bringing back some kind of a Ba'athist party. Those are very few now, I think. Some of them fear for retaliation or retribution by some of the individuals who Saddam very much supported, but I think the intimidation and fear factor for the populace is also down. And so that's why I'm discounting a very serious insurgency ongoing here right now, because of those factors. Successfully taking away the leaders of the insurgency, the funding and the facilitation of the insurgency, now it's more low-level individuals who still have a gripe against coalition forces that attack us. Some individuals still out there being paid to attack us, but I do believe there are individuals out there, as you say, for a jihad reason want to go ahead and bloody coalition forces.

For some reason, there are individuals, more so now moving on to the terrorist organizations, that don't want to see a democratic Iraq in the Middle East. And that is where some terrorist organizations now recruit foreign fighters from outside the borders of Iraq to come in and do some of the dirty work here in attacking Iraqis, such as maybe we saw down in Karbala and Baghdad in recent bombings.

And so that's kind of the landscape as I see it right now. Insurgents -- as I said before, insurgency in disarray and the terrorist organization being very difficult to get established right now. And so I believe we have a situation where we need to keep the pressure on as we continue to generate the Iraqi security capacity.

Last question -- your second part of that question, regarding the equipment. I believe that we got caught in a situation where CPA was procuring the equipment for the police, for the ICDC and for the border police. And as we transition from last fiscal year to when the supplemental kicked in there was the gap, and that was the gap that we couldn't drop any contracts to get this equipment from because we didn't have the funding.

Then, right after -- right around before mid-December to January, contracts were dropped, and those contracts have not been -- as you maybe read, and I as I do, in the Early Bird, have not been completely negotiated because there are some, I guess investigations necessary to see about contract improprieties. So that's where we are on it. I would have started paying out of CERP to buy this stuff earlier, I guess is the bottom line I'm trying to explain.

Q: Just to follow up on the first part of your answer, would I understand it, then, correctly that the terrorist side -- by that meaning either foreign or domestic -- Islamic extremist component has sort of overtaken the FRE component in terms of the attacks you're seeing in Al Anbar?

Swannack: I think it's a marriage of convenience, best to describe it. There is a marriage of convenience either being recruited to come in here to attack Americans as being paid by former regime elements or terrorists now. They're trying to both disallow and deny the ability of coalition forces working with Iraqis to move towards democracy. And so that's -- it's a marriage of convenience to deny and degrade the progress that we're making here.

Okay, let me go to Washington for the next question, please.

Q: General, I'm Carl Osgood. I write for the Executive Intelligence Review. Your division has been very busy over the last two-and-a-half years, as you already noted. Could you comment on the stresses and challenges that this level of activity has imposed on the 82nd and how your soldiers are coping with this?

Swannack: Okay, I understand the question to be about the stress on the division the last two-and-a-half years, but I didn't catch the very end of your comment -- or your question.

Q: I'd like to know how you and your division -- the soldiers in your division are coping with this level of activity.

Swannack: Okay. Just to bring everybody up to date, the 82nd Airborne Division Headquarters has been involved in fighting the global war on terrorism for about the past two-and-a-half years in Afghanistan and also

here in Iraq. Our troopers have been on six- month rotations to Afghanistan, and now we had a brigade just leave here after a year's duty here. And we have the remaining two brigades that were in Afghanistan here now, with them departing probably over the next month to month-and-a-half.

So the division has been very stressed. It's interesting to note that the 82nd Airborne Division has a rapid deployment mission, wheels up 18 hours. Paratroopers kind of have a mind-set of mission focus, where you jump in at the night to seize an airfield or jump in the night in the middle of nowhere, little groups of paratroopers getting the job done. So they expect that.

The one thing, I think, that helps cope, our Army trying to get to be an expeditionary force model now, is that we get predictability in our troopers' schedule. That's what they need. That's what they need to know -- is when the time is they'll be deployed, when the time is they'll be on mission cycle, standing at Fort Bragg, ready to deploy anywhere in the world, and when they'll have off. And that's the best way we can help our troopers cope with this very high OPTEMPO that they're experiencing right now.

It also helps for family members -- and they're probably the most critical in this equation -- is for our family members, our loved ones, to have a predictability as to how long they will -- our troopers will be deployed and when they'll be back, before their -- and how much they'll be back before their next deployment.

Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, sir. Thank you.

Swannack: Thank you.

Over here.

Q: Thanks, General. Mark Stern, ABC. You've talked a lot about the rebuilding work that your soldiers have done. But at the same time, while that's been going on, as you've just mentioned, the type of enemy you've been dealing with has changed. Do you feel, now that you're leaving, that you've left your region any safer for the Iraqi people?

Swannack: Yes, I do. I feel that we've left Al Anbar safer in the generation of the Iraqi capability, working with the coalition capability.

I also believe that the center of gravity for this entire operation that we're conducting here is the Iraqi populace. If we have the popular support of -- the coalition forces and Iraqi security forces have popular support from Iraqis, then the insurgents or terrorists do not have that support. Then the populace is working with us, as we've seen in the tips that we get, to turn in foreign fighters in their areas, insurgents. It's amazing every day how many IEDs we get notified of, caches we get notified of, and individuals who are trying to attack us that we get notified of. That's what's going to go ahead and create a safer Al Anbar province, and I believe that we have that -- already have that now and will even get better in the future, with the United States Marine Corps here.

Right here.

Q: Shob-i-fru (ph) from NHK. Just to follow up on the question of the equipment, you said that November, January, March, there was like a delay of the equipment to come. How frustrated were you when you learned that the delays are coming? Like who did you curse the most about this delay? And did you feel sorry that the Iraqi police had to go in the field without enough equipment?

Swannack: Well, probably the thing that was most frustrating to me is I kept on trying to explain to the Iraqi security forces that I was very much trying to generate in them the capacity to do the work that they had to do.

And I would tell them that I would get body armor in soon, that I would get radios in soon, and I had to keep on postponing that in their minds.

The perception of Iraqis for what it may be is that when coalition forces came in here, when the United States of America came in here, that everything would improve dramatically, immediately. And that's a false perception. Over time it is improving, but that was the most frustrating factor for me is to see that I could not get the quantities of equipment that I needed to go ahead and give to the Iraqis who wanted to do the job so that they could do the job. That's why as soon as we get this equipment I'm going to see a rapid improvement, as you said, in the security posture in Al Anbar. The situation is quite good now, but we start getting more capable and equipped, Iraqi security forces will get better and better every moment, every day.

Right here, you had a question.

Q: I was just wondering -- a couple of questions, I guess. I'm Ned Parker with AFP news agency. With the borders, were there things that could have been done or what would have been needed to have patrolled them better early on. I know -- in October I was out to Kay-im (ph) and speaking with your officers out there, it was the end of October, and they mentioned that until mid-October there weren't enough people from the 3rd ACR to patrol fully some of the, I guess, some areas that were thought to be major traffic routes from Syria around the area of the Euphrates. So what could have been done or what was needed to have done a better job early on?

Swannack: Okay. For everyone in here you must understand the vastness of the border region out there. It's 850 kilometers of desert with a 10-foot, 12-foot berm marking the border. So the ports of entry here were quite well-manned. There was still a lot of, I believe, individuals that could transit the border checkpoints using forged paperwork, which was pretty much in use. But smuggling across the border, smuggling of people across the border, movement of terrorists and foreign fighters across the border, it was a wide-open border. And some of the neighboring countries did a pretty credible job with their border guards; others did not. And I won't get into each's on that regard. But that was a problem that the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment spoke of.

We've been able now to generate the border forces; we still don't have the SUVs necessary for them to go ahead and work and surveil border crossing points that have been used historically for the last 2,000 years as smuggling routes. And so that's what we have to get after. We've got, I think, in the border police somewheres around three to five buses and only a couple small trucks; buses to move the border police around to the various check ports of entry, but nothing really out there to go ahead and provide the reconnaissance assets and surveillance assets along the border. That's where we have to improve.

Q: A follow-up. I mean, why hasn't that come yet or that will be in the money that's been announced by Bremer and --

Swannack: That's right. Ambassador Bremer's taking the border security program he mentioned to me the other day very seriously and I expect in the near term to go ahead and get this equipment delivered. It's on order and we're starting to get in equipment as part of this parcel at the end of this month.

Q: Would you have described the border area -- I mean, you had soldiers who are both having to police Anbar province, which is a difficult province, and patrol the borders. Were there enough soldiers really to do it all back in the fall --

Swannack: Absolutely. There was enough -- I get, I guess, the responsibility of making the decision where we're going to put our troops against what threat. I felt at no time that I was short forces to go ahead and do the mission. I felt very good at putting the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment on the border; they did a very good job out there. And the 1st Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division around Ar Ramadi and Habbaniya and Caldiya and the 3rd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division from Fallujah down towards Iskandariyah and Mahmudiya. I felt very good about that, the force composition that I had and the capabilities that I had.

Let's go to Washington for probably one more question now.

Q: General, it's Jim Mannion from AFP again. I was wondering if you could go into a little bit more detail about the organization of the Islamic militants or the foreign fighters in your area. You talked about individuals. Is it individuals, or are they plugged into larger networks? And how are they organized, or what sorts of organizations do you see them attempting to establish? Thank you.

Swannack: Thank you. Good question.

I believe that the foreign fighters and terrorists have a cellular organization. I would estimate out in Al Anbar province there are somewhere between eight to 10 cells, predominantly in the larger cities -- Fallujah, Ar Ramadi, out by Husaybah, al Qaim region. And they -- probably the cells have somewhere between five to eight individuals in the cell.

I think it's been very difficult for the terrorists to establish these cells because the Iraqis don't want them here. We get very, very good tips and sources to tell us when there are foreign fighters or terrorists in their area, and so that's the predominant means through which we go ahead and systematically, with precision efforts, take down the terrorist organization. So what I've told you is probably 50 to 80 foreign fighters or terrorists organized and about eight to 10 cells out there in Al Anbar.

Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, sir. Thank you.

Swannack: Okay. Last one, here. Right here.

Q [Through interpreter.]: (Name and affiliation inaudible.) I have two questions.

First question. General Swannack, can you give us more explanation concerning the Marines which will replace the 82nd Airborne Division, about their presence in the west area? Will the border be secured by them?

Second question. Last month you were subject to an attack by terrorist elements, you and General Abizaid. Can you give us more explanation? Have you captured the elements who performed this attack?

Swannack: Okay. The two questions are, first of all, something about the Marines who are replacing us, and the second one about the attack on General Abizaid and myself last month in Fallujah.

Well, first the Marines are combat veterans from Iraq previously. It's the 1st Marine Division, the 3rd Marine Air Wing, the 1st Support Group and the 1st MEF headquarters; somewhere around 25,000 Marines, somewhere around 2,500 combat vehicles, and somewhere under 100 rotary-wing and fixed-wing aircraft. So it's a very, very capable force. And yes, I feel very confident that they will be able to move in, take over the battle space and continue to go ahead and make progress as we have over the last seven months in Al Anbar Province, in security, in essential services, in economy and in governance.

As for General Abizaid and myself, I wanted to make sure that General Abizaid knew exactly the flavor of what Fallujah was like, and so he and I went on a short patrol downtown, stopped into the ICDC battalion headquarters and were receiving information by the battalion commander, the ICDC battalion commander, when we were attacked by only three to five individuals.

It was, I'm sure, not an attack knowing who we were. They had seen our convoy, possibly, coming in there, a target of opportunity. As you can guess, General Abizaid and I have a pretty healthy contingent of personal

security forces when we go anywhere. It's almost like a platoon. And so afterwards, General Abizaid, a combat veteran, myself, were laughing. I'm very -- I have a good personal relationship with General Abizaid and I professionally respect him. We had a nice laugh about it that it was probably not a smart idea for this very small element, that got repulsed immediately, to go ahead and attack General Abizaid's contingent with me around.

So that's pretty much it. I don't believe it was known that we were there until after the fact. We had Robert Burns from AP with us, so he reported it right there with us. Actually, it was taken a little bit out of context. It wasn't all that much. Three RPGs and some small-arms -- AK-47 -- fire is all it was. And I had paratroopers around us, I had ICDC around us, and we were fine.

Thank you very much for the, I'd say, friendship and the close working relationship, warm relationship we've all had, media and the 82nd Airborne Division. We'll be heading back to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, here in a couple weeks. You're always welcome at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. And I respect you as professionals. I hope you have the same respect for the paratroopers and myself.

Good luck to you and God bless you. Stay safe.

Q: (Off mike.)

Swannack: Thank you.

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