



U.S. Department of Defense
Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs)

News Transcript

On the Web:

<http://www.defenselink.mil/cgi-bin/dlprint.cgi?http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060414-12825.html>

Media contact: +1 (703) 697-5131

Public contact:

<http://www.dod.mil/faq/comment.html>

or +1 (703) 428-0711

Presenter: Commander, 3rd Corps Support Command, Brig. Gen. Rebecca Halstead

April 14, 2006

DoD News Briefing with Brig. Gen. Halstead from Iraq

(Note: General Halstead appears via teleconference from Iraq.)

JIM TURNER: General Halstead, this is Jim Turner in the Pentagon briefing room. Can you hear me?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Yes, Jim, I can hear you. Good morning.

MR. TURNER: Good morning.

Our briefer today is Brigadier General Rebecca Halstead. She's the commander of the 3rd Corps Support Command. The general is coming to us from Logistical Support Area Anaconda in Iraq. She is here today to provide us with an operational update.

The general will have an opening statement and then will take your questions. As a reminder, the general can hear you but cannot see you. So please identify yourself before asking your questions. Also, I'd like to remind you that there's a four-second delay before the general can hear your question.

And with that, General Halstead, I'll turn it over to you.

GEN. HALSTEAD: Okay. Thank you, Jim. And again, good morning from Balad, Iraq. And I appreciate the introduction.

I really appreciate the invitation this morning to speak with you on behalf of the soldiers and leaders of the 3rd Corps Support Command and provide a snapshot of our organization, our mission and an update on the progress being made by our dedicated warriors and civilians.

Let me begin by telling you, first and foremost, about our most important and valued resource, the centerpiece of our organization: our brave men and women who proudly and expertly serve in the 3rd Corps Support Command.

We average about 20,000 soldiers, NCOs, officers and civilians. And we're organized into eight brigades operating from over 50 different bases across the country, both in Iraq and Kuwait.

We represent the total force. We have over 200 company-sized units. Half of those are National Guard

and Reserve, and the other half are active duty.

We come from all 50 states and from Guam, American Samoa and Puerto Rico. And some of our units deployed to Iraq from -- excuse me -- from Korea and Germany.

We also have an augmentation of over 5,000 civilian contractors, which we consider our ninth brigade in the command.

Just as diversity is our nation's strength, I really believe it's the strength of the 3rd Corps Support Command as well. My number-one priority will always be on the people, our soldiers and leaders and civilians and their families. Our men and women are on point for our nation. They are America's sons and daughters. They're willing to live for our nation by serving. They're trained and disciplined. They're competent and confident. And they are the ones who accomplish the mission every single day.

Our mission is critical to the success of the Multinational Corps. Quite simply, our main effort is the receipt, storage, issue, transportation, security and distribution of logistics required to support the major commands across the entire area of operations.

Now, on a daily basis, what that means is, we move over 120 combat logistics patrols. That is, on average, over 17,000 trucks a week. We produce over 7 million gallons of bulk water a day. We distribute over 1 million gallons of fuel, over 9 million short tons of ammunition and over 80,000 cases of water. That's a day.

Now, I am pleased to report, however, that we have just begun production of water at our second water bottling plant in Iraq.

This enables us to reduce the number of trucks and drivers that we put on our road every day. We also prepare over 500 pallets of supplies that are flown each day. Again, this keeps us from having to put additional trucks and personnel on the road.

We execute our logistics mission in concert with many other organizations, like our partners in the Air Force, who support us with a variety of aircraft to help us maximize the air movement and minimize the ground movement.

In the month of March, for instance, we reached an all-time goal of moving over 16,000 pallets by air. We also have a partner brigade from the Army Materiel Command, largely made of civilians. They provide critical services in the areas of maintenance, armoring vehicles and also for fielding of new equipment. That's just to name a few.

None of us operate solely independently. Our success is clearly a team sport.

Another aspect of our mission is to support and train the Iraqi security force. As you would imagine, there are different levels of logistics units in the Iraqi army, just as we have in our own forces. So in the 3rd COSCOM, our mission is to partner with the Iraqi army's motorized transportation regiments. We call those MTRs. We also provide technical support and assistance to the Iraqi army national depot and the regional support units. They provide maintenance and supply support.

The Iraqi army is organized into 10 divisions, and there will be nine MTRs. The Iraqi Mechanized Division does not require an MTR. As of today, the 3rd COSCOM partners with three MTRs, and we will receive our fourth MTR by the end of the month, and we will partner with a total of eight by the end of 2006. The British will partner with the ninth MTR.

We receive MTRs when they are 85 percent equipped and manned and when they've completed their individual training. So then our focus becomes on the unit level collective training, and that is everything from transportation operations to maintenance to force protection to soldier discipline. Our goal is to bring them to a higher level of readiness in preparation for them being assigned to their Iraqi army division.

We believe our first MTR will transition to the their Iraqi division in the next couple of months, and that by the spring of 2007, all nine MTRs will have transitioned to their assigned Iraqi divisions.

For the national depot and the regional support units, our focus is mainly on training them on warehousing operations, assisting them with the development of their logistics concepts for their support systems, like ordering parts and supplies, prioritizing their work and their maintenance and coordinating the distribution to support their army units and sustain their readiness.

In closing I just want to acknowledge, and I must acknowledge, the incredible support that we receive from our families, our friends, faith groups and entire communities. Through their outpouring of support, we stay focused, we stay encouraged, and we're able to accomplish our complex missions.

And most importantly, we continue to hold in our sincere thoughts and prayers those families who have lost a loved one and who have paid -- that have paid the ultimate sacrifice, because we recognize that they have sacrificed on behalf of our nation. May God bless them.

So with that, I would be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

MR. TURNER: Okay. Lita?

Q Lolita Baldor with the Associated Press. To what extent has the failure or at least the delay of the Iraqis to set up a unified government impeded efforts to stand up these additional logistics teams for the Iraqis? And can you talk about what the biggest challenge is? Is it getting them the equipment, is it getting the logistical troops, or what else?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Jim, are you there? (Pause.)

MR. TURNER: General, can you hear me? This is Jim Turner.

It looks like we've lost the signal for a second here. Let's see if we can get that fixed. (Pause.) General, can you hear me? This is Jim Turner. We can't hear you.

GEN. HALSTEAD: Okay, yes, I can.

MR. TURNER: Okay, we got you back now. I'm sorry.

Did you get that last question?

GEN. HALSTEAD: I got nothing after I said I would be willing to take your questions. (Laughter.)

MR. TURNER: Okay. Let's try it again. Lita?

Q General, it's Lolita Baldor with the Associated Press. Can you say to what extent has the failure of the Iraqis to set up a unified government impeded your efforts to train the Iraqi logistics troops? And can you talk a little bit about what the biggest challenges are? Is it getting equipment for the troops or getting actual numbers of troops?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Okay. I'm not sure that I heard all of your question, but I will address what I believe I heard to be part of it, and that is, is the seating of the government impeding or slowing down the training of the Iraqi forces, the Iraqi forces in the logistics systems? I believe that was the first part of the question. And then the second one is, is it affecting equipping -- slowing down equipping.

So I'll address the first piece first, on the seating of the government.

I would tell you that we have continued to train with our partner units, which I mentioned were the Motorized Transportation Regiment, and it has not impeded that training at all. We're very encouraged by the attitude and the professionalism of the Iraqi security forces that we partner with.

I recently was -- well, I have sat down with all of our Motorized Transportation Regiment colonels, and then, as I mentioned before, the RSUs, and I've sat down with all those colonels and spoken to them. And when I do that, we speak soldier to soldier. We say in the Army that soldiering is a matter of the heart, and I am so moved by their courage to serve in their armed forces. And the gratitude which they show us for assisting them in this effort to facilitate democracy is always -- it's always moving.

I don't think that I've ever sat down with my counterpart that both of us haven't been moved almost to tears, to include in one session the colonel took his colors, his national colors, off of his staff, and he folded them and he kissed them and he gave them to me, and they hang in my office. So I would tell you that none of that partnership has slowed down at all.

And their training is magnificent. We have a term in the Army called AAR, after-action report. It doesn't translate in their language. So they were doing a rehearsal for a transportation move, and I asked the translator how he felt the rehearsal was going. And of course, I understood the answer a little bit because he said "AAR" in amongst a lot of other words I didn't understand, and that started very encouraging.

On the last part, in terms of equipping, as you know, MNSTC-I is the command and agency that does all the equipping for the forces, and they're still in the process of equipping units. And we're seeing some great progress in that.

We assist at Taji National Depot to help move equipment to units.

And we've moved in the last several months over a thousand pieces of equipment -- and I see "we" -- we have helped the Iraqis move this themselves. We have not moved anything personally. It's just helping them in their system and in their process.

I hope that answers your question.

MR. TURNER: Pam.

Q General, this is Pam Hess with United Press International.

I have a couple of questions.

And the first one -- your spring 2007 goal for having the MTRs with the units -- will they be independent at that point? Or how much support will be required further for them? Because obviously the sooner they are on their own, the sooner you guys can come home.

On the air component of your moving cargo, are you maximizing that? You mentioned that March was

the highest ever. And how do you decide what goes on air and what you'll take the ground risks for?

And on the ground risks, could you tell us how your soldiers are faring, what the pace of attacks are? What your casualties have been since you've been there, and if you see any trends going up or going down.

GEN. HALSTEAD: Okay, thank you.

I'm not sure I caught all of those, but I will do my very best.

The first one -- I believe you asked me the goal of 2007 for the MTRs to go to the division -- would they be able to operate independently? And "independently" -- let me define what we call "independently."

When we partner with the MTR, they're at a certain level of readiness, which I mentioned -- 85 percent equipped, 85 percent of the personnel are assigned to that unit. Then we work with them to get to collective training. And then when the MTR goes to the division, they are independent with that division. So in other words, that division then is giving them their missions, they provide their own security. And so as a division entity, yes, they're doing independent operations.

And so -- now, that's -- the MTR is doing independent missions. The division itself at large potentially has other missions and other partnerships that are still being worked.

So I think that tied into your next question, which was if at that point they're independent, does that mean we can come home? And I think I kind of already answered that for you.

Although the MTR is ready and they go to the division and they can do independent operations, I need to put in perspective for you. An MTR has about 800 soldiers assigned to it.

So total, nine MTRs -- you're only speaking of about 3,000 forces out of the 250,000 Iraqi security force.

So there is not this direct connection if an MTR is independent, that the whole division is independent, which then -- that's why, you know, no one would be able to say so that means we can all come back, because there's going to be still a lot of other training and partnership going on. And I hope that answers that piece.

I think the next question you asked was, are we maximizing our air transport, and because we just had our best month, were we not doing that before?

The way the air piece works is, as you identify a requirement to move things by air, the Air Force is really good at planning then sorties for us. So we give them what we anticipate that we can move by air pallets and have ready for them. And our goal is that no aircraft, no vehicle, no truck moves around empty, because, you know, we want to maximize both the ground and the air.

Deciding what goes in the air is -- there are many factors. As a logistician, we look at weight. We look at the urgency that the supply is needed, how long -- you know, there are airfields that have to receive it, so you're looking at point of departure, point of arrival, the type of aircraft available. So there's a lot of factors in there. And that's why it's hard to maximize sometimes, because there are many different airfields, many different types of aircraft, and there's a lot of different ways to build your pallets.

But we are seeing huge success on that. And success, for us, means not putting more trucks on the road. And it allows us -- we have right now an operation going on where we're doing our very best to retrograde equipment out of Iraq that we're no longer using, that's Army equipment that we don't use out on the roads but over a period of time has come into the country.

So we since, I believe, 20 February have processed over 3,500 pieces of equipment. So allowing trucks to move that Army equipment back out of Iraq -- you know, we're still using trucks, but it allows us to use those trucks for that, and then we put more in the air. So it all starts to balance out that way.

And I think the last piece was, with the movement that we do have on the ground and the combat that we experience with IEDs and this sort of thing, how are we doing out on the roads is the way I would sum it up.

I would like to tell you that -- and I can tell you -- that in the 3rd COSCOM we're doing really, really well.

But I think if you remember in my opening statement, none of this happens alone. We don't operate in isolation. We get wonderful analysis and assessment from our intel folks on what is the threat out on the road. We travel in other maneuver commanders' terrain, and so it's an absolute important need to communicate with them as we travel, to get the latest information. If there's been an IED, we stop a logistics patrol from going into the same area till the area is cleared.

And so in terms of casualties -- that was another part of your question -- I would just like to tell you that we had a soldier killed on 26 October to enemy -- and that's the last soldier that we have had killed to enemy fire. So you might say with an organization of 20,000, that's a great statistic. But what I would tell you, to that soldier's family that's 100 percent. So I think it's better that we don't talk in those terms or numbers, because every single soldier matters.

And we have been blessed. We have been blessed that we have a nation that supports us, that provides us the best equipment in the world. And when we go out on the roads, every vehicle is looked at as a system -- the team that's in the vehicle, the armor they're wearing, the armor they're riding in, the intel they've been given, the communications they're talking on -- and that's a system that's moving down the road. And it's not moving down the road offensively, it's moving down the road with respect for the folks that are out there.

And I am very, very proud of how our soldiers perform. I mean, I couldn't be prouder. And I thank the good Lord for that every night, I can tell you. So I hope I've answered your questions, as well.

Q Hi, General. Gordon Lubold with Army Times. Just kind of wanted to talk a little bit more about that. Obviously, the logistics piece was the piece that was slightly slower in terms of getting the ISF up and running in general, the combat piece being the other side of it, the logistics piece being a little bit longer. In terms of developing MTRs, can you just talk about what the challenges still are and what is it that holds them back from developing further and becoming as much independent as possible?

GEN. HALSTEAD: You know, I really apologize because I did not catch your question. And I don't know if it's my headset. So if I could ask you to repeat that, I would appreciate it.

Q Sure. It's Gordon from Army Times. And I was just trying to get you to speak a little bit more about the development of the logistics piece of the Iraqi forces, that you were talking about it before, and if you could kind of talk about what the challenges still are in terms of getting them as fully independent as possible. What is it that they aren't quite able to grasp, or is it equipment or personnel or mindset or what?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Yes, sir. Okay, I have it now. I apologize. I totally missed that the first time around. Okay. The development of the logistics piece for the ISF and where their challenge is.

I would not say that it's necessarily equipment. I think that there's been a great effort to equip the forces. I think you hit it at the end when you said mindset. As we partner with them, one of the things that we train our own soldiers and leaders is don't force our mindset onto them, because the systems that are developed

have to be sustained when we leave.

So, for instance, one of the challenges is parts. It's not maintenance. I have never seen such a capability of people to fix. I told them I'm going to bring my Jeep over here so they can fix it. I mean, it's amazing. They can take something that you would not even believe would ever roll again and completely fix the vehicle. I often tease that I understand that concept, however, because I fly around Iraq a lot, and when I look out, you know, it can be miles and miles and miles and you'll see a shepherd -- that has a truck out there, by the way. And you just go, there is no Jiffy Lube, there is no gas station, but that truck is running around out there in the terrain. So they have great skill sets for fixing.

But it is the parts that become an issue because there are different fleets of vehicles, and then moving those parts around. And I think that may be the greatest challenge.

Once the parts are ordered and come into regional support units to the Taji National Depot, then getting them out to the sites where the national maintenance contract teams are -- I think that's going to be one of their biggest challenges. And what they're trying to come to grips with is they have a concept to prove -- and I applaud them for this -- the MOD has approved the concept, and now they're trying to really put some meat on how they're going to do -- is it going to be civilian contracted in some areas? Is it going to be all military in some areas? And as that starts to mesh, we're helping them to understand and develop systems to do that.

So it's challenging and it goes a little slow some days, but I think there's definitely progress, and there's a lot to be said for how they're moving in that direction.

MR. TURNER: Donna.

Q General, Donna Miles, American Forces Press Service.

I'm curious. You talk -- at the end of this effort, you'll have about 3,000 support troops -- I believe that's what I heard you say -- and I'm curious -- in light of a 250,000-member force, that seems like a very small logistics piece to support that. Will that be able to sustain?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Okay. A very -- 20,000 seems like a very small number to -- considering the 250,000 of the force that's over here.

Well -- and I would just tell you that although it's a logistics command, one entire brigade of the eight brigades provides security on our routes. They do escort security of the combat logistics patrols.

I think probably one of the reasons why it sounds a little small to you would be because we really have learned the value added of leveraging contracts in our civilian workforce. And as I'm sure you know, for instance, we put money back into the economy over here by using, for instance, the Iraqi truck company. They -- it's their drivers, their trucks, and they -- you know, they provide some of the movement of logistics, and that's a great news story. It allows us to have a smaller footprint.

And I think that's why, you know, you probably see that ratio as being maybe what appears to be a little bit smaller than you would expect. And our forces are still doing space defense and force protection as well. So -- but I -- but we have what we need, and there are absolutely no issues in that regard, and we're always assessing where we have our people to make sure that we're really maximizing that effort as well.

So it's all working really well. Thank you.

(Cross talk.)

Q I think she misunderstood her question.

Q I think she misunderstood the question. It was about the 3,000 Iraqi logistics supporting the 250,000 army.

MR. TURNER: Did you get that, General? Do you want to restate the question?

Q I'd rather not restate the question.

Q General, if I could just repeat, I'm curious -- the 3,000 Iraqi logistics personnel being trained to support, ultimately, a force of 250,000 -- is that, if I'm understanding -- and please correct me if I'm wrong -- is that enough to do the job?

GEN. HALSTEAD: That's a great question, and I'm glad you asked it, because I would not want to give the impression that they're the only Iraqi logistics forces.

When I mentioned in my opening statement that there are different levels of logistics units in the Iraqi army, just like there are in our forces, there are what they -- they have what they call HSC companies, headquarter supply companies. And there are almost a hundred of those companies. They're out with the maneuver brigades. So the partnership in the division goes down to the brigade and battalion level. So there are many other logistics units out there that are being trained and partnered by coalition forces.

That just doesn't happen to be part of my mission. In the 3rd COSCOM, our focus is on the -- are on the MTRs. So there are many, many more logisticians and log units out there in support of that very large ISF, Iraqi security force.

I'm really glad you asked that, because I would not have wanted for anybody to be confused on that effort. Thank you.

Q General, this Lisa Burgess with Stars and Stripes. This may not be your lane, but do you have anything to do with the PRTs in Iraq?

GEN. HALSTEAD: (Off mike) -- I don't have anything to do with the PRTs.

Q I'll let someone else ask a different question. Thank you, ma'am.

Q General, it's Kay Maddox (sp) from Voice of America. You were asked earlier about -- one of the biggest challenges about training the Iraqi army was mind-set. And I just wonder if you can be a little bit more specific about that. What exactly did you mean?

GEN. HALSTEAD: I only meant in terms of logistics concepts, because where we have such a common bond is our mind-set of soldiering. And you know, I believe everything starts and ends with the soldier -- and civilians, you know, the human resource of the organization. And they believe the same.

So the mind-set -- I was really speaking more in terms of a cultural mind-set, you know, who -- I'll give you an example of fuel. Where we tend to allow decisions to be made at a very low level -- if I have a company that's in charge of a fuel mission, then that company commander has that mission; they're able to be issued fuel, receive it and issue it out.

As the Iraqi army is developing their concepts, they still have some of that decision-making at a much

higher level. And that -- and we can understand that, because it's all about money and fuel and resources. And so I think that's the mind-set that's a little bit different. And it will take a while to decide what's military lane, what's civilian lane, and where should those decisions be made. And that's where the concepts are really important.

MR. TURNER: Well, it looks like we've just about run out of time. So I'm going to have to cut it off here, because I think the satellite's going to push off. But thank you very much, General. Would you like to make any kind of closing remark?

GEN. HALSTEAD: Well, again, I want to close with saying thank you, absolutely, for the opportunity. And I mean that on behalf of all the soldiers and civilians and leaders, and not just the 3rd COSCOM, everyone who's serving over here, because we so appreciate your interest and your support. And that's what keeps us going. So we thank you for that very, very much.

Have a nice weekend.

(C) COPYRIGHT 2005, FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC., 1000 VERMONT AVE. NW; 5TH FLOOR; WASHINGTON, DC - 20005, USA. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. ANY REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION IS EXPRESSLY PROHIBITED. UNAUTHORIZED REPRODUCTION, REDISTRIBUTION OR RETRANSMISSION CONSTITUTES A MISAPPROPRIATION UNDER APPLICABLE UNFAIR COMPETITION LAW, AND FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. RESERVES THE RIGHT TO PURSUE ALL REMEDIES AVAILABLE TO IT IN RESPECT TO SUCH MISAPPROPRIATION. FEDERAL NEWS SERVICE, INC. IS A PRIVATE FIRM AND IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. NO COPYRIGHT IS CLAIMED AS TO ANY PART OF THE ORIGINAL WORK PREPARED BY A UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT OFFICER OR EMPLOYEE AS PART OF THAT PERSON'S OFFICIAL DUTIES. FOR INFORMATION ON SUBSCRIBING TO FNS, PLEASE CALL JACK GRAEME AT 202-347-1400.

<http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/2006/tr20060414-12825.html>