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**Presenter: U.S. Army Colonel Jeffrey J. Snow, Commander, 1ST Brigade, 10TH Mountain Division**

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**EDT**

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## DoD News Briefing with Col Snow from Iraq

BRYAN WHITMAN (deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): It looks like we got video. Let me see if Colonel Snow can hear us.

Colonel Snow, this is Bryan Whitman in the Pentagon. Can you hear me?

COL. SNOW: Hey, Bryan, you're just coming in just a little bit low.

MR. WHITMAN: I just need to speak up a little bit. There we go. How's that?

COL. SNOW: Hey, Bryan, sounds much better. How are you?

MR. WHITMAN: Very good. And thank you for joining us today. And good morning to the press corps and good evening to you.

Today Colonel Jeffrey Snow, who is the commander of the 1st Brigade, 10th Mountain Division, is going to spend some time telling about what his unit has been doing. He's assigned to Multinational Division in Baghdad and has been operating primarily in northwestern Baghdad. You will recall, I think, that Colonel Snow spoke to you about five months ago, February, I think, February time frame. And his unit's been there just about a year, and he's going to update us on their activities and take some of your questions.

So Colonel Snow, with that, let's go ahead and turn it over to you.

COL SNOW: Okay, thanks, Bryan.

Well, good morning, everybody. It's great to be with you to talk a little bit about this brigade and its accomplishments, as well as to share some insights into how I think we're doing as we come to the conclusion of our one-year rotation and begin preparations to redeploy back to Fort Drum. First I'd like to talk to you about the brigade's area of operation, our mission, and then share some information that I think will provide a foundation from which you can ask me questions.

Our area of responsibility consists of western Baghdad, stretching from the heavily urbanized areas

along the Tigris River west to the farmlands of Abu Ghraib, encompassing more than 300 square kilometers and home to nearly 1.3 million Iraqis. There are more than 200 mosques and religious centers. Key among them is the Khadimiya shrine, one of the holiest shrines for Iraq's Shi'a population. Three Iraqi army bases and the Abu Ghraib internment facility all fall within our boundaries, along with the Baghdad International Airport complex.

Within our battlespace there are neighborhoods that are predominantly Shi'a or Sunni, and others that are mixed. In the rural Abu Ghraib area, the population runs to 90 percent Sunni. Linking these areas are several key routes which serve as arteries for travel in and around Baghdad.

Our mission has been to conduct full-spectrum operations in partnership with Iraqi security forces to neutralize anti-Iraqi forces while simultaneously training those forces.

In order to accomplish this mission, we identified six objectives early on.

The first was to neutralize anti-Iraqi forces.

The second was to train Iraqi security forces so that they are capable of enforcing the rule of law.

The third was to facilitate the establishment of competent, local councils responsive to the needs of the people.

The fourth was to improve the quality of life for the Iraqi people.

The fifth was to improve economic opportunities.

And lastly, we wanted to find ways to enhance the perception of Iraqi security forces and the government of Iraq.

So the question is, well, how did we do?

I believe that in conjunction with our Iraqi counterparts, we have contained, suppressed or disrupted the insurgencies in areas once considered safe havens. Early in the deployment, success was indicated by the positive referendum and national election turnout that were a direct result of our combined operations to interdict insurgent networks and mitigate risk to the political process.

Over the past four months, success has been seen in the disruption of Sunni and Shi'a rejectionists and terrorist networks across the area of our responsibility. The enemy has been forced to adopt new tactics as our combined offensive operations have continually disrupted insurgent activities.

I'm pleased with the progress of Iraqi security forces. We have trained two Iraqi army brigades and one national police brigade that to a certain extent can plan, execute and sustain counterinsurgency operations with limited coalition support. Though some logistics assistance is necessary, the Iraqi security forces are making progress in providing security for the Iraqi people.

When we first arrived, we were partnered with one Iraqi brigade, and U.S. forces controlled over two-thirds of the battlespace. As we depart, there are two Iraqi army brigades, a national police brigade and a more robust Iraqi police force operating in our area, and Iraqi security forces are in the lead in two-thirds of the battlespace, with coalition forces in tactical overwatch.

Because of the growing effectiveness of Iraqi security forces, we were able to expand coalition efforts to the west of Baghdad. We have been able to disrupt insurgent networks and the route lines they used to travel

into Baghdad by denying insurgents crucial support zones and destroying their caches.

The Iraqi security forces are getting better every day, and although they have growing pains like any new army, they have demonstrated a strong will to fight and protect the Iraqi people. It will only get better with time.

Coming into this mission, I told soldiers our mission was to work ourselves out of a job, and we've worked hard to do that. As I am sure you know, our brigade is not being replaced by another brigade. It is being replaced by portions of three coalition battalions under the command and control of three different brigades. We are making progress.

As far as local councils are concerned, we're making progress, but it's uneven progress. In urban areas, the security level facilitates the execution of local governments. In the rural areas, we're having a harder time. While the councils are meeting consistently, they still struggle to get everyone to the meetings and to communicate with higher councils in Baghdad due to security concerns.

We have worked hard to improve the quality of life of Iraqis. We've executed over 50 medical operations to provide medical care to Iraqis in areas where care isn't available. In our area of operations, we have spent over \$150 million to enhance the quality of life for Iraqis. We have built water treatment plants, improved water distribution and sewer systems, rebuilt electrical infrastructure and renovated 35 schools. We've made progress, but there is still more work to be done. Our brigade has developed numerous projects that other brigades will see through to completion.

I believe the soldiers of the Warrior Brigade Combat Team have made an historic role in this country, and I believe their efforts have made a difference. There have been setbacks and sacrifices, but we depart optimistic about the future of Iraq. We have witnessed two historic election periods that have set the foundation for the new Iraqi government.

For the first time in decades, all Iraqis now have a voice in their future. This momentum will be hard to reverse, and even the Samarra bombing did not sway the Iraqi people from their belief that all Iraqis can live together, regardless of their religious background.

The insurgents tried to split the people along religious lines, but this tactic backfired. Reporting by Iraqis on insurgent activity has increased significantly since we arrived. Iraqis want to see the enemies of freedom and oppression defeated as much as we do.

It will be a long and challenging endeavor, but in the end, I feel democracy will prevail. As long as we continue to support the Iraqi government and the Iraqi security forces continue to improve, then the insurgency will wilt away from the burden of its own oppression. You can only kill your own people for so long before they say, "Enough," and turn against the terrorists.

And they are turning more each and every day. Yes, some are turning to militias, but most are turning to the government and the security forces to solve these problems.

I think this is an important point for the American people and the media to understand. My personal opinion is that the only way we will lose this war is if we pull out prematurely. But in the end, I understand this is a political decision that the American people and our elected representatives will have to make, based on recommendations from our senior leadership. I would hope we get the time and support we need to finish this mission.

This war is a battle of the wills. The insurgents will never defeat our soldiers' will to fight, ever. So they've taken aim at the willpower of the American people. Our soldiers may be in the cross-hairs every day, but

it is the American voter who is the real target, and it is the media that carries the message back each day across the airwaves. So when the news is not balanced and it's always bad, that clearly leads to negative perceptions back home.

Now, I'm not saying bad things don't happen. They do. But there are also good things going on, and we are making progress. Our soldiers believe in this mission, and they're proud of what they've done for the people of Iraq.

I tell you this because 746 soldiers from this brigade have reenlisted, and we accomplished our fiscal year 2006 mission in only seven months -- a remarkable achievement. These soldiers understand the mission, and they're willing to continue the fight.

In closing, I want to tell you how proud I am of the discipline and teamwork that each unit and soldier within this brigade has demonstrated this last year. The soldiers continue to amaze me with their dedication, loyalty and motivation. They have represented the 10th Mountain Division and our country well while working for two different divisions.

The Iraqi people and security forces respect the 10th Mountain patch and the results we have achieved in the last year. We've worked hard to build upon the success of those who preceded us, and we knew that the mission would not be complete when we depart.

Our successes come from being team players, forging a relationship with Iraqi civilians and security forces, conducting combined operations with the Iraqi security forces and, perhaps most importantly, from the support of our families and the American people.

At this point, I'll be happy to take any questions you have.

MR. WHITMAN: Well, thank you for that update and for your perspective from the ground there. Certainly some impressive accomplishments of your unit there.

Let's get into some questions. In fact, let's do something a little bit different. Colonel Snow, we actually have your hometown newspaper here, and we'll start with the Watertown Times. And Marc, you got the first question.

Q Hi, Colonel Snow. It's Marc Heller from the Watertown Daily Times. At the risk of being a little bit inside baseball, you're probably thinking a little bit ahead to getting back to Fort Drum. And I wonder if you could talk a little bit about getting reset. Tell us a little bit about what condition your equipment is in. And when you get back to Drum, what do you need to do to get yourself ready, ultimately, to go out again? Tell us a little bit about that process.

COL. SNOW: Sure. Marc, that's a good question.

Actually, we have actually started our redeployment process. Our torch party, with 56 soldiers, actually left this morning en route back to Fort Drum to prepare for the return of our soldiers. And it'll be a tiered deployment process between now and really the 1st of August to get everybody back.

Now, when we get everybody back, what the soldiers do is they go through a reverse, what we call soldier readiness checks, to ensure all their paperwork is in order.

And there are screening forms, health assessments, other things of that nature to make sure that the soldiers are physically and mentally prepared to take a well-deserved block leave, which will start in the middle

of August and run until September.

Now, when we come back from September, most of our equipment that we will ship here in the coming weeks from Iraq we'll get back there to Fort Drum, and then, we'll begin the process of what we call reconstitution and reset. And that is, we will have a number of soldiers that will be leaving the brigade over the course of the next 90 days, about a third, and then, we will go about the business of recovering our equipment that we ship back, and then, drawing equipment, what we call left-behind-equipment, that's currently waiting back there at Fort Drum for us and rebuilding our equipment sets for the units. And then, we'll go about the business of beginning training, which will take us over, you know, a period of months in an effort to prepare us for future endeavors.

It is a complicated process, but I'll tell you, the Army has come a long way since we've started this endeavor, and we get better and better at it. It allows us to recover quicker and quicker.

Q: How long should it take in total? How long should it take in total to get to, you know --

COL. SNOW: Well, the goal is to be fully prepared to execute combat operations within six months. That is the goal.

Q: Colonel Snow, I'm going to follow up on Marc's question a little bit here. We were told this week about how much it's going to cost the Army to reset as well as the Marine Corps. The Army total was about \$17 billion. Can you talk a little bit about how much equipment you are going to leave behind for the Iraqi security forces? And I'm sure you don't have a total on how much it'll cost to reset, but can you give us a picture of how much equipment you will need to replace, repair?

COL. SNOW: Boy, you know, ma'am, that is a great question, but fortunately, my leaders protect me from having to worry about the money.

You made one comment about us leaving equipment for Iraqi security forces, and I don't know that to be a correct statement. We are leaving most of our up-armored humvees and a lot of our equipment for other coalition forces, either in theater and/or -- it's my understanding that some of that will go into reset for other units. And possibly some of that is to the Iraqi security forces, but I'm not aware of that.

As to the cost associated with that, I'll be honest with you, I don't have a clue. I probably should know that, but I don't, and I'm very fortunate that I've got commanders that allow me to focus on the fight. And they tell me, and I explain to them what I need, and they'll forget how to resource it. And thus far, throughout transformation and the entire time we've been here, they've held true to that.

Q: Do you know about how much of your equipment you'll leave for other coalition units?

COL. SNOW: Well, you know, over here -- when we deployed over here, we did not have any up-armored humvees, and so you know, that number is in the neighborhood of 220. All of those will be left here. There's equipment called stay-behind-equipment that is left for units to deploy in, because what the Army is trying to do is reduce the amount of equipment that they've got to load on to ships and put on the planes to come over here in support of other units.

For example, most of you there know that the 2nd Brigade from the 10th Mountain Division is going to be deploying shortly.

So whatever equipment we have that is similar, it makes sense for the Army to keep it here and reduce the amount of equipment that has to accompany follow-on units. And we've been doing that for some time, and

I think it's the right thing to do because it minimizes the amount of time it takes to get that equipment over here. It certainly reduces the cost of having to ship or fly that equipment over there. And I think the Army's doing a great job in that regard.

MR. WHITMAN: Pamela.

Q: Colonel Snow, it's Pam Hess. In your opening statement you talked about your brigade being replaced by pieces of three battalions. Does that mean that battalions from other brigades are just expanding their AO? What kind of an exchange is that people-for- people?

And also, on the larger point you made about media coverage, Baghdad is one of the most dangerous places in Iraq, Baghdad and Ramadi. What you reported to us is pretty positive. How do we square the daily casualty reports out of Baghdad, particularly, with the progress that you say you're making? We have a logical disconnect on that.

COL. SNOW: Right. Well, with regard to your first question, you're exactly right, there are elements of three brigades. One of those is the 4th Brigade, which is operating to the east of us. They are going to assume responsibility for providing tactical overwatch of 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army Division, which has independent battlespace. So, by tactical overwatch, they have what we refer to as a MiTT team from the Iraqi Assistant Group that is providing training and assistance. But if they need additional assistance or a Quick Reaction Force, that comes from 4th Brigade.

From the north, the 1st Brigade of 4th Division is going to assume responsibility of tactical overwatch for 3rd Brigade of the 6th Division. They also have independent battlespace. So those two Iraqi army brigades are taking their guidance and direction from 6th Division. However, by tactical overwatch, what I mean is coalition forces are responsible for QRF or if they need additional assistance, they're capable of responding.

And then the third unit is actually coming from the south, and that is the 2nd Brigade of the 101st is assuming responsibility for a sliver of our battlespace. And the reason for that, quite frankly, is right now 3rd Brigade only has two of their three battalions operational. But there are plans over the course of the next 60 to 90 days to form that third battalion, and that will be great because they'll be able to expand their area of operation. And I think that's a good thing.

Now, with regard to your second question, I would answer it this way. I think sometimes we just focus a little bit too much attention to, you know, IEDs and kidnappings and murders. I am not denying those things happen, that they do. I think how you get around that is, you know, I think embedded media is the answer. By and large those media that have come out here and spent time with us -- and you were one of those -- I think they come away with a different perception when they actually get there and spend time with Iraqi security forces or they spend time with coalition forces, and they go around and see firsthand what is going on and talk to the people. By no means do I want to undermine the kidnappings and some of the assassinations that are going on. They're tough.

And if I could give you one more example, take for example we have had some pretty tough attacks here recently with Operation Together Forward where some of our checkpoints have been attacked. Now, if you were to look at that, you'd think, well, that's a terrible thing the checkpoints are being attacked. But if you go up there and you talk to the soldiers and the national policemen at those checkpoints, they feel like they're making a difference. And we had four of these type attacks over the course of a three-day period.

And in three out of the four, they thwarted those attacks. They identified the VBIED before it got to the checkpoint, did a good job reacting, and as a result minimized casualties. Additionally, they believe they have significantly disrupted the insurgent ability to move in and around western Baghdad.

But if you don't get out there and spend the time with them, what you tend to focus on is the fact that, well, we had another, you know, VBIED strike. That is unfortunate, but I think they're moving in the right direction.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go over here to Jonathan.

Q: General (sic), Jonathan Karl, ABC News. You offered your personal opinion that the only way to lose is to prematurely pull out of Iraq. So I'm wondering if I can press you a little bit further on your personal opinion. How long do you think that process will take? I mean, what would represent a prematurely pulling out of Iraq? How much more work remains, and what are the big challenges ahead?

COL. SNOW: Right. Well, again, my personal opinion -- although, I think you will find it to be very consistent -- we go through a very deliberate process each and every month to assess the status of our Iraqi army forces and our Iraqi police forces. It's much like a unit status report, if any of you are familiar with that for our own Army. We put a lot of time and effort into assessing that in determining what we need to continue to make forward progress.

Now, I don't know what that amount of time is. What I can tell you is that each and every month we've been here, you know, it's gotten better. I mean, just recently, the two brigades in my own -- in -- that I have tactical overwatch with, the 1st and 3rd Brigade, just got up-armored humvees. The 3rd Brigade got about 36, and the 1st Brigade got about 60. But the 1st Brigade's a little bit larger. That's why they got the increased number. So about 15 per battalion. That is a significant force protection enhancement for those units.

In terms of the time, I don't know that. I mean, what we are working on right now is working on enhancing the logistics and the maintenance and the -- I would put it in the category -- maintenance, logistics and supply capability, repair capabilities of the Iraqi forces.

Again, my personal opinion is that's the long pole in the tent. But as we speak, we are working very hard to train that capability within the Iraq army units. And then the division and above leadership is working very hard to develop those next levels of maintenance, responsibility and training. So it's going to take some time, but I would just -- again, my personal opinion is I look at how much time and effort people are putting into this, and we're going as fast as I think we can go. And in some cases, it's an awful lot of training to get these folks where they need to be. So it's not going to be easy, but I think we're doing the right things. And when the conditions are right, you know, as all of our leadership has said, I think we will move on to something else.

MR. WHITMAN: Jeff.

Q: Good morning, Colonel. This is Jeff Schogol with Stars and Stripes. You had mentioned the importance of embedding. We were told recently that your brigade is not accepting any embeds. Can you talk about why?

COL. SNOW: Hmm. And I would tell you, I'm not aware of that. You know, to my knowledge, not only have we accepted embedded reporters throughout, but it's my understanding we've got one more that's en route to accompany us on the way back.

Now, the only thing I would say is it could be a case of we just went through a very deliberate relief in place process, and during that time frame, if in fact that's what you're referring to, then I probably did not accept an embed because the priority has got to be to providing information to those units that replace us.

And that may have been the case why you were told that. I'd have to go back and check it.

But what I'd tell you about that is, reliefs in place are very important. I mean, we've gained a lot of information and a lot of knowledge. We've developed a lot of personnel relationships with local nationals, local government officials, Iraqi security forces, and we've got an obligation to pass on those lessons learned. And that is leader intensive. So that may have been why that's the case, but I'll be honest with you, I have not turned down an embedded media the entire time that I've been here.

Q: Quick follow-up. My understanding is this was turned down yesterday. Is it possible -- is this not coming up at the BUB or -- I mean, have you been so busy that you've been unable to attend the BUB?

COL. SNOW: I'm sorry. I could not hear the last part of that question.

Q: My question is, is this information not coming up at the BUB, or have you been too busy to attend the BUB with everything you're doing?

COL. SNOW: Hey, listen, I attend every battle update assessment six days a week, and no, that is not something that is coming up at the battle update assessment.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go back to Barbara.

Q: Colonel Snow, Barbara Starr from CNN. I also want to follow up and ask you about your comments about the media. When you say -- quoting you -- "We focus too much attention on IEDs and murders," I just, I want to ask you a couple of questions just to be very clear. Is that also, as with a couple of other things today, your personal opinion, or is that a command view?

And your view about embedding, in light of, of course, what happened to Bob Woodruff and to Kimberly Dozier, are you taking any new measures for the security of reporters who embed since you're encouraging us to do that?

And third --

MR. WHITMAN: Let's try to keep it to -- (inaudible) --

Q: Well, this really gets to the nub of it, Bryan. Excuse me. I'd like to ask, what --

MR. WHITMAN: -- (inaudible) -- Barbara.

Q: -- what are your statistics on attack levels, since you say you have all this progress? What are the actual statistics on attacks in your area?

MR. WHITMAN: Colonel Snow, feel free to answer two of the three, and we'll get to another reporter. Thank you.

COL. SNOW: Okay. Bryan, I would just say, I'm having a hard time getting all of it. Let me answer what I -- at least part of the question. With regard to reporters, for embedded reporters, we do have a responsibility for providing force protection. So you know, the answer -- is that something that we look at? The answer is yes. We look at where the reporter is going, are we taking the right measures, do we brief the reporter on the threats in that particular area, and do we go through a thorough process to ensure that -- what that patrol is doing, task and purpose, or understand, and what their actions should be in the event of an attack. All of that is true, and we take that very seriously. And I personally have got to sign and approve when embedded reporters are coming in. But I've done that, and so that's not an issue.

And unfortunately, your first and third questions, I did not get, so I'm going to have to ask you to repeat those.

Q: (Off mike) -- you've mentioned all of the progress, so can we have some statistics to back that up? What have been the rate of attacks? And if you need to provide it for the record, but we would like to know. What have been the rate of attacks over the last several weeks against U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians in your sector? Are they up or down?

COL. SNOW: I would say, if you look at -- let me -- just I want to check my facts here before I answer that to you. The way I would answer that is that attacks here recently are up in our area; however, the effectiveness, the overall effectiveness of them down.

So, you know, you may perceive that as double-speak. I don't have the precise numbers in front of me.

What I'd say is this. I think since we have started Operation Together Forward, you'll find that the number of attacks are going up. Why is that? I think in part because we've put a lot of time and effort and we've communicated that we were going to do this, to the Iraqi people. And in doing so, in an effort to inform them, I think insurgents have also taken note. And I really think this has had an impact. So as we populated and put additional patrols, both dismounted and mounted, into neighborhoods, what we refer to as mahalas, and we increased the number of checkpoints, we expected that there would be an increase in attacks, and that is precisely what's happened. So we really weren't surprised.

But I believe that these attacks are going to go down over time. So I remain optimistic.

MR. WHITMAN: Colonel Snow, we've reached just about the end, just about the end of our time, and I wanted to give you the last couple of minutes if you had some closing remarks.

COL. SNOW: Well, I do. First of all, I want to thank you for the questions. While I'm incredibly proud of the accomplishments of the BCT and our partner units, it has come at a significant cost. There are pictures of 12 soldiers and two Marines on the Memorial Wall in our headquarters who have paid the ultimate sacrifice, 11 of them from the 10th Mountain Division, who will not return with us when we go home. They are gone, but not forgotten, and I assure you they will never be forgotten. Each of their losses serves as a sobering reminder that freedom is not free; and all died a hero in the defense of his country and a set of ideals bigger than all of us.

The future of Iraq is bright, and I would like to share two anecdotes to tell you why. In one of the more dangerous areas of western Baghdad, we have national police and Iraqi army working side by side planning and conducting operations. Four days ago, a national police checkpoint was conducting routine operations when one of the policemen saw something suspicious in a vehicle waiting to pass through the checkpoint. The policeman opened the trunk and discovered explosives, and in that instant he pulled the driver of the car out and away from the car as it exploded.

The national policeman at the checkpoint as well as the driver only sustained minor wounds. Concurrent with the blast, an Iraqi army battalion sent tanks and infantry to secure the site. The wounded national policeman and driver were evacuated to the nearby Iraqi army base, where they received initial triage and then they were evacuated to a coalition military hospital.

It is this sort of competence and teamwork that will solve the current security concerns. Iraqi security forces are in the lead in many portions of our area of operations, and they're getting better. The people of Iraq desire security, and it will be won by the security forces.

I'd like to conclude by sharing a poem written by First Lieutenant Robert Seidel, a platoon leader that served in 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Battalion, shortly before he was killed in action on 18 May. And I quote:

"As I am cloaked by the darkness of the soft desert sky, I feel a strange likeness between my father and I, for I am the father of 30 young men related only by the blood we shed. And they look up to me to lead them through the fight, for we know not what awaits us this cold desert night. But I vow to protect them and bring them all home, so may I find strength in the courage they have shown. And like my father, I ask the Lord as I pray, watch over my boys if today is my day."

It is because of the dedication and commitment of Iraqi security forces and leaders like Lieutenant Seidel that we will win the global war on terrorism. We owe it to them to complete the mission we started.

Thank you.

MR. WHITMAN: Thank you, and we wish you a safe and speedy redeployment, and for sharing some time with us this morning.

COL. SNOW: Well, thank you, Bryan, and take care.

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