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Presenter: Colonel Brian Jones, Commander, 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division **August 04, 2006 9:00 AM EDT**

DoD News Briefing with Colonel Brian Jones from Iraq

(Note: Colonel Jones appears via video-teleconference from Iraq.)

BRYAN WHITMAN (deputy assistant secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Good morning, and let me see if Colonel Jones can hear us, first of all. Colonel Jones, Bryan Whitman from the Pentagon.

COL. JONES: Hi, Bryan. How are you doing?

MR. WHITMAN: Very good.

Well, thank you for joining us this evening, and good morning to the Pentagon press corps. Our briefer today is Colonel Brian Jones. He is the commander of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team of the 4th Infantry Division. And he assumed command for operations in his area in January of this year. The brigade includes some 3,700 service members. And the brigade is assigned to Multinational Division North, operating north of Baghdad.

He's coming to us via satellite today from Forward Operating Base Warhorse in Baqubah. And as is kind of our format, he's going to start with a brief opening and give you a sense of what his unit's been doing and then is going to take some questions.

With that, Colonel, thank you again for joining us, and let me turn it over to you.

COL. JONES: Great. Thanks, Bryan.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I want to thank you for this unique opportunity to tell the American people about the incredible accomplishments of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and our brothers in the Iraqi army and Iraqi police forces that we support and train.

I think engagements such as this extremely important to help explain and add clarity to what is happening over here from our perspective.

The 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team is organized as a joint and combined force with members of the U. S. Navy and U.S. Air Force, soldiers from the U.S. Army Reserve and National Guard, and an infantry battalion

from the Federal Republic of Georgia.

Our mission in the Diyala province and in southern Salahuddin province is immense in scope. The brigade's area of operations is approximately 30,000 square miles in size, or roughly the size of the states of Vermont and New Hampshire combined. Major municipalities include Baqubah, the provincial seat of Diyala; Balad and Abdujal in southern Salahuddin; and the cities of Khalis, Balad Ruz, Khaneqin and Muqdadiah, all in Diyala.

The physical terrain we operate in varies from desert to urban to thickly vegetated palm groves, with daytime temperatures now hovering around 120 degrees.

Most importantly, the real terrain is actually the population of about 1.8 million people, with the demographic distribution of about 50 percent Sunni, 35 percent Shi'a and 10 percent Kurds.

Interestingly, Diyala is known as "Little Iraq" for its diverse population. We sometimes refer to Diyala as "Big Baghdad" because so many of the issues down there spill over into our area of operations.

We are partnered with the Iraqi security forces to include the police, the army, and the border enforcement forces in our primary role of developing their capabilities, and we are working with them to defeat the terrorists and insurgents in support of the Iraqi government's efforts to provide domestic security, foster economic growth and develop basic infrastructure and services. Equally important, we continue to transition the lead in these areas to Iraqi control in order to allow our eventual disengagement, while striving to leave a relatively stable democratic Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors and a partner in the war against global terrorism.

We have focused our efforts along four separate lines of operations: building a capable Iraqi security force, neutralizing the anti-Iraqi forces, promoting a legitimate and responsive government, and placing the Iraqis in the lead. Only by generating complementary effects along all lines of operations simultaneously can we create a synchronized approach that executes a war-winning versus a war-fighting strategy.

Simplified, our mission essentially has two key problem sets: a kinetic problem set and a non-kinetic problem set. The kinetic component refers to the combat action such as raids and cordon and searches that our soldiers conduct with the Iraqi army and police partners to defeat terrorists and insurgents. To date, we have performed more than 12,000 combat patrols and conducted focus raids that have captured more than 300 insurgents. Additionally, we have discovered hundreds of caches with small arms munitions and military equipment.

The other equally important portion of our mission is the effort we take to develop the government, the economy and the leadership. This non-kinetic role is dominant in most of the areas in which we operate. We have conducted numerous engagements with the local and provincial leaders to introduce and establish initiatives to assist in the development of these areas. In coordination with the provincial reconstruction team, which is a combined State Department-DOD initiative to develop the government, economy and infrastructure of Iraqi provinces, we have invested more than \$21 million in infrastructure programs and projects in focus service areas, which we refer to you as -- by the acronym WESHAREICMO, which stands for water, electricity, sewage, health, agriculture, roads and bridges, education, irrigation, communications, municipalities, oils and fuel -- to provide these basic services to the Iraqi people.

We additionally assist in programs to include the education process, development and practice of local governments in the development of economic initiatives that will build the foundation for long-term stability in the areas in which we operate. One example of an economic initiative was our work with the provincial and federal Ministries of Agriculture to complete pesticide spraying of Diyala's extensive date crop to combat the destructive dubas bug. Iraq dates are the country's second-largest export next to oil and therefore an important economic

stabilizer and job provider. This is the first time spraying was conducted in three years.

We are investing in the training and mentorship of our Iraqi army, border forces and police as well, and each day they come close to shouldering full responsibility for the security of their province. On 3 July, the 5th Iraqi Army conducted a transfer of authority ceremony assuming lead responsibilities in their area of operations. This allows our forces to shift to a supporting role, where we will provide mentorship, tactical enablers, for instance, quick reaction forces or intelligence assistance and logistical support.

We remain extremely proud of our accomplishments at this point in assisting with providing the Iraqi people with security necessary to establish their elected government, and assisting the development of the institutions will provide long-term stability, prosperity and the opportunity to develop the Iraq of their hopes and dreams. This is a tough mission, and our nation's forces and this brigade are performing it well. But ultimately, the Iraqi people will have to decide what their future holds.

It is a pleasure to speak with you today, and I will now take your questions.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's go AP, and then, Reuters, how's that?

Q: Good morning, colonel. It's Lolita Baldor with the Associated Press. Could you tell us a little bit about the types of violence that you're seeing there? There's been a lot of discussion here about civil war. Are you seeing more Sunni against Shi'a violence or is it violence against troops or the security forces?

And can you, with that, tell us if that's changed over the last six months while you've been there?

COL. JONES: Yes, ma'am, I think I can address some of that. The types of violence we see range everything from improvised explosive devices to assassination to plain out murders, but also some level of kidnapping. And that kidnapping is normally associated with an extortion attempt as a fund-raising element, we believe, for some of the criminal elements.

I would not characterize all of the violence we see as strictly Sunni on Shi'a. And although that's how it may come out in the initial press reports, we're finding, as we go back and more or less peel the onion back after three or four days, that some of it is associated with financial gain, such as extortion; some of it is criminal, and purely criminal, activity; some of it is sectarian; some of it is, in fact, political because there is, of course, a lot at stake in terms of gaining political power here at this time.

Has there been a change over the last six months? What we saw when we initially got here was the breakdown in targeting in Diyala Province specific, and there's not been much of a change, really, over in southern Salahuddin. But in Diyala specifically, initially we were the target of just about 60 percent of the attacks, and over the six- to-eight months we've been here, that has now shifted, where we are seeing anywhere from 20 to 25 percent of the attacks and the majority of the attacks are now amongst the civilian population. And we believe that was a conscious decision by the terrorists to shift the fight to the local populations, not in terms of spectacular attacks, although we still see the occasional car bomb or violent mass attack that causes mass casualties, but more simply in constant assassinations and kidnappings that are going on with the population as the target.

Q: So just as a follow-up, this is more insurgents against the civilians versus -- rather than Sunni against Shi'a?

COL. JONES: Again, it's very difficult to classify what's being conducted by insurgents as opposed to what's sectarian, because there are so many interests that collide here in Diyala. You know, Diyala is very unique in the fact that it's got a Sunni majority population. However, the government in Diyala, the provincial government, is really a combination of Shi'a and Kurds. So you have a minority element which has its hands on the levers of

power in the province, and that's a factor and a result of the fact that during the initial rounds of provincial elections, the Sunni were not participating. And so there is some frustration amongst the Sunnis in terms of getting back into the seats of power of their government that they formally had. You have that conflict.

You do have, of course, the terrorists from both sides, extremists from both elements, whether they're Shi'a or Sunni. You have some pressure from the Kurds up in the northern portions, up near Khaneqin, not terroristic pressure, but political pressure to try to enforce the provisions of TAL 58. They're looking to reclaim some traditionally Kurdish territory. And all these things seem to bisect. So it's difficult to say whether it's all Sunni on Shi'a or insurgent on civilians.

What I would tell you is that we have seen more or less a roller coaster in terms of attacks on the civilians over the last month and a half. We would average anywhere from 20 to 30 deaths an evening, and that would go, you know -- last night there were three civilians killed in Diyala Province; the day before, there were 13. And so you see this roller coaster effect. Some of it is certainly tribal, some of it is political, and some, of course, is sectarian. But it's very difficult to separate those even days after the fact.

Q: Sir, this is Kristin Roberts with Reuters. Can you talk a little bit about the foreign influence that you're seeing in the violence there? Is it still being directed and supported and perhaps funded by Iran or other parties outside of Iraq?

COL. JONES: I'm not sure I caught the first part of your question. You're asking if we're seeing any evidence of things being funded or supported?

Q: Directed or supported -- violence being directed or supported. If you could characterize the foreign influence on the violence there in your area of operations.

COL. JONES: I would tell you it's very difficult to figure out exactly who is providing support. We know there is money coming into the province from outside forces to fund a lot of the terrorist actions we see.

Basically, if I could just digress a second, what you have in terms of the kinetic problem set, those people that we're trying to target, is essentially a pyramid. And at the very top of that pyramid you've got the foreign fighters and the terrorists. In the middle of that pyramid, you have some former regime elements, some -- what I would term the resistance, some rogue militia. And at the very bottom you have a criminal element. And what we believe is going on is the money, as it comes in, either from the foreign fighters or the true terrorists, is funneling down through some of the other facilitators down to the criminals, who are basically looking for money so they can support their families.

I can't tell you where that money's coming from. I'm not sure if it's coming from external to the country, if it's coming from former regime elements that stole it somewhere else. We're not really sure what the source is.

I know at higher levels they continually work on trying to pinpoint that source. I'm more concerned about the effect on this end, which is yes, they're getting money, and they're continuing to pay, essentially, for terrorist actions to occur.

(Off mike) -- that there's a good deal of money generated by kidnapping and hostage-taking. So you hear a lot about the kidnapping that's going on. But what you don't hear is -- a lot of it associated with a release program where they'll tell the family, "Hey, give us \$40,000, and we'll give you back your son or daughter." Mostly sons are what seems to be picked up here. And that's how they're using extortion, essentially, to fund some of the terrorist activity that's going on.

So again, I can't break down how much of the money's coming from extortion inside the country and how much money's coming from outside the country, from where I sit.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's do Fox, then CNN.

Q: Colonel, it's Nick Simeone at Fox. Today in Baghdad there are reports that several hundred thousand Shi'ites were demonstrating against the United States and Israel, and in support of Hezbollah. How concerned are you that the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah right now could spill over into Iraq and perhaps whip up Shi'ite sentiment and further destabilize the country?

COL. JONES: I would say I am concerned, but I'm not greatly concerned. I think that the Iraqi people are well aware of what's going on with -- in terms of Lebanon and the Hezbollah and the Israeli, obviously, fight that's going on over there.

There are some who would try to whip the normal man into a frenzy, to have him attack the Americans. But most people understand that our role here is not one of aggression at this point. Our role is one of trying to help them sort out their government, provide the blessings and opportunities of democracy.

There are some -- I think what I read was most of the people that were demonstrating were Shi'a with some kind of loyalties to Muqtada al-Sadr. We're aware of that. We're watching that. But I'm not sure how widespread his influence is, especially as you move farther north, away from the traditionally Shi'a provinces.

Q Colonel, it's Mike Mount with CNN. Can you kind of give us a quick update on how the police forces and the Iraqi forces in your area of operations are doing in terms of operating with your troops and kind of keeping a hold on the security situation there?

COL. JONES: Sure. Let me address all three facets of the Iraqi security forces.

We'll start with the army. The army has been improving by leaps and bounds in the eight months we've been here. And truly I think we're starting to see the evolution of a professional force, as opposed to a force of necessity, I think, is what I would call it, when it was initially formed.

We just got a new commanding general in the 5th Division staff, Brigadier General Shoquer. And he is truly a professional. He does not have a biased bone in his body. He is working for the future of Iraq, and he tells that as he goes around with his different engagements with the local leaders. He's been in command now about a week and a half, and I can tell you that I'm absolutely impressed with him.

His brigade commanders are similarly committed and similarly well-educated, and understand that a credible Iraqi security force must be nonpartisan and impartial. And they are striving hard to make it that way.

And the army, which has, of course, been partnered with coalition forces now for the better part of two years, really is making great leaps and bounds in terms of their tactics, in terms of their equipping, in terms of their ability to conduct operations on their own.

On the 3rd of July, we transferred the lead in the province to the 5th Iraqi Division, which General Shoquer commands. And we are in a supporting role now; we are no longer being supported by them, we are supporting them. And every day you see them taking on more and more of the security responsibilities. I think it's great news.

The news is not that great for the police. The police are a little bit farther behind in terms of development than the army is. And that's a function of partnering. We have been training and working with the police since I've been here using -- well, for the military we use the military transition team; with the police we have a police transition team. So we have soldiers and international police liaison officers dedicated to developing the police. Now that the army is moving pretty much on its own with limited support from us, we are going to shift

more and more emphasis to the police to help them farther along and move them a little bit more quickly down the scale. But I'll tell you also that the police have made great progress in the eight months we've been here in terms of organization, personnel and equipping. What the police need more of is professional training, and a professional ethos has to be instilled, and I don't think we're too far behind on that, either. Really, all this stuff boils down to is a function of leadership, and if you have the right leaders at the right levels, all those formations will continue to improve. And I'm confident we're going to move in that direction with the police.

The final aspect or the final piece of the security forces is the Border Enforcement Police. They are probably about 80 percent manned right now. They've got a 270-kilometer border. They've got 22 border forts out there. We have border transition teams with them similar to what we have with the police and the army. And again, we are continuing to make great strides with getting their performance where it needs to be. They are behind a little bit on equipping. I don't think they're behind on professionalism. I think it's an equipment shortfall for them that is being addressed by the Ministry of Interior, and we continue to make progress with them.

So, you know, I am very optimistic that the security forces are continuing to move down the right path and that they will, in time -- all three will in time be able to take the lead in the province.

MR. WHITMAN: VOA and then NPR.

Q: Colonel, it's Al Pessin from Voice of America. Thank you for that well broken-down description. We keep hearing about how the Iraqi army, in particular, is growing both in size and in capability. And you've talked about transferring authority or leadership to them in certain areas. But when does the increase in the numbers and capabilities of the Iraqis translate into some improvement in the security situation, and possibly into a reduced need for foreign troops?

COL. JONES: I'm not sure I can adequately predict when. I will tell you that we do a provincial security council between my boss, Major General Turner at the 101st, the governor, the deputy governor, the provincial chief of police.

And we measure all three of these areas as well as some of the non-kinetic areas I talked about earlier to see how we are in progress. And again, I would just say, the army is on its way. We have two brigades that have already been validated that are conducting operations on their own with us in support. We have the 3rd Brigade which remains to be validated, but will validate this month and take again the lead in their area.

So across Diyala province, certainly, all the army forces are capable of being in the lead. Now, that doesn't mean they're capable of performing on their own. They still rely on us for what we call enablers, whether that's military intelligence, whether that's some logistical support, because their logistical infrastructure is really not developed to the point yet where they can conduct independent operations. But they are moving in that direction.

I am comfortable that the army possibly by the end of this year, the middle of next year is ready to go, and that's my assessment here in Diyala. And I don't think the police are very far behind, because now that we've got the army functioning in terms of independent operations, we can really put a lot more emphasis on the police, and we are now transferring to do that. And so we will take our police commitment and probably double or triple it here over the next three months to make sure that we continue to move them down the right path.

Q: Can I just try my question the other way around? Why has the increased numbers and capability of the Iraqi security forces not translated into a reduction in violence, indeed a recent increase in violence in some areas?

COL. JONES: I guess the best way to answer that question, and really if you look at Diyala specifically, Diyala sits on the border with Iran. Diyala has some Kurdish influence. Certainly, the Iranians are interested in

what happens here in Diyala province. Diyala province is the only province along the border that does not have a Shi'a government south of the KRG, the Kurdish area. And so I think there are some Iranian interests here making sure the Shi'a retain in power. The Sunnis, obviously, are the majority; they're in a minority status here in terms of the government and the functions of government. And so all these different elements, I think, are combining to see who is going to have the true political power here in the province, and I think they're voting in many different ways. That's one aspect of it.

The second aspect of it, of course, if you recall that Zarqawi was killed here some time in early June, the 8th of June, I believe. At that time, over that three or four week period, in Diyala specifically, we have truly attacked the al Qaeda network, and I think managed to take it to its knees. It won't stay there obviously; it might bounce back. But really the power of that entire network, we've really put a hurt on them.

And so what you're seeing in that vacuum is some of the other rogue elements, some of the militia elements are trying to assert their power and probably try to give themselves a leg up in terms of posturing themselves for the provincial elections that will come in six months out. And that's what a lot of this violence is right now, it's the posturing in the province for provincial elections.

There are, of course, extremists on both sides who will not come into the peace process, but I will tell you that here in the province, I've met at least four times over the last week with four different leaders, civilian leaders of different elements in the population who are working to try to calm the violence.

And I have a hard time explaining why the violence is going up and when people say that the army's not working, because I can't imagine what the violence would be like if the army wasn't working. So again, you're trying to say the army's not working because the violence is going up, but I would tell you the violence would probably be much higher if the army wasn't working and the security forces weren't working. And I think what you'll see is a peak in the violence and I think it will start to drop off.

A lot of it, again, is associated with what happens in Baghdad, which is why I think the operations that are being discussed about Baghdad will truly have a great impact on what goes on here in Diyala.

MR. WHITMAN: Do you have one, Tom?

Q: Oh, yeah. Colonel, Tom Bowman with NPR. You talked about how the army's coming along, but you mentioned logistics and so forth. Can you focus on logistics? What more equipment and training do they need? At what point do you believe, in your area, they'll be able to stand on their own two feet in that regard?

COL. JONES: Each division has a motor transport regiment which is assigned to it, which is about a 600-man battalion, which really provides the infrastructure and the logistical support at the tactical level. They are in the process of getting fielded with their trucks I don't think that's going to be a problem. I don't think any of the actual distribution of supplies will be a problem. But as we build this army from the bottom up, the tactical level, and then from the ministry level down, there's a gap that exists in terms of what pushes supplies down to the MTR, what pushes the supplies down to the tactical level and allows us to distribute those supplies. That gap is what needs to be filled before these guys can really operate on their own. Like I said, they're getting the equipment in terms of trucks, ambulances, all the different support aspects they need to have that you would expect at a tactical level, but the next level up is where the gap exists.

Now, they also have a problem with fuel distribution, and you are aware of that. That's a country-wide problem that they're working through. You know, if you want all these elements to go out and patrol to find bad guys, they got to have gas, and right now they're having trouble getting gas distribution consistent across the board. And they are very good at taking it and pushing it down when they get it, but again, getting it down to the MTR is where the shortfall exists right now. And people at all levels are working through that.

Q: You said they were in the process of getting their trucks. How many trucks, and when do you expect them?

COL. JONES: Oh, boy, I'm not sure I can quote those numbers off the top of my head. I would tell they are probably about 75 percent filled on their trucks at this point, so there's probably 25 percent of the trucks that they don't have. But most of the trucks they don't have are the specialty trucks in terms of wreckers or fuelers, et cetera.

They've got plenty of haul capability. They don't have the specialized trucks just yet to move their engineer equipment around, to haul fuel around in the quantities that are necessary, water, et cetera. I would think -- because 5th Division has somewhat of a priority in terms fielding of equipment, I would think by the end of the year they have that stuff, and commensurate with that is the level of training of the actual motor-transport regiment soldiers, which, again, I'm pretty confident by the end of the year they will be ready to go.

MR. WHITMAN: Jeff, go ahead.

Q: All right, colonel. Jeff Schogol with Stars and Stripes. The president had talked about the need to equip the Iraqi security forces. When I was in Diyala province, I noticed that while the Iraqi army has some humvees, it looks like the rest of the Iraqi security forces still have Datsun Pickup Trucks with PKCs. Can you talk a little bit about how many of Iraqi army soldiers and police officers have humvees, and how many are still using these improvised armored vehicles?

COL. JONES: I can address certainly what's going on in Diyala. I would tell you that at the beginning of last month we had 40 -- approximately 40 humvees for the Iraqi army that were Iraqi army procured, Iraqi army painted. We had, as you know, lent them some humvees with differing levels of armor protection so that they could patrol with a little bit more security. But in the last week and a half, the 5th Division has received approximately 150 additional humvees. So we're close to about 200 humvees right now across the fleet here in the 5th Division.

I would contrast that with the 4th Division, which is over in southern Salahuddin, and they've not yet received any of the new humvees. Again, 5th Division has a little bit of a priority in terms of fielding, and that's why they're getting these humvees. I will tell you, that humvee gives each of those Iraqi soldiers a tremendous sense of confidence because, as you know, those Datsun Pickup Trucks and the other trucks that are running around, you know, are light-skinned vehicles not designed for this kind of fight, and IEDs have a pretty damaging impact on them. These new trucks give the soldiers a lot more confidence and will make them much more effective both on the hard-ball roads they're patrolling and off into the dirt roads and trails that are obviously very much present around in this kind of terrain.

I'm not sure what the plan is in terms of where 4th Division fits in that hierarchy. I know the 5th Division will continue to be fielded until they are complete, and I will tell you right now, they're probably about 80 percent complete on humvees. I'd have to go back and check my numbers.

The police, however, are not in the humvee distribution plan. We have -- again, as we have humvees that we have that have armored protection, we are trying to paint those blue and field those to the police so they have a little bit more protection also. But again, the army is ahead of the police in terms of equipping. The army's ahead in terms of development, and the police are lagging behind.

But I think everybody here over here recognizes that, and they're taking steps to make corrections on that, on that plan.

Q: A follow-up question. About 200 humvees doesn't seem like a lot when you're talking about the entire 5th Division. I also noticed that at FOB Normandy, soldiers are going to the boneyard and recouping old armored

personnel carriers to give them to the Iraqi army. Are you having problems getting adequate numbers of humvees and armored vehicles for the Iraqis?

COL. JONES: I don't think we're having any problems whatsoever. I think we're on the fielding plan that was designed.

I would tell you we went into the boneyard up there at Normandy -- and I guess you're familiar with that, because you were up there with Colonel Kandarian -- and we pulled out 14 M-113s that were, I think, A-1 or A-2 models that had been placed there after the conflict, and we rehabilitated them and then we distributed them, to give them an armored capability before they got the humvees. We would much rather they went around in humvees. I think that's a little bit more protection. And also from a maintenance aspect, the 113s are kind of hard for the Iraqis to support.

But there's not a problem getting humvees. The humvees are coming. The schedule has been released, and I'm confident that they're going to continue to come. So I'm not sure -- I don't think showing the initiative to get armored vehicles was an indicator of any kind of problem.

MR. WHITMAN: Let's have one more. Gordon?

Q: Colonel, Gordon Lubold from Army Times. You mentioned that since you'd arrived, you'd captured, I believe, 300 insurgents in your area. What happens to those people? And I assume military intelligence people get to visit with them and they're held. But what happens to them ultimately? How many of those people remain in custody?

COL. JONES: Well, of course any time we deal with prisoners, there are strict guidelines we have to deal with. And normally at the battalion level you have 24 hours to interrogate the prisoner, conduct tactical questioning at that level, and then bring them up here to brigade, and we put them in the brigade detention facility. And then we are allowed to hang on to the prisoner for about 14 days to complete the in-processing and medical screening, et cetera, and then we move that prisoner to the higher level.

I would tell you, of the prisoners we've seen here in the brigade, about 20 percent of them end up getting released because as we look at evidence that's been collected, we don't think it's justifiable to maintain them, and we send them back out. Actually, we pay them \$7 a day for their missed work, and then we send them on back out to their families.

We took about -- we take about 25 percent of that total, and they are sent to the IP. Because the crimes that they were associated with are not significant enough to transfer further up in the system, we give them back to the Iraqi police, and the Iraqis decide how they're going to dispose of them.

And about 60 percent of the detainees we capture end up going up forward into the theater internment facility, where we send the evidence packet up. And they, of course, go before the central Iraqi criminal court system to decide the disposition of their charges.

And at this point -- because it takes a lot, when we work through the system, at this point about 3 percent of them have gone to trial, the initial parts of their trial, but they have not had adjudication of their cases yet.

Q: And 20 percent coming back a second time through the system?

COL. JONES: Right now we're only showing a very low percentage of repeat offenders. Of the -- I would say maybe -- maybe -- 6 percent total, based on the numbers I have here in front of me, that get back into the system again. So we're not seeing a lot of repeat offenders.

MR. WHITMAN: Colonel Jones, we have reached the end of our time, but I wanted to give you the last word. If you had something that you wanted to close with, I'll turn it back to you.

COL. JONES: Okay. Sure. Thanks.

Let me just offer a few closing comments.

First, I would like to take the opportunity -- this opportunity to say how proud I am of the soldiers of the 3rd Heavy Brigade Combat Team and of their fellow soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. These young Americans are truly remarkable. They voluntarily left the wealthiest and most advanced nation in the history of the world to serve their country in a dangerous, confusing and extremely demanding area of the world. Their dedication to our nation and its values in the face of the challenges that occur routinely in such a combat environment are simply inspirational. I've often heard of "the Greatest Generation," and I can tell you from firsthand experience that this generation of service men and women demonstrate courage and sacrifice on a daily basis that rivals that of any generation of Americans.

I'm equally awestruck by the contributions of our coalition partners. As you know, we serve side by side with a battalion from the Republic of Georgia, and like each of the other coalition members, their service and dedication are both impressive and appreciated.

Finally, I think I can speak with some authority on the dedication and sacrifice of our Iraqi security forces. The price they pay -- the price they are paying to afford their countrymen the opportunities and blessings of democracy are equally high. Despite the challenges of trying to build a police force and an army in the middle of a fight, they remain undeterred. We are honored to serve with them.

Thanks very much. Appreciate your time.

MR. WHITMAN: Colonel Jones, and we appreciate yours, and hope that before your tour is completed we'll have an opportunity to talk to you again.

COL. JONES: Great. Looking forward to it.

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