

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

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

Right here, you had a question.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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