

Q Yeah. The second part, Colonel, was -- (pause).

MR. WHITMAN: Okay, we kind of stepped on each other there. Colonel, the second part of the question had to do with the reconstruction efforts and if you could talk to the Iraqi government's participation in funding of Iraqi construction and development.

COL. MARTIN: Okay, sure. Well, there's two kinds of CERP. CERP is the Commanders Emergency Response Program money. You've probably heard about that before. And that's how we're able to apply funds to emergency projects in order to improve the security situation and build the infrastructure here in Iraq.

Of all the projects that I mentioned, I didn't mention that I've got about \$82.5 million in U.S. funds through Commanders Emergency Response Program money that's either planned or already been spent. Additionally, I've got 84 projects that are funded by what is called ICERP, and the "I" stands for "Iraqi"; "CERP" hasn't changed. And right now I have about \$19.5 million that's been funded by the Iraqi government. And I think that in the future, you're going to see more and more of the projects funded by ICERP. So that's the direction that we're going.

Q Can I just ask a quick follow-up? Colonel, one of the things -- going back to the personnel assets. One of the things that's in discussion here is that the service members serving overseas don't have a chance to vote. Do your guys know about the absentee ballot situation?

COL. MARTIN: Oh, yes, they sure do. I've got a voting officer. Actually, my brigade adjutant is the voting officer for the brigade combat team.

And every battalion has a voting officer. Every company has a voting officer. We have a primary and an alternate.

It's also a very strong message from the command, from the commanding general all the way down to the company commander. We ensure that every soldier has an opportunity to vote. And it's not a matter, I mean, I can access the Internet anyplace in the battlespace.

And personally I've taken on as a mission that every single soldier will get a ballot. Whether they choose to vote or not, that's their call. But it will be in their hand, and then they will have time to vote. And I think they will.

Q Thanks.

Q Sir, it's Meredith MacKenzie from Talk Radio News. A question about the 45-day period of review. How is that affecting the Iraqi security forces in your area? And what else is being looked at as that 45-day period continues?

COL. MARTIN: Well, I wouldn't get stuck on the 45-day period. When the earlier question was asked, you know, when am I going to say that the security is durable, I said I'm pretty conservative when it comes to this. So when I say 45 days, 45 days could be 60. It could be 30.

But you know, day after day after day, if I keep seeing the same thing and I'm very aggressive in the way we conduct reconnaissance in the area, you know, I'll be more than likely to make the switch and tell my commanding general that, you know, with my own two eyes, this is what I've seen.

Now, how has that affected the Iraqi security forces? I'll tell you, since the combat in May and June against the militias, I've seen a marked increase in their -- what word am I looking for here -- confidence, their confidence.