

shift forces around to go after the enemy where he is. And that's what we're trying to do.

But the thing that I'd bring up, too, as we're shifting forces and as perhaps my commanders are giving me more forces to deal with and more priority on certain enablers like aviation or air or artillery or things that I need -- precision weapons or, in fact, in some cases intelligence -- more intelligence, which General Austin has given me, there also is the case with the Iraqi army continuing to gain in capability.

Every day, they get better and better. I am amazed at the huge strides that they have taken in the 11 months we've been here. And when compared to my last tour over here, it is a monumental change in terms of the capability of the Iraqi army.

The Iraqi police is beginning to grow as well. As the focus was on Baghdad over the last several years, the Iraqi police forces in the northern province didn't get as much attention, didn't get as much love in terms of their growth and training. We're changing that now. I'm down -- I'm short right now -- I'M short -- (repeating himself with emphasis to indicate he did not mean "I'm") -- the Iraqis are short right now about 17,000 policemen in the north. And of the ones that they do have, many of them were recruited very quickly and put right on the street. So we have to get some of those through training.

We just graduated, on Saturday, 12,000 -- or, I'm sorry, 1,200 new Iraqi policemen. We've got four new classes entering this week. So, every day we get better and better in terms of the police forces, which are complementing the army, the Iraqi army, which are currently in the cities. We're trying to get them out of the cities into the hinterlands while the police take over the security measures in the city. That has happened in some places, like Kirkuk, to a degree in Baqubah, in Muqadiyah. But what we also have to do is continue to get that in other places so the Iraqi army can be released to continue to pursue, as we're doing with them now in some of the rural areas.

MR. WHITMAN: General, we have reached the end of our allocated time here, and I do want to give the last minute or two to you for any closing remarks that you might have or anything that we might have asked you that warrants further comment on.

GEN. HERTLING: No. There were some very good questions today, Bryan. I appreciate everyone continuing to have interest in what's going on over here at this time, because I know the elections are taking quite a bit of news media and focusing on that particular area, rightfully so. Some of the political aspects of Iraq are certainly taking the interest, as well, of our politicians and the American people.

But what I'll tell you today is, I have never been as confident or as hopeful for Iraq as I am right now. It is -- today it was 127 degrees when I was out with some both Iraqi army forces and U.S. Army forces, and they were continuing to take the fight to the enemy. And then immediately I switched to a session with some politicians. I was with the governor of Diyalah on Sunday -- correction, Saturday. I was with the governor of Ninewa on Sunday. I was with the governor of Kirkuk today. And all of them are trying to get jobs for their people and make the system work.

So it is a very hopeful time in Iraq, but there are still a lot of enemy out there. And in order to get the people of Iraq completely secure, we have to just continue to go after al Qaeda and the other extremists over here.

I want to thank you for all your support back there in the Pentagon, but also thank all of our family members for continuing to give support to our soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines over here. So thank you very much.

MR. WHITMAN: Well, thank you, General, and thank you --

GEN. HERTLING: We've got a lot of civilians here, too.