

and that certainly applies to the young men that are making up the Afghan battalions and divisions and corps. So I think when a program is developed by the Afghan government that their forces in conjunction with the coalition assistance as required can manage the problem. Sooner is probably better than later would be the message that we ought to send. Yes, ma'am?

Q Hi. On MRAP vehicles -- there's been an urgent request from CENTCOM for more of those vehicles that are lighter and more maneuverable, and last year you reduced the number of these vehicles the Marine Corps was receiving because concerns about the size and maneuverability. Would you support more of these vehicles, especially considering what you said about Afghanistan? And also there was criticism for about how an urgent request for MRAPs was handled and I know there's been some changes there. Can you talk about how these urgent requests are being handled now -- (inaudible) -- concern to people on the Hill?

GEN. CONWAY: Yes. The -- you're talking about MRAP vehicles exclusively, yeah. We took an allocation of MRAP vehicles into Afghanistan when we first put forces in there in strength commensurate with what they felt their needs were and it was roughly 40 vehicles or so. We've seen a few more than that requested for use with the road clearance teams and that type of thing. So we're -- the numbers are such that we're easily able to satisfy our requirements both in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

The problems, though, that we started to see emerge with the vehicle when we decided to reduce our buy are only exacerbated in an Afghan-terrain situation because the Afghan roads are sloped in some cases unlike roads here in the United States or elsewhere might be. There's a lot of mountain trails and switchbacks and those types of things and the vehicle is still too heavy for -- in a lot of cases for suspension and axle systems. Now, we've taken that back to the manufacturers. They're working on it. Unfortunately, the problem (is more weight ?) to be able to fix some of these things. You just need a heavier type of chassis in order for these vehicles to stay up.

It would also, though, because it is a top-heavy vehicle just based on the way it's built -- it has a high center of gravity -- we're also seeing more rollovers in Afghanistan, again, due to the terrain than we have seen in Iraq. So we've got to look at where it can be used and where we probably shouldn't look at working it in order to, I think, achieve max efficiency from the vehicle. You know, we were accused I still think falsely by some people on the Hill with ignoring an early request for MRAP vehicles. We tossed that to the DOD IG and I think they're within days or weeks of coming out with a report. They've been doing a lot of interviewing and that type of thing to understand what the threat was, what the thinking was, what our true needs were with regard to the threat at the time and how the underbelly explosions then tended to perpetuate later on. I think the IG is going to have some fairly positive things to say about our urgent needs process.

Q (Off mike) -- on that report -- (inaudible) -- draft version?

GEN. CONWAY: You know, it's funny you'd ask. I just got back from a trip and I asked my folks where it is. We think that it's coming out shortly. I've not been briefed on it yet. It's just some, you know, some excerpts are starting to slip out a little bit. We think that it's nearing completion.

Q General, getting back to Anbar, you said you can reduce troops -- Marines there and still maintain security and I'm wondering what the Baghdad Command had to say about this. Did you raise it with General Petraeus? Did he seem supportive or is he holding his cards pretty close to his vest on -- (inaudible)?

GEN. CONWAY: I think more the latter than the former. You know, there's -- in some ways 25,000 Marines in the Anbar Province for a number of years is a Linus blanket, okay? You know, that pretty much says to you the Anbar Province is simply not going to be a problem. But General Petraeus is moving to a different job here interestingly in a few weeks and it'll be -- they say where you stand depends on where you sit, and so I'll be interested to have that conversation with him later on when he's responsible for both places with the realization that, again, Marines on the ground in the south have proven they can do a very good job -- (inaudible).

Q When you -- (inaudible) -- with Baghdad was there a lot of -- (inaudible) -- around the table? Did they say, we'll take it under advisement? Can you give us a sense of what was said?