

Baghdad. This qadha's comprised of a very diverse population. It's primarily agrarian. It's about the size of the greater Washington, D.C., area, with a population of around a half a million people. There are three major cities in the Madain: Salman Pak, which is primarily a Sunni city, Jisr Diyala, which is a mix of Sunni and Shi'a, and Nahrawan, which is predominately Shi'a.

As Bryan said, we've been here for four months, currently scheduled for a 15-month deployment. We have an embedded U.S. Department of State Provincial Reconstruction Team that has been absolutely invaluable in supporting the economic growth of the Madain.

I want to take just a little bit of time to describe to you the progress in the Madain. And before I begin, I'd like to say this is my second tour in Iraq. My first was as a commander of the Iron Dukes -- 2nd Battalion, 37th Tank Regiment, 1st Brigade, 1st Armored Division -- from May 2003 to July of 2004, where I served in Baghdad. First Armored Division, as you all know, was extended for three months during Muqtada al-Sadr's first uprising and my battalion fought for five weeks in An Najaf.

Honestly, the progress here in Iraq since my last visit is absolutely phenomenal. I can state this because a portion of my current brigade sector was also a portion of my battalion sector five years ago. Five years ago, as a battalion commander, I never worked with an Iraqi army unit. The combined security cooperation effort depended almost solely on an Iraqi police force heavily infiltrated by the Jaish al-Mahdi. At that time, we supported the recruitment and training of a nation organization named the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.

Today, I'm partnered with an Iraqi army division and the qadha has six fully functioning Iraqi police stations with a district headquarters, highway patrol and an emergency response unit. Now Iraqi security forces routinely plan, prepare and execute offensive operations and the population clearly respects and trusts them.

Our mission, in partnership with the Iraqi security forces is to secure the population and interdict accelerants -- accelerants being described as enemy forces and munitions -- from entering Baghdad.

Clearly, there is a measurable improvement in the security of the Madain. And this improvement is primarily a function of the hard work done by our predecessor unit, the 3rd Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, known as the Hammer Brigade, which is one of the surge brigades that operated out here in the Madain prior to our arrival.

When Colonel Wayne Grigsby's brigade assumed responsibility for the Madain in 2007, attacks averaged two and a half a day. In April, as we began transitioning with the Hammer Brigade, attacks were down to one per day. And today, as I sit here and speak to you, attacks are less than one per day, with over half of those directed at Iraqi security forces.

I believe the significant reduction and the fact that attacks remain low can be attributed to two things: first and obviously, the astounding efforts of the Hammer Brigade over 14 months and now our 2nd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, in an area that really saw very little U.S. presence prior to 2007. Now the populace is absolutely assured of our commitment and the commitment of the Iraqi security forces. The second contributor to the decrease in attacks is the ever-increasing professionalism of the Iraqi security forces. Coupled with the security contributions of the Sons of Iraq, we have achieved a point here in the Madain where operations are by, with and through Iraqi security forces.

All these efforts combined deny anti-Iraqi forces sanctuary and provide a solid foundation of hope for the free citizens of the Madain. The most significant effects of this reduction in violence -- our ability to shift focus from predominantly offensive operations to enabling improvement of essential services and improving the capabilities and capacities of the Iraqi local governance. Security conditions have also allowed for significant progress in growth and economic capacity.

Since our BCT began efforts in May 2008, the Iron Brigade has continued to support the improving Iraqi civil works infrastructure and supplemented the substantial Iraqi government's own funding initiatives. The Provincial Reconstruction Team, in coordination with the local government, recently has facilitated the completion of projects worth three-quarters of a million U.S. dollars and we have additional plans for projects valued at just over \$9 million to be funded by the Iraqi government.