

The great news story in all of this is the increasing capacity of the Iraqi government to fund civil works reconstruction. Their financial commitment to projects in the Madain now exceeds that of ours by about a 60 to 40 ratio, and their future plans clearly show a continued commitment to take over the reconstruction funding and move beyond a 2007 reliance on U.S. funds.

To support reconciliation throughout the qadha, the Iron Brigade has organized and funded over 6,000 Sons of Iraq, and this is an excellent and currently necessary investment for us.

The improved security conditions have also had positive side effects. Recently across the qadha, we have witnessed a resurgence in the return of internally displaced persons. This is a good news story twice over because the government of Iraq has taken the lead in settling land disputes and assisting in the resettlement of over 9,000 displaced personnel.

The gains in security in Madain now allow us flexibility to address security concerns in more remote areas. I recently took a portion of my brigade, a unit from the Iraqi army, and conducted offensive operations outside of the Madain in an area near Balad Ruz in Diyala province. We were cross-attached to the 1st Armored Division, Multinational Division-North. We began operations in the middle of July and recently returned back to the Madain.

In closing, I want to express how proud I am of the accomplishments of the Iron Brigade and our Iraqi partners. I want to thank the American people for their continued support of our most precious resource, the sons and daughters of America who volunteer to serve in the Army of the greatest country in the world.

Thank you very much for your time today. At this time, I look forward to taking your questions.

MR. WHITMAN: Well, thank you, Colonel, for that overview. And we do have some questions here. And I'm going to actually ask Jim to help me get through the questions here in a minute, as I have to go. But let's start with Courtney.

Q Hi, Colonel. This is Courtney Kube from NBC News. You mentioned in your opening statement that you're now seeing attacks that are fewer than one per day in your area and that about half of them are directed specifically at Iraqi security forces. There were three pretty significant attacks against Iraqi security forces and Iraqi police recruits earlier this week. Have you seen any kind of assessment -- not visibly in your area, that is, but -- have you seen any kind of assessment that there's an increase in going after these recruits? Who specifically is going after them? Who's the enemy that is conducting these attacks in your area right now?

COL. WHITE: Courtney, I can't speak for the attacks against the recruits, because it didn't happen in my area. I can say that as we recruit both Iraqi army, national police and Iraqi police, the same precautions we've been taking for the last year are taken into account. And really, because those type of attacks against those recruits has not occurred here in the Madain, I couldn't really say who was targeting those recruits that were recently attacked.

I will say, though, in general as we look at who does conduct attacks against both Iraqi security forces and, of course, the Iron Brigade, it is really down to two organizations. It's an organization -- Jaish al-Islami, which is a Sunni-based insurgency, and again, we still have Jaish al-Mahdi -- excuse me; I'm choking here -- Jaish al-Mahdi special groups which have moved back into Iran (sic) and are -- and we're starting to see a resurgence in our southern area.

Q Colonel, this is Courtney again. Could you talk a little bit more about that? You're seeing a -- you're seeing a resurgence recently in special groups in your area? Can you put any kind of numbers behind that?

COL. WHITE: Yeah, Courtney, I really don't have any specific numbers. We continue to conduct intelligence-based operations to capture and detain those individuals that are against the Iraqi government. And of course, now we have a more heavily -- reliance on the Iraqi security forces to assist us in that. Their human intelligence networks are absolutely outstanding throughout the Madain. We combine our efforts to take down those individuals that are against the government of Iraq.