

TRANSCRIPT

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Q: Since you're going to have mostly Iraq questions today I wanted to start with an Iran question. It's almost an afterthought that they have a conventional military capability and all the talks of nuclear weapons and what they may have there. Can you just give a sense of where they have a formidable capability or at least a credible capability in ground, air defense and the naval world that needs to be reckoned with by any military planner and just can't be blown off as an afterthought?

A: Well Iran has substantial military capability. It's primarily of concern to American military power in about four different ways. Number one, they have naval capacity to temporarily block the Straits of Hormuz and interfere with the flow with global commerce should they choose to do so. Number two, they've got a substantial missile force that can do a lot of damage to our friends and partners in the region. Number three, they have a pretty robust terrorist surrogate arm that could in the event of hostilities cause problems not only in the Middle East but globally. And number four, they have a very substantial land army that while it's not offensively oriented is certainly capable of conducting asymmetric warfare throughout the depth of Iran in a defensive mode.

Q: What about the air defense capability? Is it as networked as Iraq's was before 2003 in the 9/11 conflict?

A: It's interesting, when you look at Hezbollah and if you consider that most of what came to Hezbollah probably came through the Syrians but certainly must have had some sort of Iranian linkage there. If not directly from the Iranians, indirectly from the Iranians.

We saw deployed in the battle against Hezbollah long range missiles that we haven't seen before in the Middle East, cruise anti-ship missiles that were fired, anti-tank weapon systems that were very affective against the [Murkaba] tanks, some shoulder fired anti-tank weapons that were very affective against armored vehicles, and even RPVs loaded with explosives deployed on the battlefield. So I think these techniques show that they've got a defense establishment that's capable of putting sophisticated weapons in the field. We didn't see a lot of air defense, interestingly enough.

So while we shouldn't ever underestimate Iranian military power, if I were to put them on a scale of one to ten with regard to their air defense network, I'd say they're a middle grade power.

Q: One follow-up. Can you give an example of an asymmetric use of the conventional army that hasn't had a lot of spare parts removed, [inaudible]? One scenario. One asymmetric scenario?

A: Asymmetric use of military power can certainly come when an attacker goes into enemy territory, when forces rather than massing decide that their going to conduct hit-and-run types of operations against the lines of communications.

Q: That's something Iran would be capable of and they're practicing?

A: Yeah.

Q: Six weeks ago at your hearing you laid out some pretty clear markers on Iraq. You said the violence was the worst you'd ever seen it and it had the potential of a civil war. In the ensuing period, of course the bodies keep piling up, there are more American troops there. Baghdad, Iraqi officials are talking about ringing Baghdad with additional defenses. What's your assessment today? Has it gotten better in the six weeks? Is it closer to civil war?

A: The situation in Baghdad in particular is slightly better, but Baghdad is not going to clarify itself in my mind militarily for a couple of months. And after I testified, I was there. Of course I go there once a month. I'm always in the region.

After I testified, I went to Baghdad. I went out with our forces into the areas we were clearing with American troops. I found out there was more confidence on the streets than I'd seen before and I got this from talking to Iraqi military and people in the Sunni community. More confidence in coalition forces, more confidence in Iraqi army forces, still very low confidence in the police.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done. There are a lot of sectarian problems that are very serious. I tried to characterize this so people understand the difference.

You know when you look at the insurgency in Iraq, a combination of coalition military forces

and Iraqi military forces and police can over time deal with the insurgency. The insurgency can't be fatal to Iraq in my mind. I do believe that the secular tensions if left unchecked could be fatal to Iraq and so it's very, very important.

And the center of the problem is Baghdad. It's the main effort. It's the area where we've got to expend the most military effort. But no military effort in a counter-insurgency conflict is going to be successful without corresponding political efforts to complement them. Dissolution of the militias, reform of the police, effective governance, and effective ministries of interior and defense, all of those have got to come along with the military activity that goes on for this to be effective. I think come December we'll have a pretty good idea whether the tactics that we've employed are right or we're going to have to do something different.

Q: You say it's slightly better in Baghdad. What's your metric? The bodies are still piling up and certainly at a rapid pace in the last several weeks.

A: Well, the bodies are piling up in areas that are not necessarily the same areas that we're patrolling. We're not everywhere in Baghdad. We're very methodically going through neighborhood after neighborhood. And the neighborhoods that we've been there have and that we're currently staying in or that Iraqi troops have been in and currently staying in, the situation has improved. So where we've applied our pressure, things are getting better. Are there still problems in Baghdad? Absolutely. Is the sectarian difficulty, concerning? You bet.

Now, the other thing I would say, and I think it's important, I know the various political actors in Iraq pretty well. I believe they're gaining a heck of a lot more confidence than I've seen in a long time. They're acting with a certain degree of gaining experience and acting with a certain degree of capacity that I haven't seen before that I think over time can lead to success. It's clear that we've got two main actors that are really trying to destabilize the sectarian problem or destabilize the sectarian issues and inside Baghdad in particular, al-Qaida on the one side and offshoots of the Jalshamadi on the other.

And while we've been able to get at al-Qaida pretty successfully, it's been harder to get at the Jalshamadi. We've had some success against some of their death squads and I'll say their splintered death squads, splintered group death squads, but we'll need to continue that in order to be successful.

Q: General, hi. I wanted to ask you about [inaudible] which has a variety of ways to have entered the new phase. More sustained combat, suicide attacks, also NATO [inaudible]. My question is does NATO even with the promise of a thousand new troops by Poland have the personnel, the equipment it needs to achieve its mission down there? And second, [inaudible] timetable for putting the US forces under NATO command?

A: Well there is already about fifteen hundred US forces under NATO command down in the

south. There's air and logistics units and we frequently chop our special operating forces and our air forces to NATO in order to accomplish military tasks in the south in particular. We'll chop over the eastern sector I think relatively soon. I don't see any real military reason not to chop it over. Matter of fact, I favor chopping it over sooner rather than later primarily because I think achieving unity of command is better than having two separate commands.

So again there are political dimensions to the chop-over of the stage four area which is the eastern area that I can't estimate whether or not they've been satisfied or not. You know the political leadership will have to determine that. But militarily both General Jones and I are pretty comfortable about where we are.

As far as a dynamic in the south and in the east, a lot of people look at NATO and they say well NATO has gone in there and they've had a heck of a fight. But in fairness to NATO, they've also gone in there and operated in an area where we haven't been operating very much. We didn't have a large density of American forces in there. In particular, in Helmand Province we had about a hundred Americans in Losgarga and the British put 3,300 paratroopers in there. And the Canadians put a battle group down in the southern parts of Kandahar that were areas we really haven't patrolled extensively.

So the thickening of the NATO force in areas where we hadn't gone before certainly turned over a lot of different things. Number one, Taliban. Number two, also a certain amount of well organized criminal and drug groups that cooperate with the Taliban. And I think that it's very important that this military activity on our side be sustained.

I'm also concerned that the amount of military activity that's been organized and supported from the Pakistan side of the border this past year has increased. While we get a lot of great cooperation from the Pakistanis in many different ways, it's clear that we've got to do more against the Taliban on both sides of the border for Afghanistan and Pakistan to be able to move in a better direction. I don't think the Taliban represents a mortal danger to the Kharzai government. But certainly at this stage in the campaign we'd hoped to be at the point where we were doing more development and less fighting.

Q: Just one quick follow-up. The agreement between the government of Pakistan and the tribes in [Waziristan], in western Pakistan, does that represent to you a pulling back from military efforts against the Taliban in Pakistan, and what are your concerns about that if any?

A: Well I guess like anybody I'm kind of wait and see. I hate to answer one of your questions with I don't know, but I don't know. I did talk to President Musharraf about it. I told him I was concerned about it.

On the long run, I think they're on the right track. The long run is you've got to go forward in the tribal areas with economic, political, and military solutions that the tribes cooperate with. But I'm

very, very skeptical about this notion that people that have been harbored in the tribal areas are no longer going to be harbored. I'll believe that when I see it.

Q: Last time you were here I asked you about the SA-16s and 18s showing up on the battlefield when you said 16s yes, 18s not for sure. I'd like to repeat that in Iraq, and I wanted to repeat that question and then say we were very surprised at all the weaponry that showed up in Lebanon. I want to see if any of that, if you were seeing any new weapons moving into Iraq and if so from where? Anti-tank weapons in particular?

A: Actually, there are two things that have shown up in Iraq that give me concern. Number one is RPG-29 which is a shoulder-fired dual-head warhead that is very effective against most armored vehicles, and you'll forgive me for not saying how effective it is against ours. I'm concerned by that.

The first time we saw it was not in Iraq. We saw it in Lebanon. So to me it indicates number one an Iranian connection, and it's hard to say in our part of the world that we operate in as to whether or not people are giving us a hint about things to come.

The other thing I'm concerned about is the EFP that you've all reported on which is a form of IED that is manufactured we believe in Iran that shows up occasionally on the battlefield.

Q: What about the air defense weapons?

A: The air defense weapons I believe, and I would have to have my J2 check, but I believe what I've seen on the battlefield are those things that have come from the Saddamist inventory and not from Iran.

Now we did see some brand new Chinese manufactured rockets that were longer range, and you'll have to forgive me on the nomenclature, that I believe also came over from Iran which was surprising in a way because normally what we see is stuff that's been well buried, well hidden, that was part of the Saddamist. It could have been that it was part of the Saddamist army stuff that just got cleaned up and then put in a field, but it looked brand new to us.

Q: So there's at least a possibility it could be a new import of Chinese production?

A: Yeah. Now the way I think weapons flow, first of all in the part of the world that we operate in there's a tremendous amount of weapon smuggling going on all the time. I think the EFP's probably are coming across with the help of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Kudz Force which is a government entity. I'm not quite sure about single RPG-29 showing up, how it showed up.

There's clearly links between Lebanese Hezbollah training people in Iran to operate in Lebanon and also training people in Iran that are serious winner groups that could operate against us in

Iraq. So these linkages exist but it's very, very hard to pin down with precision.

Q: I was just in Israel and the Israelis said that they were beginning to worry a lot about their dependence on network centric forces, and they're revising the way they think about their dependence on it. Force structure some and from, they're saying from asymmetric threats. They wouldn't answer a direct question about whether it was EMPs from [inaudible] nuclear [inaudible] or something like that. Do you have any similar concerns about people somehow breaking down the network centric construct?

A: I think our enemies. The longer we fight in the Middle East, the more our enemies go to school on us. They understand how we fight, what we do, where our linkages are. Their studies are thorough and I can't tell you how precise they are and I can't tell you their ability to effect it. I think in the event of a more serious conflict in the region with a major power that I would expect our networks to come under attack.

Q: General I want to take out to Anbar. On CNN yesterday you said that the key to Anbar is of [inaudible] Iraq and political, the political [inaudible]. The problem seems to be that getting any kind of indigenous Iraqi forces to stay and fight. The Army and Marines have been working out there with, trying to train new Iraqi army units. This is the year of the police but there doesn't seem to be a whole lot of progress.

What's the--

A: In Anbar Province.

Q: In Anbar, yeah. What's the prospect for that area? Your focus is on Baghdad but you can't ignore Anbar.

A: Well look, it's very, very clear that Anbar Province is a problem that will have to be dealt with over a period of time, but the first problem that has to be dealt with, any military commander that tries to do everything will do nothing. Our job, our priority, and General Casey's effort is to get Baghdad in a better security situation and allow the government to start to exercise political control much more decisively there. Anbar Province is--

Are any of you from the west? Any of you from Nevada? You know Nevada, California, Idaho, that sort of? Well I'm a westerner from the California-Nevada desert area and there's an awful lot of physical similarity and sparsity between that area and a sparsity of population in Anbar Province. I won't say anything about the people since I'm one of them.

It's a violent area. It's a tribal area. It's a tough area. We have had trouble getting the police on board. We've had trouble getting the army on board out there. And then whenever we bring out foreigners, read that anybody who's not from Al Anbar to serve in the military or police units

there, they immediately want to go somewhere else. So Anbar is a tough place.

But on the other hand, today I was reading where there's several tribal groupings that are getting together and essentially attacking al-Qaida because they're tired of the violence themselves. Al Anbar by the way wasn't well policed under any regime.

And of course yes, I am aware of the fact that a Marine staff officer wrote a paper where he expressed great concern over the direction that things were going in Al Anbar Province. But Al Anbar is not the decisive point. Baghdad is. We'll get to Al Anbar Province. And I think there are some positive signs in Al Anbar not the least of which is you know some very interesting indication of people getting tired of al-Qaida and foreign fighters being out there operating.

Q: The tribal alliance against al-Qaida may be a positive finding in the short run, but doesn't that lead you to another militia situation which is one of your problems in Baghdad and south, in the Shia area?

A: Well you know we're keeping all options open for Al Anbar Province and the tribal auxiliaries have existed out there forever. There's no reason to think that some form of tribal auxiliary can't work out there in the future.

So the Marines are really doing a heck of a good job out there. They've got an awful lot of Army forces there with them. It's a huge area but it's an area that we'll continue to work our way through.

Ultimately, we've got to get Iraqi security capacity there. I think the Al Anbar police and defense forces need to be heavily recruited from Al Anbar, and I think we will find good people that are willing to fight for the new Iraq that will come from there.

Q: General, when we started off you seemed to be saying that the solution in Iraq is non-kinetic and if I'm reading you right the ultimate solution, I guess. If I'm reading you right, would you talk about the non-kinetic side? You talked about the political tasks that need to be done cleaning up to the two ministries and [inaudible]. Would you give us a sort of report card of where things stand? And is it your sense that the United States is bringing the full weight of its non-kinetic power on these problems?

A: We are very good at applying our kinetic power anywhere in the Central Command area of operation that we have to. But you know, the numbers game that we--

Q: Could you tell us what you mean by non-kinetic powers for those of us who--

A: Kinetic is military power designed to kill and destroy things. You know a tank round is kinetic round. It blows up the house that it shoots at or the tank that it shoots at. So killing power

might be a better way of saying it.

General Correlly has said on more than one occasion that the key to victory in Iraq is getting the angry young men off the street. I believe that General Correlly is right. He said it three years ago. He said it two years ago. He said it last year and he's saying it this year. He's right. George Casey will tell you the same thing and so will I. That doesn't mean that there's not a military component to what has to go on. Clearly, we must destroy al-Qaida cells. We've got to kill and capture them. Clearly, we've got to decisively defeat any military threat to the new government.

But when it comes to the larger problem-- the average attack against US forces is an IED, the average IED is an attack form carried out by people that are really not ideologically committed to anything. They get paid, and they're getting paid because they don't have any money and they're getting paid because they've got people that have got money that are generally members of the old army that don't have work.

So, I think there's two points to it. Number one is you've got to get the angry young man off the streets. Not only in the Sunni community, by the way, but in the Shia community too. You've got to over time disarm the militias. And then you have to build a longer term economic prospect for the future. That's a very rich country.

But on this fourth year when I see where we started with the army and where we are today, we've made huge strides. Where I see where the economy started and where it is today, I think we've made some strides and I think we need to bring that portion of the campaign into better focus in the years ahead in order to be successful.

Q: So what will that take?

A: It will take more focused economic aid not only by the United States but by the international community. It's not necessarily aid, but it takes a focused program of economic recovery.

Q: Just to follow up on that, I was reading Greg Jaffe's fine piece in the Journal. I guess he interviewed you and some quotes--

A: Yeah, he rode around with me for several days.

Q: The quotes that stood out to me, you say, "Military power can gain us time, but that's about it. The best way to contain al-Qaida is to increase the capacity of the regional powers to deal with it themselves."

Could you develop that a little bit or is that downplaying the military, the kinetic component of this? That's what it sounds like. Is that what you're getting at there?

A: Well I believe that there's three very broad big problems in the theater. Number one is Sunni ideological extremist thought as exemplified by Bin Laden and his various organizations. That's a powerful current of danger that is floating in almost every country in the region and it's not mainstream and we must do everything we can to keep it from going mainstream.

The second big movement throughout the region is Shia revolutionary extremist thought as exemplified by revolutionary Iranian thinking. That exemplifies itself in the actions of Hezbollah, Shia splinter groups in Iraq, et cetera, and other places.

The third big problem in the region is this very, very corrosive, never ending Arab-Israeli conflict that gives power to both of those other two. What we don't want to have happen in the region is have Sunni extremism become ascendant or Shia extremism become ascendant. But every time you have a problem crop up in the Arab-Israeli arena you indirectly give them some strength and some capacity.

I know this is a very complex answer, and I apologize for giving it to you. But I believe that our strategy for the area can't be to control it. No nation on earth has ever controlled the Middle East. As a matter of fact if you try to control the Middle East you'll rapidly find out that the Middle East is going to control you.

What you've got to do is shape the future and you want to shape the future by increasing capacity in the region for moderates to win. That's why it's so important that the Iraqis take more responsibility for fighting the insurgency in Iraq. Why the Afghans have got to take more responsibility for fighting the insurgency in Afghanistan. That's why it's so important to help the Pakistanis defeat al-Qaida and their federally administered tribal areas. And that's why it's very, very important to make sure that the House of Saud defeats al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia.

So anything that we can do to increase regional and local capacity to defeat those very, very broad and dangerous movements is to our advantage. Part of it's got to be military. We should attack without hesitation al-Qaida cells wherever we find them.

On the other hand, we need to build capacity, local capacity, to do the institution building to make societies that are going to be more resilient against the broader extremist trends in the area. The extremism is not mainstream. In many ways we're kind of at a point where we could have been if we decided to resist Fascism in the æ20s or Bolshevism in the 1900s. The problem is, you know, a lot of have a hard time understanding why it's to our advantage to be out there in the middle of this. And it's to our advantage so that these terrible ideological movements do not become mainstream and start moving us in a direction that can move towards World War III.

Sorry for such a long answer.

Q: Do you need then more Special Forces?

A: I think that Special Forces capacity needs to be increased. Yes, I do.

Q: Thanks. What are you expecting in Ramadan?

A: I think in Ramadan we're going to have an increase in activity like we've had every year since we've been on the battlefield for five years.

Q: To shift gears a little bit to follow up on the questions about air defenses. You said that Iran is, that you see it as a middle grade power. What makes you say that and what could change and how quickly could it change, change that assessment?

A: Well right now Iran is actually the most powerful military force in the region except for the United States of America, but the mismatch between our military power and their military power is very, very substantial.

Q: Greater than Israel?

A: Well, when I'm talking about the region I'm talking about the countries in my region and Israel is-- You'll have to forgive me-- If they're not in CENTCOM they don't matter. [Laughter]. I have asked the Secretary to include North Korea but he decided not to. [Laughter].

I don't want to underestimate Iranian power because Iran is a powerful country. Its conventional forces are defensively oriented but its intelligence forces are offensively oriented. So Iran has traditionally conducted an asymmetric campaign in the region and they continue to do that. So I've got to come back to where you were, you know where you were trying to take me in a particular place. I think I'm wandering here. Focus me.

Q: Well I was going to ask you what [inaudible] for Iran in terms of making its air defenses either presumably more threatening?

A: The biggest change. Yeah, I got it. I'm sorry.

The biggest change on the horizon for Iran is if it becomes a nuclear power. It's my opinion that Iranians are trying to achieve nuclear breakthrough for military purposes. That's how I read the intelligence. It's my opinion that that won't happen for some years, but it's also my opinion that if Iran becomes a nuclear power it so destabilizes the region that it makes it more dangerous for everybody, to include the Iranians.

Q: Do you think the surface-to-air missile [inaudible] could wander around the region as easily as this RPG that you brought up earlier?

A: I think in today's battlefield that sophisticated weapons that don't require an awful lot of technological backup can show up anywhere.

Q: Sir, I just want to take it back to Anbar. You've acknowledged that the Iraqi forces are not really up to the task now on--

A: No, I didn't. I said that the Iraqi forces in Al Anbar need a lot of work. The Iraqi forces in Al Anbar are fighting and dying for their country and I think that is worthy of our respect.

Q: I understand, but they're not ready to take on--

A: They're not ready to take the lead. That's correct.

Q: Okay. And there's still [inaudible] and a lot of US casualties. So can you explain why Anbar asked [inaudible] even while you're doing Baghdad?

A: Anbar is a huge area. It's very, very large and it has a lot of very small population centers that if you concentrated your campaign efforts there would soak up a lot of troops from the decisive areas that are where we need them more.

Q: But you say you have ample troops?

A: We have ample troops to do what we think we need to do. Ample troops doesn't mean you have enough troops to do everything everywhere. I would never want you to think that.

Q: Well why not request more troops to do everything you need to everywhere now?

A: Where would you like to get them from?

Q: You say you have two million.

A: How many do you think are ground troops?

Q: I'm using your own statements, sir. You said that you have two million, [inaudible] reserves, and if you say that you don't have them, and then please explain that.

A: I really don't follow your logic.

Q: Are you saying that you do not have--

A: If you're asking me as a military commander, is there enough military power inside Iraq to stabilize Iraq over time, my answer is yes.

Q: But why are you making a trade off now between your priority mission of Baghdad and dealing with problems in Anbar where you clearly need more forces and where a large number of US casualties occur?

A: I think Baghdad is the most important place to put the military priority of effort. We military guys generally believe that you have one priority effort, and our priority effort is Baghdad not Anbar.

Q: I guess I don't--

A: Yeah, I guess if you'd been educated at West Point it would be an easier discussion point. I understand your point. The point is General, do you have enough forces?

There are a 140,000 American troops. There are 23,000 coalition troops. There are 300,000 Iraqi troops. There are a 100,000 facilities protection forces. That in and of itself is enough to do the military tasks that need to be done, not everywhere all the time equally, but to bring Iraq to stability over time provided governance and institution building takes place.

Q: But wouldn't it make sense to do some of these things simultaneously?

A: Now if you're asking me why don't we just bring in two more American divisions, is that what you're asking me, and put them in Al Anbar Province?

Q: I'm asking you for the reason you did say that you couldn't deal with Anbar now because there are not enough troops to deal with all of these small areas. That's a very large area so you'll handle it over time.

A: Right.

Q: And I'm wondering why--

A: Why we just wouldn't call in more American troops.

Q: Why it couldn't happen now?

A: Why not call in more American troops now? Is that the question?

Q: Yes.

A: Because every time American troops operate in large numbers, it creates a dynamic where Iraqi troops do less. It's very important that Iraqi forces take responsibility for military operations

in their own country.

Q: Just so you understand, there's 500,000 people in the American Army, ground forces. They're all not ground forces. There's about a 130,000 of them in my theater of operation. A 130,000 of them just came, 130,000 are there, 130,000 are getting ready to go.

So if you look at my son-in-law who's a soldier, he's fought in Afghanistan for a year, he fought in Iraq for a year, and he's getting ready to go back to Iraq.

So I mean it's important that the force as a whole, the American force as a whole, be managed in such a manner that it can deal with the military problem in Iraq and Afghanistan and unforeseen problems that may arise, for example from Iraq or Iran.

Q: Talking about the battle of Baghdad you said that by December perhaps you may see [inaudible]. You had some troops that are about to, that are involved in battles with Baghdad that are scheduled to rotate out in the November time frame that are doing very important work. I've been told, I have some friends in these units, that they are being told quietly to brace for an extension, just temporary, take them to Christmas or a little bit beyond in this very important time frame. Would you say that's true?

A: No, I'd say-- I can't really speak for General Casey and extensions of particular units. We extended that brigade that came down from Mosul for a specific time period. I'm not exactly sure what we said was the end date, but it was very clear to the unit and we don't intend to extend them beyond that end date.

Q: Any other beside that unit, besides [inaudible]?

A: We'll do whatever we need to do militarily to take the right actions to either extend units. For example, you go back to 2004 when we had to extend the entire 1st Armored Division for six months or whatever it was, 120 days. If it's necessary to do that because of military situations on the ground requires that, we'll do it. If we have to call in more forces because it's our military judgment that we need more forces, we'll do it. The numbers by the way, despite what a lot of people think, they continue to go up, they go down, they move around. I think what we told those troops, unless there's a real emergency, that that's when they'll be coming home.

Q: With regard to the advisory teams in Iraq that are embedded with the Iraqi army. Some folks have suggested that the ten to twelve man teams are too small, affiliated with the Iraqi battalions that are sort of a distributed operations model. [Inaudible] counter-insurgency with companies [inaudible] their own. Is there any thought that those teams need to be bigger so you can have a little bit more of a presence? A couple of soldiers at the company level?

A: That's a great question. We're looking very hard at these teams. Ultimately, the teams with the

Iraqi units will be more important to us than our battalions and brigades.

I think you can see clearly where we're going. We went from an armed forces that was at zero to 300,000 people under arms and now there are 300,000 people under arms with American advisory teams, although advisory is not the word we're using. Embedded training teams I think is the correct term we're using. We aim to insure that those teams that can help with command and control, bring to power, bring to bear American combat power especially air power for the Iraqi units that are needing it. And then help them logistically. I think we're clear that over time we're going to have to strengthen that.

You know Greg, I don't know that I'd want to say that they're going to go from 12 to 14, but it's clear we're going to have to make some adjustments.

Q: General, I just want to go back to the troops thing for a minute.

A: Yes, Jim.

Q: Do I understand you to be saying that there are not sufficient ground troops for a larger effort in Iraq--

A: No.

Q: --while at the same time keeping enough in reserve for other contingencies?

A: No, that's not what I'm saying.

Look, there are a 140,000 American troops in Iraq now. There's a reserve in Kuwait that's not committed. There's a reserve in the Arabian Gulf that's not committed. If those forces were committed, then the next place to go is to go back to the department and say send more troops.

General Casey is very, very clear, and really it has less to do with the number of American troops on the ground as it has to do with the friction between Iraqi forces taking the lead and exercising responsibility over battle space.

Today we gave the 4th Iraqi Division over to operational command of the Iraqi Ground Force Command. That's two divisions. Our intention is to have all ten divisions go that way.

If you look at the general strategy, the idea is to turn over more land, more control, more Iraqi units in the lead with coalition forces in backup, and that's what we're trying to do.

So the notion of throwing more American units at the problem for a particular period of time actually gets in the way of the strategy of turning over more to the Iraqis. We have sufficient

combat power to deal with all sorts of problems that may occur in the region.

Q: General, you mentioned come December you'll see whether the tactics have worked that you're applying to diffuse the sectarian intentions. Can you amplify on that? Why December? Is that a particular time frame you see as sufficient time to judge what you've done? And also could you just answer this perhaps over simplistic question of--

Q: You've asked him a question. Why don't you let him answer that one first.

A: Well, December as we've looked at the situation we brought down the American brigade from Mosul. We put additional American forces that were in the periphery back into specific neighborhoods that were targeted. We're looking to bring more Iraqi forces into Baghdad from other areas and we've yet to really make those moves. So I think, and plus you also know that there's this barrier move that's going around to the external portions of Baghdad that keeps getting reported as a trench. It's really not a trench. It's controlling movement in and out of Baghdad, 28 various locations around the city that are fairly traditionally used by the Iraqis to do that.

I think that a combination of increases in capacity of the ministries et cetera, is about how much time we'll need to see whether or not it's working.

So from the time we started, we started the first phase of the Baghdad security plan, we didn't get the effects that we wanted. We made some changes to it. Now we're in the second phase of the Baghdad security plan, and we'll examine to see where it is back in the December time frame or sooner if General Casey thinks that he's starting to have, and General Correlly thinks that they're starting to have good effect.

Q: Let me just follow up with a fairly simplistic question. Do you think you're winning the war right now?

A: Given unlimited time and unlimited support, we're winning the war. [Laughter]. Yes, I do think we're winning the war.

Q: I think the Iraqis are winning the war. I think they're going to win the war. I think we need to not look at this war as the United States versus Iraq. It's the United States plus their Iraqi allies fighting extremist threats to the peace and stability of Iraq and also dealing with sectarian problems which are pretty severe.

Q: A couple of law-makers came forward last week and said that from Army briefings the Army readiness levels are reverting. What changes have you seen over time with the Army readiness levels, and what impact is it having on Iraq and Afghanistan?

A: Well, Army units that are in Iraq and Afghanistan are very efficient, very effective, and they're coming to my theater ready and trained. So, I don't see impacts on Army readiness in my theater. Army troops are fighting well all throughout the theater. As a matter of fact, I would characterize the way that our forces fight tactically as being better than I've ever seen it. And a lot of that is because we have junior officers and sergeants that are on their third tour duties. I mean they have gotten very good at their business. So, when it comes to that I'm very, very satisfied.

You have to ask the Army about the readiness issues, but it's not showing up in the field. If it shows up in the field, you can be assured that I will say something.

Q: In terms of, as part of the plan for pushing forward the direct security forces, for a long time Americans, various corps commanders have talked about pulling back Americans to the big bases. Is the battle of Baghdad plan where you're once again pushing forward Americans into the neighborhoods, is that a sign of that old strategy of pulling back to the big bases didn't work at least in Baghdad?

A: Well, I'm not sure that I would characterize it, Julian, as that the plan before was pulling back in the big bases. I would describe it somewhat differently. You put American forces on over-watch so you come forward when the Iraqis need it. But the most important thing is that people have got to understand when they need it we've got to come forward.

I was in a Baghdad neighborhood, in a Sunni neighborhood, and I talked to several different people. I asked them, "Are you satisfied with American forces being here?" And they said to me, "We would prefer to have American forces here." And then I'd ask them the question, "How about Iraqi military forces?" They said, "We would be okay with Iraqi military forces, but we prefer to have the Americans here." This is interesting because it's a Sunni neighborhood mind you. Then I said, "How about the police?" They said, "No we don't want the police here."

That's not the effect we want. The effect we want is we welcome the police, we'll tolerate our own military forces, and we really don't want the Americans here.

Q: Quick follow-up.

A: So on the other hand, like in any military campaign you've got to make your adjustments. Our adjustments are we've got to go in there, we've got to stabilize Baghdad, and we've got help build confidence in better policing and better Iraqi military forces. The military forces are actually doing pretty well. The police need a lot of work.

Q: Quick follow-up. All of Iraq assigned, you've got the T.E. Lorens quote hanging up, better to let them do it imperfectly then you do it perfectly.

Why is it so hard for American forces to step back and let the Iraqi security forces do it badly? Because time and time again we've seen units say I'll do it for the Iraqis.

A: The Iraqis have their culture way of doing things and we have our culture way of doing things. Our culture is to grab a hold of things and make it happen. The Iraqi culture and our culture are very, very different but we have to be tolerant of the Iraqis learning how to do their duty to preserve their integrity and sovereignty and respect their people's rights and within the confines of their own culture. It doesn't move fast enough for most Americans. I'm not saying that, by the way, that we would do it perfectly either.

For example, if I were a commander in downtown Baghdad I would know that my best intelligence would come from Iraqi soldiers and Iraqi police on the streets, not American soldiers. They speak the language. They know what's going on. They sense the various issues that are going on in the neighborhoods. So, ultimately our victory is when Iraq sovereignty is arrayed throughout the entire country by their armed forces and their police. That's what we've got to get to and we've got to have patience. We don't need to always grab a hold of everything.

You're right. It is hard for our commanders to get used to that. But in many respects this gets back to this excellent question here about troop numbers. If it's only a matter of us doing it for ourselves, then you've got to ask yourself what are we trying to achieve. Are we trying to conquer the place or are we trying to liberate the place? We're trying to liberate the place. We're trying to work our way out of a job. Ultimately, you defeat extremism in the region when the people in the region are robust enough to resist it. Too large of an American footprint in the region actually moves people towards the extremist camp.

Q: NATO Commander Jones said recently that he could use a back fill of some extra forces about a battalion size and some other capabilities. The Poles and the Canadians are sort of trying to figure out how they're going to fill that gap. What is the possibility that US troops will be sent in there before winter sets in to kind of not be a [inaudible] Taliban?

A: Just so we're all, in understanding where we are, US troop numbers are higher now in Afghanistan than they ever have been. It is unlikely that US troops would come externally to fill further NATO gaps. It is possible that US troops would move around within the NATO battle space to help NATO commanders do what they need to do. For example, last week we moved two American companies. We chopped them from my command to the NATO command to operate in the southern area in order to give them the military capacity that they needed to do their work. Okay?

Q: General, just sort of another stab at force levels. Considering we haven't seen what a while back was talked about as significant decrease in number of troops in Iraq. Looking ahead, how do you sustain your force levels considering what you talked about in terms of rotations? You've got some that are going back again and again. Should there be or would you contemplate

recommending a change in the rotations for one and five or for the reserves of one and two?

A: At this point in Iraq-- If you had asked me six months ago and you may have asked me six months ago, I would have said that we would be down a couple of more brigades from what we currently have. We clearly did not achieve the force levels that we had hoped to. You might ask yourself why is that. Part of it is that the sectarian violence got worse, and part of it is that the development of the security forces in particular, the police, during that five month period where we had no effective government essentially in Iraq, caused us to have to keep more US forces in there.

I think that we'll do whatever we have to do to stabilize Iraq and Afghanistan and use the military power of the US to do that within the confines of the construct that I described the campaign about which is you've got to trust to the people in the region to want this more than we do.

Q: Do you see an impact on US forces and how often you would have to rotate troops in and out if you have to sustain this level for a while longer?

A: I think that this level will probably have to be sustained through the spring and then we'll reevaluate it. I'm sure General Casey's probably going to reevaluate sooner than that, but I'd say through the spring time. I think these are proven force levels. I think they're achieving the military effect and we'll bring in more forces if we have to. And oh, by the way, if we can send more forces out, we'll do that as well.

Q: General, you mentioned you'd like to have more Special Forces to [inaudible]. Something on the level of 80 percent of the Special Forces are [inaudible] to your area of responsibility. What would you use more Special Forces for? Are there other countries in the area of responsibility where you think we should be using more Special Forces other than Iraq?

A: If you go to Afghanistan there's a lot of other nation Special Forces that are operating out there. Other nation Special Forces don't necessarily have the broad range of missioning that our Special Forces do. So our Special Forces do what we call foreign internal defense which is essentially increasing the training capacity and at the same time doing advisory sorts of work. And they can also do direct action. You'll see other Special Forces concentrating more on direct action. So the range of missioning for US Special Forces is pretty profound and we've got a lot of capability.

I just think, again, when I look at what our young Special Forces troops do in the field and when I contemplate the future in the Central Command area of operations I can see the conventional force structure coming down but not the special operations forces, because their skills will be more needed not less needed.

Q: Is there too much emphasis on training right now for them? Would you rather [inaudible]?

A: No, I think we have a good mix between forces that are involved in direct action and training.

Q: I have an off-beat question, but did you have all of the technology tools you need to wage war in kind of an underground space? Do you have specialist similar to the tunnel rats that they had in Vietnam? Are these weapons being stashed in underground areas in Afghanistan and Iraq?

A: I think we're always looking for technological fixes. We have pretty good technology but we would be silly to say to you that our technology knows all and sees all. It doesn't. And so we've got some pretty robust programs especially in the counter-IED arena that are doing a lot to close the technology gap. But if I were to say what the biggest gap is on the battlefield, it is human intelligence.

If it was, and this is no fault of the intelligence professionals, the human intelligence inventory that went into the war was too small for the war. It's only now starting to ramp up and it's going to take years before it gets robust enough in terms of experience to be where we need it to be to fight a long war against ideological extremism as represented by groups that are global in reach like bin Laden.

Q: I meant, is the underground really actually underground?

A: Oh, you're talking about real undergrounds. The technology is, on a scale of one to ten the technology is at a four. We need more. More ability to see better underground.

Q: General, I only went to Hollins College. I didn't go to West Point so I apologize if you perplex me with your answer. [Laughter]. Going back to what Ann was saying.

A: Come on Sally. Give me a break.

Q: You said West Point. I didn't go there, I apologize.

A: It's a trade school. [Laughter]. It's not very good at football but it does produce soldiers.

Q: Going back to her question and I'll ask it from a lay person's standpoint. It looks as though you guys are kind of a big, dumb, moving thing who can only focus on one thing at once. That's the way it comes across. You can only focus on Baghdad. We're going to let Anbar happen, whatever happens there. We're not going to put more forces there.

A: Look. It's not a matter of forces only. There's a substantial effort that's going on in Al Anbar Province. Al Anbar Province hasn't been abandoned. Things are not stopping out there. Special Forces operate out there. Marine units operate out there. There's a big effort going on in Ramadi

and Fallujah, but is Al Anbar Province our main effort? No, it's not. The main effort is Baghdad and we have in fact moved troops from Al Anbar to Baghdad among other places.

Q: So you're willing to take a hit in Al Anbar.

A: We are, like any good commander or any mediocre commander, however you choose to describe it. No commander will put all effort spread out equally throughout the battlefield and think they're going to achieve success. That's not what we're doing. It's not what we're going to do.

Q: General, as I understand it there are three major efforts going on in Afghanistan right now, Operation Big North Wind, Medusa, and Mountain Fury. I was wondering if you could speak to some of the successes that you're seeing right now in defeating the insurgency in that area and also the status, the progress of reconstruction and development?

A: Reconstruction and development needs to be accelerated. The international community needs to do more and in particular we need to get roads to connect Afghanistan to the rest of the region because with the roads come security. The biggest change in security I ever saw in Afghanistan was when the Kandahar to Kabul road opened.

So it's not just a matter of military forces. It's a matter of doing those things that will increase security and allow the government to extend its reach into the region.

The military offensive operations that are taking place: In the east, Mountain Fury, too soon to say yet. They just kicked off here recently.

Whenever the Taliban mass, it goes very poorly for them, and they massed in the area down in the south of Kandahar. NATO forces are claiming casualties of upwards of over 500 enemy killed or so. I'm not sure I know what the numbers are. I don't like to really do the body count thing. I don't think it's necessarily helpful. But sufficient significant casualties were inflicted on the Taliban by NATO military operations down there, and it will have an effect on them.

It's clear from our intelligence that the Taliban are very concerned about the amount of their casualties, but on the other hand the Taliban has also taken a very cynical track that they didn't take in the previous couple of years. I think we're up to 71 suicide bombers now which is unusual for that battle space. It's a copy from the al-Qaida play book. I would assume that it's probably being funded by their al-Qaida friends that are operating in the Afghan-Pakistan border and have access to substantial funds.

So, I think we have a lot of tough military activity ahead in Afghanistan, but I don't think it will stop progress.

Q: Okay just a real quick factual question.

Q: You said a couple of times there's a 140,000 troops in Iraq. We've been told over the last week that it's about a 147,000. Bush used that figure. Not to correct you, but I just want to make sure we have apples and apples.

A: Jeff, just get the exact-- It's over 140,000. Okay. So use the term over a 140,000.

Q: Okay we're out of time. We'll have to leave it there. Thank you very much.

END TEXT