

July 2, 2007

Press Conference

Brigadier General Kevin Bergner

Good morning, Asalaam aleikum.

As the surge of forces has become a surge in operations we are increasing the pressure on extremists. We are doing that by applying more force in Baghdad and in the belts around the city simultaneously.

Our operations are focused most importantly on al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda affiliates.

Three days ago, Coalition Forces killed another significant AQI leader Abu 'Abd al-Rahman al-Masri. He was an al Qaeda senior leader who had worked directly for Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the al Qaeda leader of Iraq. He had facilitated communications throughout the region and had a long history in al-Qaeda.

In the past few weeks, there have also been a number of other key AQI associates captured or killed by coalition forces, including Khalid and Khalil al-Turki, two senior AQI associates who ran a foreign fighter network. In the north, Iraqi Army and coalition forces continue successful operations in Mosul. The graphic represents just some of these recent results:

Kamal Jalil Bakr 'Uthman, aka Sa'id Hamza

Killed by Coalition Forces in June in Mosul

'Uthman was the al-Qaeda in Iraq military emir of Mosul

Planned, coordinated and facilitated suicide bombings

Facilitated the movement of more than 100 foreign fighters through safe houses in the area.

Aman Ahmad Taha Khazam Al-Juhayshi .. was emir of Ansar al-Sunna in Mosul and has been involved with AAS since 2003

- Fled to Syria in 2005 to avoid capture by Coalition Forces

- Returned to Iraq in January

The Mosul terrorist networks' leadership as well as their facilitators and operational cell leaders have been disrupted due to the teamwork of Iraqi and Coalition Forces

In Diyala Province, we have begun to assist the Government of Iraq and the Provincial Government in restoring the public distribution system so that food deliveries can resume for the people of Baqubah. The first shipment of 72 trucks arrived over the weekend and is coupled with other humanitarian assistance efforts to restore medical support and other services that had been hijacked by extremists.

We are also operating against other extremist elements known as Secret Cells or Special Groups who are destabilizing the security situation in Iraq. These "Special Groups" are militia extremists, funded, trained and armed by external sources...specifically by Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force operatives.

This morning, in the rest of our weekly operational update we will focus on coalition and Iraqi operations against the special groups, their support from Iranian Quds Force operatives and the involvement of other extremist organizations.

The special groups have evolved over the past three years into what are largely rogue elements that use a cellular structure to operate independently. Their cellular structure and interactions create a complex web of relationships which have increasingly been fueled by external influences.

In the past few months, since the surge of forces began, Iraqi and coalition forces have conducted a range of operations against these Special Groups. This chart shows 21 of the higher level operatives that have been taken off the streets of Iraq since February of this year. The majority are in detention – three were killed when they took hostile action against coalition forces.

As you can see they operated throughout Iraq. They played key roles in the planning and execution of bombings, kidnappings, extortion, sectarian murders, illegal arms trafficking, and other attacks against Iraqi citizens, police, army and Coalition Forces. They also moved money into and around Iraq, to fund their operations.

I want to point out just a few of these individuals for you, some of which we have with their pictures on the chart.

First, Abu Yasier al Sheibani who was captured on 20 April... he is the brother of the Abu Mustafa al-Sheibani the leader of the Sheibani Explosively Formed Penetrator network... Abu Sheibani was the deputy, key logistician and financier for this group in Iraq.

Abu Zaki was captured in Eastern Baghdad and was a key member of the Khazali network and involved in attacks on Coalition Forces.

Abu Zahrah was a tactical planner for one of the Special Group's operational cells.

Abu Musa prior to his capture was a key conduit for mortars, explosively formed penetrators, and IEDs to the Special Groups around Baghdad.

Azhar Dulaymi was killed on 19 May and was a Special Groups Commander. He led the execution of the 20 January attack on the Provincial Joint Coordination Center in Karbala that killed five soldiers.

At the bottom of this chart are two men who had a particularly important leadership role and working relationship with external sources -- Ali Musa Daqduq and Qayis Khaz'ali. Ali Musa Daqduq, was captured in southern Iraq by Coalition Forces on March 20th of this year. He was captured with false identity cards using various aliases.

He initially claimed to be a deaf mute, and contended that his real name was "Hamid Muhammaed Jabur Al Lami". In fact, he is Lebanese-born and has served for the past 24 years in Lebanese Hizballah. He was in Iraq working as a surrogate for Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force operatives involved with Special Groups.

Here's what we learned about Ali Musa Daqduq.

- Joined the Lebanese Hizballah in 1983
- Served in numerous leadership positions
- Commanded a Hizballah special operations unit
- Coordinated protection of Hizballah Secretary General Hasan Nasrallah
- Led Hizballah operations in large areas of Lebanon

In 2005, he was directed by senior Lebanese Hizballah leadership to go to Iran and work with the Quds Force to train Iraqi extremists.

In May 2006, he traveled to Tehran with Yussef Hashim, a fellow Lebanese Hizballah and head of their operations in Iraq. There they met with the Commander and Deputy Commander of the Iranian Quds Force Special External Operations.

He was directed by Iranian Quds Force to make trips in and out of Iraq and report on the training and operations of the Iraqi Special Groups.

In the year prior to his capture, Ali Musa Daqduq made four trips to Iraq. He monitored and reported on the training and arming of Special Groups in mortars and rockets,

manufacturing and employment of improvised explosive devices and kidnapping operations. Most significantly, he was tasked to organize the Special Groups in ways that mirrored how Hizballah was organized in Lebanon.

He also helped Quds Force in training Iraqis inside Iran. Quds Force along with Hizballah instructors train approximately 20 to 60 Iraqis at a time sending them back to Iraq organized into these Special Groups. They are being taught how to use EFPs, mortars, rockets, as well as intelligence, sniper, and kidnapping operations.

In addition to training, the Quds force also supplies the Special Groups with weapons and funding of 750,000 to three million U.S. dollars a month. Without this support, these Special Groups would be hard pressed to conduct their operations in Iraq.

When Ali Musa Daqduq was captured, he also had detailed documents that discussed tactics to attack Iraqi and coalition Forces.

An example is shown on the screen. The document instructs the Special Groups on techniques to attack a convoy, where to fire the rockets and machine guns, which vehicles to engage and how to coordinate the attack.

He also had a personal journal that shows his involvement with extremist operations in Iraq. Here are two sections from the diary that give you a sense of his operations.

First he notes meeting with some Special Group extremists and their description of a failed attack on a British officer in Southern Iraq... incidentally, the diary notes the attack failed when Iraqi soldiers intervened.

His diary also notes meeting with Special Group members who were targeting other Iraqis and Coalition Forces in the Diyala Province using IEDs as well as small arms fire.

Let me now turn to the second individual -- Qayis Khaz'ali, who was captured with his brother Layith and Ali Musa Daqduq.

Qayis Khaz'ali was in charge of Special Groups throughout Iraq since June 2006, and his brother Layith Khaz'ali was a member of the Special Groups network. Both men are Iraqis and their pictures are shown here.

Here is some of what we now know about Qayis Khaz'ali and his work with Iranian Quds Force operatives.

- The Quds Force goal is to develop the Iraqi Special Groups into a network similar to the Lebanese Hizballah.

- Special Groups would be unable to conduct terrorist attacks in Iraq without Iranian supplied weapons and other support.

- Like Ali Musa Daqduq, Qayis Khazali's main contact was Hajji Yusif, the Deputy Commander for the Quds Force Department of External Special Operations.

- Funding and training of the Special Groups started in 2004.

- The Quds Force supplies Special Groups with EFPs, machine guns, rockets, sniper rifles, rocket propelled grenades and IEDs.

- Iraqi Special Groups are trained in one of three training camps inside Iran and are operated by the Quds Force and supported by Lebanese Hizballah operatives.

When Qayis Khazali was captured, we found an in-depth planning and lessons-learned document. It was about the attack the Special Groups conducted against the Karbala Provincial Joint Coordination Center on January 20th. This 22-page document provides a unique window into the planning and execution of Special Group operations here in Iraq.

It is important to point out that both Ali Musa Daqduq and Qayis Khazali state that senior leadership within the Quds force knew of and supported planning for the eventual

Karbala attack that killed five coalition soldiers. Ali Musa Daqduq contends the Iraqi Special Groups could not have conducted this complex operation without the support and direction of the Quds Force.

Ali Musa Daqduq and Qayis Khaz'ali both confirm that Qayis Khaz'ali authorized the operation and Azhar al Dulaymi, who we killed in an operation earlier this year, executed the operation.

The document we captured showed the following:

- The group that attacked the Provincial Joint Coordination Center in Karbala had conducted extensive preparation and drills prior to the attack.
- Quds Force had developed detailed information regarding our soldier's activities, shift changes and defenses and this information was shared with the attackers.
- They had American looking uniforms, vehicles, and identification cards that enabled the attackers to more easily penetrate the Provincial Joint Coordination Center and achieve surprise.
- The captured soldiers were killed when the attackers' dispersal from the site was interrupted.

Finally, when we captured Qayis, we also recovered 11 separate documents that recorded attacks against Coalition Forces--attacks that were ordered by Qayis himself.

Shown on the screen are two of these documents recording attacks conducted against coalition facilities in Basrah. These attacks are also confirmed by our own reporting. In all, these documents recorded 3 attacks against the Basrah palace, 2 targets in Amarah, 1 against an intelligence target in Basrah, 2 against the Shat Al-Arab Hotel in Basrah, and an IED attack against a HUMVEE. Additionally, one document recorded nine attacks against military vehicles in Russafah.

What we've learned from Ali Musa Daqduq, Qayis Khaz'ali and other Special Groups members in our custody expands our understanding of how Iranian Quds Force operatives are training, funding and arming the Iraqi Special Groups. It shows how Iranian operatives are using Lebanese surrogates to create Hizbollah like capabilities. And it paints a picture of the level of effort in funding and arming extremist groups in Iraq.

We are continuing to work closely with the Iraqi Security Forces to target these Special Groups; interdict the flow of weapons, funding and training; and curtail the external influences that are arming extremist groups in Iraq.

That concludes our operational update for the week and I'll now take your questions.