

PRESS CONFERENCE:

General Babakir Baderkhan Zibari, Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Joint Forces

Brigadier General Robin P. Swan, Commanding General, Coalition Army Advisory Assistance Team – Iraq of the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq

DATE: April 17, 2008

TRANSCRIBED BY:

SOS INTERNATIONAL LTD.

PARTICIPANTS:

**General Babakir Baderkhan Zibari
Brigadier General Robin Swan**

REPORTERS:

Haydl[ph] Qutri[ph], Radio Sowa

Unidentified reporters from Mina[ph] News Agency, Aswat al Iraq News Agency, Iraqiya Channel, Radio Iraqiya, Al-Mada Newspaper, Samariyah TV, Ibat[ph] News Agency, Free Iraq Agency.

REPORTERS 1-17

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

***INT = INTERPRETER**

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: As-Salāmu `Alaykum. It's my pleasure to be here and present Iraqi Army arming programs especially when the Iraqi armed uniformed of their national duty to deep-rooting pillars of modern democratic state and to build state of law encountering foreign terrorism. And it presents loyalty in defense of Iraq and all humanity against the new industry which was called in media death industry. Ministry of Defense directs to enhance the military capability in a way to avoid wasting money through the corrupted administration and through long and slow procedures especially that Ministry of Defense started establishing new, modern institutions. Therefore, trusted, practical program adopted to guarantee the capability of military and security capability in a transparent way in general that the procurements of the Foreign Military Sales Program that equipment less complicated will continue to procuring it through interior channels to—of Ministry of Defense. The Iraqi needs will be bought by Iraqi money. All procurement must be approved in accordance with Iraqi law. Any economic interests when Iraq add new procurements to the Army procurements as in procuring American weapons and procurements. Any allocated funds for this program is in a bank account and its interest will be used in the future to buy new equipment. We will work with foreign ministers,

foreign governments to put Iraq in a good position in the local and international markets and not to be conclusively with the American companies. I would like to indicate that program and under the present pressure and the needs to establishing new units and expanding the operational management. It's very wanted to accelerate the delivery of the weapons and equipment according to the foreign ministry sale or Foreign Military Sales Program as it's shown in the Chart 01. And I would like to refer to the details about distribution of program's money which is \$2.6 billion. Ministry of Defense and Army staff in coordination with the American forces and NATO continue. It's studying to accelerate achieving arming programs to strengthen the Iraqi Army and readiness. For the last six months, \$590 million; as we said, the total number is \$600 million. Seventy-eight million dollars for construction. One hundred twenty million [dollars] for maintenance. The total of the delivery in the next six months because we increased units to the Iraqi Army approximately \$300 million for maintenance and for construction and repairing. We don't need it in the next six months. Three hundred sixty-five million [dollars] in the last six months in the maintenance also. Demands provided from the Ministry of Defense was \$684 million as you can see in 2007 and continues [un]til March, 2008. General Swan.

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

I'm Brigadier General Robin Swan and I'm the commander of the Coalition Army Advisory Assistance Team within Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq. At the outset, I would like to say that I am honored to share the stage today with General Babakir as I and all of the soldiers within MNSTC-I work very diligently with General Babakir and the Joint Headquarters Staff as well as within the Ministry of Defense to move forward the development of Iraqi joint forces. In particular we are focused with General Babakir, his staff, and from the Iraq Army side on force generation, on force replenishment, and force sustainment of the Iraqi Army. And as General Babakir mentioned, there has been a rapid expansion in the Iraqi Army which will continue through the end of this year as they move toward 52 combat brigades and 13 Iraqi Army divisions. And in particular, over the last six months, the Iraqi Army has added five brigade combat teams to its formation and we're in the process today of an additional two brigades that are currently in training that will be fielded earlier this summer. Also as General Babakir had mentioned that there is a commitment on behalf of the Ministry of Defense – and I'll only talk to the Ministry of Defense – regarding the Foreign Military Sales Program. And that between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior since 2006, about \$2.6 billion have been deposited in the Foreign

Military Sales Program of which General Babakir very accurately described the range of deliveries that have occurred within the Ministry of Defense approaching \$900 million, about \$300 million on the Ministry of Interior side for about \$1.2 billion worth of deliveries against that \$2.6 billion that has to-date been deposited from the ministries, their respective 2006 and 2007 defense budgets. Again, it's a—I'm honored to be here today and General Babakir and myself look forward to your questions.

REP1: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Haydl[ph] Qutri[ph], Radio Sowa. First question to General Babakir. There were accusations against the Ministry of Defense about weapons deal with Serbia. How is your response about this allegations and about the integrity committee?

GEN BABAKIR: If there is any clear administration corruption, it will be—there will be accountability. And buying or procuring equipment for the Army in Foreign Sales Program. It's not for the interests of the Army to be accused of these things and, frankly, brothers in high levels hear my voice and to open the discussion to have good results. As a military officer, I don't want to have many sources of arming to the Iraqi Army because that will cost us a large amount of money.

Previously we received vehicles, 100-something, that would cost us a large amount of money and it's very difficult to the Iraqi Army to train such [unintelligible] and to have repair parts. We always in a discussion because the procurement program is belong to the Ministry of Defense, not to the Army staff. And you can assist us with some of these discussions.

REP2: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: [Unintelligible.] Question to the General. There is news about Iraqi regiment refused to follow orders in Sadr City.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I don't have any information about this regiment. Chief of staff, he's not the first person who knows about this. It appears that there was disobedience in all of Iraq during the confrontation with the— last confrontations. As I heard, there were 44 soldiers who refused to follow orders and to deliver their weapons to the Mahdi Army to secure their families inside Sadr City. But the Iraqi Army performed in a good way and a perfect way and I am proud about it. Just like what had happened in Mosul and Anbar when hundreds of soldiers, they didn't follow orders. Yes. You.

REP3: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Mina[ph] News Agency. There is some information about two regiments of the Iraqi Army will be established in Kurdistan region. I would like some explanation.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: These two regiments or divisions will belong to the Ministry of Defense; will be established just like others were established in Ninawah, Basra, [and] Anbar. It belongs to the commander in chief. Yes.

REP4: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Aswat al Iraq News Agency. What is your comment about the Turkish raids that targeted P.K.K. in Northern Iraq?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We always advise Turkey not to conduct any military operations in Northern Iraq because they will not have any positive results of this raid. In Iraq, many people, innocent civilians, they are killed. And to [unintelligible] and to stop bleeding. Therefore, Turkey was in a

confrontation with P.K.K. for more than 24 years but they didn't achieve anything. We advise them to have a dialog between them.

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Iraqiya Channel. This program is still in paper. When it will be in a practical way? In a press conference of our prime minister, he said that Iraqi Army—Iraqi forces are ready and that we can take the security responsibility.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We are marching in good steps. As I can tell you, 100,000 soldiers and noncommissioned officers were trained during the last year and these divisions and units need equipment and weapons. We have four military academies, National Defense Academy, and we have other defense institutions to develop the capability of these soldiers and noncommissioned officers. Iraqi Army as I see needs all the experience of foreign armies to have a campaign, a terrorism[?] campaign to stop the terrorism against Iraq. We have to use this program for arming our Iraqi Army when we want to deal for aircraft and other sophisticated equipment used by U.S. Army.

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: What is your comment about what prime minister has said about the readiness of the Iraqi forces?

BABKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I don't think that the U.S. Army forces will withdraw—all of them will withdraw in June. After July we will coordinate with the U.S. Army and the Multi-National Force to have a replacement.

REP6: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Hori[ph] Achelam[ph]. General, Parliament members from Sadr block said that not the Sadr Trend has militias and they accused the Kurds to have militias. Do you have any imagination[sic] about other—these militias?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Anyone who holds arm—unlicensed arm must be disarmed regardless to disregard to their affiliated political party or religious party.

REP7: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Yesterday, Al Hora-Iraq, General, they said that weapons deal which was report[ed] with Serbia, it was not a good quality weapons and there were some guns to be presented to the—as a

present to other officials.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I haven't heard about it. It's not a commercial deal. We were received tanks as presents.

REP8: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Radio Iraqiya. Any limitations of an arming—Iraqi Army? When the Turkey Army invaded Kurdistan Iraq, the regional government of Kurdistan asked for help from the Iraqi Army but the kind of the arming in Peshmerga was not in a good quality. Another question. Some Parliament members called Peshmerga as militia out of Kurdistan region border. And as we know, some military units of Peshmerga was participating in Fardh al-Qanoon plan in Baghdad. Can we know any—is there any way to transfer Peshmerga and to join them to the Ministry of Defense units under the command of Ministry of Defense?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Peshmerga is present which was able to liberate Iraq in coordination with the—in cooperation with coalition forces. And as I was an official in Peshmerga units, when Peshmerga—a brigade of Peshmerga came to Baghdad, they performed in a perfect way. The

second thing, the presence of Peshmerga out of Kurdistan region—the presence of Peshmerga without any request of the Iraqi government is not legal and we—their presence, therefore, in coordination with the Iraqi government.

REP8: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Is there any limitation for arming the Iraqi Army?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: There is no limitations. I would like at the beginning we were armed in eastern[?] armed but now we are building Iraqi Army in modern pillars. We don't want to go 50 or 60 unequipped units but we want to have units well equipped and well trained. I'll give you an example. The Arab armies could beat Israel. The Syrian or Iraqi or Egyptian soldiers was qualified as the Israeli soldiers but they were not well equipped. Therefore, we need to develop our weapons. There were 125 states dealing under Foreign Military Sales Program. Therefore, as a professional soldier, we need sophisticated equipment and weapons from our friends. Yes.

REP9: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Al-Mada Newspaper. What is your assessment for the naval units to protect borders?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We have very narrow costs as we can just to export on import goods. But we build a small naval force and we are continuing to develop it and to have coast defense equipped by boats and to have sophisticated weapons and to train them and to prepare them as the Iraqi Air Force working.

REP10: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Samariyah TV. General, you were talking about deals or contracts under construction[?] in Ministry of Defense.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Contracts need time to be—to pass through the Economic Committee. I told you. I read to you about infrastructure and weapons and equipment.

REP11: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: There's another question for both sides about the deployment of the Iraqi and U.S. forces in Sadr City.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: As I told you, we received orders from the high-level command to

disarm any unlicensed weapons in Sadr City, not just militias belongs to Jaish al-Mahdi or outlaws but we have other militias in Sadr City and some others who were followers of the former regime who are targeting civilians targets. It's not just Jaish al-Mahdi.

REP12: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Ibat[ph] News Agency. Do you have any information about the reason of changing commanders in Basra?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Changing commanders is needed from time to time. And what had happened in Basra, it's due to the stabilization of the situation in Basra and we sent two divisions of Army and others from national police and local police there. Therefore, changing commanders is not a strange thing. He is not dismissed. They were there temporary for their assigned mission.

REP13: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Free Iraq Agency. There is a question for both sides. Is there any obstacles for the kind of weapons or contracts under FMS? Another question for Swan. Many official—Iraqi officials complained. Is there any mechanism to accelerate the way of arming Iraqi Army?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: U.S. Army is a friend army who is working with us day and night. At the beginning we were equipped by the U.S. Army and annually they are paying one-third of our procurement to have maintenance and repairing factories for our vehicles and armored vehicles before having a strong army to control Iraq. They are working with us side by side to develop our capability.

BRIG GEN SWAN: I think that General Babakir's point about the development of the capabilities moving side by side is a very important one. As you may know, in January of this year the minister of defense went to Washington; I accompanied him there. And he was talking there about modernization of forces which – within the ability of the Iraqi or the Government of Iraq to afford in a sequenced plan that increases, as General Babakir has mentioned, the quality of the Iraqi Army over time – is an important component of the minister's long-term strategy and certainly General Babakir's long-term strategy of quality equipment in the timelines required by the Iraqi Army for both the internal security of the Iraqi population as well as, at some point in time, being able to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq.

REP14: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: The Iraqi forces in Sadr City; why they don't go to the north in

Jamilah district?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: We have a studied[?] plan. Insha'Allah, Baghdad will restore security and our—its people will have security and prosperity. We have a plan and we are not in a hurry because we don't want to make pressure on the people. We don't want to kill anybody because anyone killed in Iraq has a family. But the militias are killing people as you have heard in Ninawa and Diyala and in Anbar.

REP15: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: What are the evidence for the armed group supported by Iran?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Anyone tries to obstacle law or to fight security forces, he's an enemy. If he is a terrorist or from the militia. Yes. You.

REP16: Deborah Haynes from The London Times. First of all, what percentage of the foreign military sales—sorry. What percentage commission does the Pentagon get from the Foreign Military Sales Program?

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

First off, I wouldn't categorize it as a commission. It is an administrative fee that is required for the processing, the solicitation, and all of the administrative overhead. So it's not a commission that comes back to the United States government as the Iraqi government paying us a commission.

REP16:

Okay. What percentage of...

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

It's 1.3%.

REP16:

Okay. And what percentage of the \$2.6 billion for the Foreign Military Sales Program is going to American companies providing the equipment?

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

You know, that's a great question. I do not know the exact percentage. There is certainly some percentage that is going to go, but it's important to note that the solicitation for that foreign military sales procurement is a global solicitation. Once the contract is or the letter of request is established by the Government of Iraq through an international solicitation, anyone can bid on that contract. And then the Government of Iraq receives a letter of offer and acceptance and it is the Government of Iraq's decision on whether or not they accept that or not. There are examples right

now, non what we'd consider to be nonstandard weapons from a U.S. perspective for ammunition, none of that is provided by the government of the United States or United States companies and it is contracted globally.

REP16: And for General Babakir, how much money is going to be spent this year in—by the MOD for bilateral weapons procurement?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: MNF, especially U.S. Army, all the destroyed camps, they were constructed by their own money just like Presidential Palace, military bases, all training camps and buildings. The Iraqi Ministry of Defense didn't—they didn't build anything until now. They assist us in arming our forces and when we spend, as I said before, they spent one-third of what we have spent. And they assist the Ministry of Interior, not just the Ministry of Defense. Even the equipment, even beds and other things; everything that is used by the Iraqi Army is equipped by the U.S. Army. The last question or the last one.

REP17: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: General, sir, keep equipping Iraqi Army with such a picture and with a large amount of money. Do you think it will make a risk for

Kurdistan region? Thank you.

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: I guarantee you that Iraqi Army when it was established—first established in 1981 was not—it was called—it was not the responsible of what had happened but it's due to the commanders. The Iraqi Army is ready and the recent Iraqi Army is a democratic army and it's army of a new country. We will not have any dictator to be in leadership of Iraq. Therefore, I trust the Iraqi Army more than any other security forces because I am keen to develop this and to arm this army because this is a symbol—the Iraqi Army is a symbol of our nation. An army lives with unstable neighbors. Therefore, we have army to protect more than 300—3,600 perimeters of borders. Therefore, we need an army even if it was a small army but developed and sufficient. Insha'Allah, we have economic sources to provide these money for the Iraqi Army.

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

Sir, if I could—can I add a comment to that. There should be no mistake on behalf of anyone that the Iraqi Army is a national army. Just over the past year, it has made tremendous, tremendous impact in areas throughout Iraq. Just as short as 9 to 12 months ago, unimaginable perhaps back last summer that battalions and division headquarters from Al Anbar Province would be utilized throughout

the breadth and depth of Iraq, but that's exactly what has happened. Under General Babakir's leadership, certainly under the minister's leadership and the prime minister's leadership, brigades from the 1st Division, stationed in Al Anbar, deployed to Diyala Province.

UNIDENTIFIED: [Unintelligible.]

**BRIG GEN
SWAN:**

In just a minute. The same thing happening today in Basra where the 1st Division Headquarters, a division – an entire division's worth of soldiers deployed to Basra in less than five days. Any army in the world would find that type of a deployment a very difficult one to do over the distances that the Iraqi Army did that within today. Battalions from across Iraq, coming directly into Baghdad as part of Fardh Al Qanoon, as a part of the Iraqi surge in Fardh Al-Qanoon for the Baghdad security plan. A battalion from the 7th Division being deployed to Diwianiyah and operating in such a way as it gained the trust and confidence of the Iraqi people; a tremendous accomplishment on behalf of the national Iraqi or the Army of Iraq. And please, again, make no mistake; it is a national army. Thank you.

REP17: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: About the operation—military operations in Kirkuk and Mosul, the

second question. Are U.S. Army operations—is there any joint coordination to Peshmerga operations in Mosul and Kirkuk?

GEN BABAKIR: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: There's no operations for Peshmerga. The presence there is just for the Iraqi Army and the operations conducted by the Iraqi Army. As the leadership of Peshmerga, there is no—there is nothing happened without any coordination with the Iraqi Army. There was a demand from the governor of Mosul to have assistance of Peshmerga at that time. The U.K. came to Mosul and secured the situation and then delivered security responsibility to the Iraqi Army. The last base was the military academy there. They were coordination—coordinating with the Iraqi Army and police there. I'm ashamed of calling people Shi'ites and Kurds. We want to work together for the Iraq and to beat terrorists and to help the state and to kiss him from his front head who help Iraq. If we have enough force, why we need the friend's army? Thank you very much.