

PRESS CONFERENCE:

**Major General Kevin J. Bergner, Spokesman, Multi-National Force – Iraq
Dr. Tahseen al-Sheikhly, Civilian Spokesman, Operation Fardh Al-Qanoon**

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PARTICIPANTS:

**Major General Kevin Bergner
Dr. Tahseen al-Sheikhly**

REPORTERS:

**Gina Chon from The Wall Street Journal
Ahmed Jassem from Al-Arabiya Newspaper**

**Unidentified reporters from Mehda Newspaper, Biladi TV, Radio Sawa, Asafiyah
Newspaper, Al-Iraqiya TV, Salam TV, Nina Agency, IBA Agency, and Aswat Iraq.**

REPORTERS 1-16

***REP1 = REPORTER 1**

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Thank you for attending the press conference today and especially those days it's really hot to carry on a press conference. But, yes, we do have electricity now. I'd like to welcome General Bergner today, the spokesman for the Multi-National Forces. We don't have any audio. There is a technical problem.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Okay. We'll just hold on for a minute.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Yes.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Let everybody get rearranged.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Okay? [Continues speaking in Arabic.]

INT:

No. Still...

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Okay. Let's do a quick test; 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: It's okay? It's [unintelligible].

INT: No. They still cannot hear anything.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Sir, can you hear me?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Yes, I can.

INT: Good.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.] 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – test.

UNIDENTIFIED: We're good. We're good.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: Very good.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Great.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

But the camera is not... The other camera. It's okay? It's okay?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Testing 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

It's okay? It's all okay? [Continues speaking in Arabic.] On the cameras there is no [unintelligible] and they want to record it. Okay?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Right.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Okay. I'd like to talk today about an important topic. That is the reconstruction in Sadr City and the Shola neighborhood. We know that the services in Baghdad generally and we have a concentration on those two places and their allocations. And there is a good dedication to those two places because those two places are heavily populated and were neglected for several years. And we want to raise the living standards and the economic standard and the

infrastructure in those two places. Regarding the services for those two places, of course, as you know, a committee was formed to set the priorities and the projects for Sadr City and Shola. Those plans make counting of the damages and houses that have been damaged. Also this includes cars, et cetera. Also, we have the Jamilah Market and the rehabilitation of the stores there. And also compensating the tradesmen that were affected by the fire in Jamilah Market. Also, opening the door for the market as well to resume its normal activity. We also assigned the members in the committee and also representatives in the ministries to provide the services and the projects according to their ministries. As far as electricity is concerned—and you can see the pictures that have been taken recently. Those are in Sadr City and you can see for yourselves how much those pictures depict. There are projects in electricity, water, cleaning, and also restoring the infrastructure, the humanitarian aids to this place. And we are very pleased to provide all those services and electricity. And I know everyone has a problem. We're not talking about the general issue of electricity, but we're talking about the shortage of power in Sadr City due to the military operations. And we're talking about a timetable to.... We also established power transmitters. Also, we brought other generators with 500 kVAs. We also maintained the high-voltage power lines that go for two kilometers. And you can see those things in the phot-

...footages. And hopefully we can see the slides. Those pictures depict what I've been talking about. Also, lighting poles. We also rehabilitated lots of those things in Sadr City and replaced lots of illumination poles. And we are also seeking to establish a new system to illuminate the city that works on the solar system in Sadr City. And this is also part of the projects. Recently, and due to the maintenance and maintenance operations and the problems that we faced in providing electricity in general, there has been a huge shortage for the city...in Sadr City. We have restored electricity to the hospitals especially and also to the operators there in Sadr City. This was part of the projects that was implemented by the Ministry of Electricity. A major point that the people always ask about is the compensations. We have opened a center that provides the compensations that has a mechanism that verifies the damages. And we pay the citizen the compensations. We don't want just to give the citizen the amount of money or compensation and he doesn't carry on with the reconstruction. We expect that we will receive the applications...around 1,250 applications regarding this and those include the houses that have been damaged; like 250, 69 vehicles, 307 stores that include...some of them are in Jamilah Market. In addition to that.... And those numbers came through the applications that were presented to the humanitarian assistance by the Multi-National Forces to the people in Sadr City. And they

compensated those people and they worked on 550 applications. And they are working on compensating the families in Sadr City and giving them money or a certain amount of money to the people. We also follow up the same mechanism to compensate the people in addition to the other services. The pictures that you see gives you an idea about the projects and the development that happen to it. We're talking about several weeks. The projects started in Sadr City and you can see that, as depicted in the pictures, with this capacity. And I think that they are huge projects and they will restore the infrastructure for the city and will provide job opportunities for the citizens in Sadr City and will eliminate the unemployment. And if there is violence and the unemployment was the cause, that's why we need to eliminate the unemployment in the societies. And this is our job. Providing job opportunities is done through providing the true projects that serve the people and also provide jobs for the unemployed personnel. And as you know, there's the percentage of the accomplishment for the projects that are being developed. And sometimes for some projects you can see that there are three shifts working on...in a certain project to expedite the project. Those include several aspects like water, electricity – like in Fallah area, for instance, and in other streets. And they're clear and the slides, as you see, we have allocated money from them from Amanat Baghdad and also from the reconstruction committee of Sadr City

and Shola. And other similar projects are now being done in Shola but Shola needs less rehabilitation. And that's why we are concentrating our...on Sadr City currently. And this is an important thing. The Jamilah project in particular was full with several problems that is due to the fire and also there were several problems like the trash. And in one of the pictures you can see that now Jamilah Market, with cooperation from the supporting sides and the Multi-National Forces that exerted a lot of effort, we have cleaned the Jamilah Market completely. We have a picture from the Google Earth taken by the Google Earth for the Jamilah Market that covers the whole market. And I was hoping that I could download that picture to show it to you. And you can go and see that this black line is gone and the area now is clean of all those trash that used to be in the past. And those efforts will result in something. And we also hope to present something to the citizens and especially in Sadr City because this is what we are talking today about. And we hope that those efforts could go to other places in Baghdad and in Iraq. If security was an obstacle in one place for the services...for providing the services, now we can say that there is no security obstacle; security has been achieved. And we have to accept the challenge that is ahead so that we can provide the best services to the citizen. And this is what we have to do, all of us. There is a follow up and the minister of electricity used to go or make tours

himself in Baghdad to punish those who violate the electrical lines due to the shortages. Now I think for the past four days the power is better. I thank you now and I think you will have questions. But now I will give space to my friend, General Bergner, so that he could give his remarks about the Multi-National Forces.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Shukran jaziilan. Thank you, Dr. Sheikhly. Good afternoon everyone. As Dr. Sheikhly pointed out in his remarks, security operations in Iraq have enabled progress in a number of different ways and in a number of different areas. Those security operations continue to make progress and the number of overall security incidents remains at levels not seen since 2004. These security improvements are enabling the political, economic, and social activities that Dr. Sheikhly referred to in his remarks. The Government of Iraq is now undertaking broader efforts to provide for those services that were not possible a year ago. And the government is getting things done using Iraqi assets, guided by Iraqi employees to help the Iraqi people. Though much work obviously still remains to be done in a number of sectors. One example though is in Iraq's recently concluded date palm spraying campaign. Dates have historically been an important symbol of Iraq and its agricultural abundance. In the past, dates have been Iraq's second

largest export after oil. During April and May of each year, the date palm trees here in Iraq face problems of infestation from an insect that feeds on the trees' sap so they require treatment with an insecticide that is best delivered using an aerial spraying method. This year, under the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture, the government's aerial date palm spraying campaign covered approximately 270,000 donums or nearly 170,000 acres in the provinces of Babil, Baghdad, Diyala, Karbala, Najaf, and Wasit. The area covered by the government's spraying campaign increased by over 33% from their efforts last year. And areas south of Baghdad and in Diyala Province which were not able to be sprayed last year due to the security situation, were sprayed for the first time in six years. Using two of the government's Mi-2 helicopters, Iraqi pilots flew 336 spraying sorties this year under difficult time constraints and challenging weather conditions. Iraqi planning for the 2009 date palm spraying campaign is already underway with the Ministry of Agriculture having already appropriated some \$20 million for the necessary helicopters and spare parts. Progress in the agriculture sector and other improvements are a direct result of the security gains around Iraq and the growing capacity of Iraqi forces, the increasing support of Iraq's citizens for the rule of law have been a key factor in reducing the levels of violence. Iraqi police and soldiers are working closely with local residents, collecting

intelligence on criminal activity, and uncovering illegal weapons caches from criminal groups. In Basra, on Saturday, the 7th of June, the Iraqi Army's 52nd Brigade found a series of weapons caches and detained four special groups criminals. The caches contained over 530 mortars and other various munitions. On Monday, June 9th, in the Al-Fursi District of Basra, Iraqi police discovered another stockpile. This one was of explosively-formed penetrators or EFPs and EFP-making components. They found them in a room that was walled off at the back of a house. They found some 300 kilograms of bulk explosives, 150 kilograms of C4 explosives, 7 large explosively-formed projectiles, and 15 other smaller explosively-formed projectiles and armor piercing ammunition. Since the beginning of Operation Sawlat Al-Fursan on March 25th, Iraqi forces have found 378 weapons caches in and around Basra. To date, the total number of weapons collected in those weapons caches includes some 3,300 mortars, over 500 rockets, some 1,400 RPGs and over 400 explosiv-...improvised explosive devices, and more than 1,700 small arms. Iraqi forces in Sadr City are also finding significant numbers of weapons caches. And on Saturday, June 7th, Iraqi Army soldiers found six different weapons caches that bring the total number of weapons stockpiles in Sadr City to 124 that have been found since the beginning of Operation A`Salaam on May 20th. The weapons collected include over 75

EFPs, some 200 improvised explosive devices, 360 mortar rounds, and over 200 rocket-propelled grenades and close to 800 rifles. As Iraqi forces and Iraqi citizens cooperate to remove weapons from the hands of extremists before they can be used, their government is increasingly capable of being able to provide the services that Dr. Sheikhly talked about to the Iraqi people and allow businesses to reopen, allow children to go back to school, revitalize the agriculture sector as they are in the process of doing, and allow Iraqis to rebuild their lives. There is still much tough work ahead, but the steady progress in Basra, in Baghdad, and in Mosul are now providing better opportunities for the citizens of Iraq. Shukran jaziilan. Thank you. And I'll defer to Dr. Sheikhly to take questions.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic for 10 seconds without translation.]

INT:

Now we will take the questions.

REP1:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP1: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Question to Dr. Sheikhy. There is the...an organization...an international organization for rescuing the people...the Iraqis which also will exert efforts alongside the efforts of...your efforts. So is it possible that one of the officials of this organization could...because the people in Sadr City want to know what further things or services you could also provide. Is it possible that...utilize the things that the committee of reconstruction provided? And we also would like to unify the efforts between different people through the priorities that you have set and also through the priorities of other organizations and what they see that is best for the...for Sadr City. Because you've said now that Sadr City is important. You give us money but we're not sure that there will be reconstruction. And also, organizing the whole compensation thing. So we hope that the committee could work on...like an organization; it could just assign the house for a contractor and he could take care of it.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, we thank you for the suggestion.

REP1: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: And also, a question for Jamilah Market. For the past press conference with Major General Qassim Atta, there was a question from the tradesmen to remove the corrupted meat and unexpired[sic] food and we have seen the good pictures as you have showed and we are really grateful for that. So have you contributed also in this? And question to General Bergner. Recently there has been a violation and the Green Zone was targeted several times. Was those attacks coming from Sadr City as well? And why have we witnessed any attacks against the Green Zone? And why has there been any attacks or violence in Baghdad recently?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Well, all the humanitarian organizations that would like to offer help we do present them. And like the Red Crescent, for instance, went and provided services in Sadr City. We have a center that is called...near the Umdafur[ph] Square and provides humanitarian aids. And there are staff that provides also services to the people. And we welcome also the work of the organizations that.... And I have to say that several organizations came and provided services. We do want them to come and we do emphasize the effort of the civil societies to come and also do their part in serving the societies.

And we do want this. As for the compensations, we said reconstruction and the compensations and providing money, this has to do with the committee. We are still also debating about this. But there is one principle; that is the citizen should be compensated. This is the major point that I want to stress on for...in Sadr City. For instance, one, we have to compensate the people due to the military operations. And we also should provide the right services to them. The second point that I would like also to stress in Sadr City is that the unemployment due to the population there is actually a lot. That's why we have to eliminate the unemployment through providing the real projects that really serve the people because the economic factor is really an important one and we have to deal with it seriously. And that's why...and this is what the committee has dealt with. And I think General Bergner will answer the other questions.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Yeah. And the improvements in the security situation in Baghdad and the overall decrease in the number of security incidents overall that I referred to still requires a concerted and persistent effort by Iraqi forces and coalition forces to further reduce those who are inciting violence. And so there have been attacks that include mortar attacks. There have...continue to be acts of violence,

certainly here in Baghdad. And so it is a continuing effort by both Iraqi and coalition forces. But I would point out that the presence of Iraqi forces in Sadr City and in many other neighborhoods of Baghdad have significantly improved the enforcement of the rule of law which was specifically what the prime minister's intent was and purpose was in undertaking these operations. And they are being enabled, significantly enabled by the cooperation by...from the Iraqi citizens in those neighborhoods. There is a much closer working relationship now between Iraqi citizens and their forces that are...that is directly enabling the improvements in security. So there are still incidents of indirect fire that are taking place. And Iraqi forces and coalition forces are continuing to work against those. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Thank you. [Unintelligible.]

REP2:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Mehda Newspaper. Dr. Sheikhly, according to the information from the Multi-National Forces and the United States, there will be...the projects will be...on the cost of the projects will be under the Iraqis or on the Iraqis. Have you talked about giving any grants or receiving any grants from the Americans? And the other question.

Could you confirm to me that the joint forces detained a leader in the special groups that trains Iraqis on making IEDs in Kut? [I think the second question was for General Bergner.]

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic. Translation was not provided for the first 49 seconds of Dr. Sheikhly's response.]

INT:

...and the security provided us with basics. And those money—we have a lot of resources and we need to find the right mechanisms as well and also through finding the reconstruction and also providing the good projects and also providing the good services and also the job opportunities to provide them. And those things are the strategy of the government. Now we have the cooperation. And the European Union and other countries are also showed readiness to provide help. There is cooperation between those countries and this is an indication that there is humanitarian aid coming from everywhere. And I think that this will give a chance for countries to help each other in providing services for the people and also providing services to each country. And I think Gen-....

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Yeah. And I would add one other point to that. There is actually a significant effort underway by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, who we work closely with, to offer a microloan program to

the citizens of Iraq, particularly those who are seeking a small business loan or a small business grant to restart a business or to re-establish their livelihood. On a recent visit to Waziriyah I saw first-hand literally hundreds of Iraqi citizens in line at the Waziriyah Vo-Tech Center which is also a Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs office so specifically to process their applications for those kinds of grants or loans, to be able to have the access to capital to restart their businesses. So that program is an Iraqi program by the Government of Iraq that is underway that is also enabling the opportunities for the citizens of Iraq to restart their businesses. And in answer to your second question, coalition forces did detain a special groups leader near Al-Kut. He was involved in the trafficking of improvised explosive devices and facilitating training of other special groups members specifically related to that kind of development and deployment of improvised explosive devices. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP2:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Can we know the name of the person that you have detained?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

The individual's name will be released once we get to a point in understanding the intelligence and exploiting the intelligence associated with that. Shukran.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

Yes.

REP3:

Gina Chon. Wall Street Journal. Now that the Jamilah Market and other parts of Sadr City are coming back to life, what is the government's plan in terms of possibly having more openings in the concrete wall that is dividing the city at the moment especially because residents, now that the market is coming back to life, that they would like to have more business, foot traffic come through there and also even more vehicle crossings to help facilitate some of the reconstruction efforts. Thank you.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

Thank you. [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, at the beginning, the security barriers or the concrete barriers are not in Sadr City but they are in all places in Baghdad. And the reasons are security in the first. And the security sometimes or establishing security and the Baghdad Commanding Operations

establishes certain procedures that protect and serves the citizen and that's why we established those security barriers. And those are temporary things and will be removed once the threat is over. And this is our job. Yes, I do expect that those things could cause problems in trafficking and also...but even we have thought about this as well. Now we've allocated four transportation li...tr...methods or...and buses for the Ministry of Transportation to contribute in solving the traffic problem in Sadr City. And also we have established routes for those buses that the citizens use which also provide transportation. We find solutions for the transportation for the people in Sadr City. And we have also set the number of the buses. And by next week you will see that there are 80 buses that work in Sadr City. But those security barriers will remain and those are one of the requirements of security. Thank you.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

And if I could, I'll just...

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

Yeah. Please.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

I have one other point that.... You know, I was told that Baghdad Operations Command did open another access point specifically in

the wall you mentioned. And as General Abud and others consider the security arrangements there, that that is their intention is to continue to improve access overall. And I think what Dr. Sheikhly refers to is consistent with what General Qassim pointed out yesterday which is four other areas that they are improving access to the other areas of Sadr City as well.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP4:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Dr. Sheikhly, we'd like to ask about the amount of money that had been allocated to compensate the people in Sadr City. And have you set a timetable to provide the money? And what is the number of those who will benefit or have benefitted from those compensations until now?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, we have opened the center and we are waiting for the people to come and apply and give us the applications to receive the compensations. The amount of damages and the compensation is done through a technical committee, through engineers and

expertise who will go and view the damaged house, for instance, and will also assess the damage. That's why we give the compensation. So we have to give them the right amount of money to recon-...to rebuild his home again. That's why we have open allocations. We have \$100 million for Sadr City and \$50 billion[sic] for Shola neighborhood and some of them are allocated for the compensation. We still have not compensated anyone. But we started the survey now and that is based on what the Multi-National Forces done before us and we are following their steps through compensate the people. And we have seen the people that applied for the coalition forces. And also we have seen that they have surveys and documents...and legal documents. And I think this is the procedure that will help us and this is what we will do in our work. But our major concern is we compensate the people.

REP5: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Bilad TV. Dr. Tahseen Sheikhly, the campaign of reconstruction in Sadr City, is it just a temporary thing now due to the military operations or it's...or do we have any future plans for it? And also, another question to General Bergner. The long-term agreement between Iraq and the United States where there were so many questions because the United States say that they would like to use

the Iraqi soil so that they can carry out their activities and operations. But recently the spokesperson for the United...for the American Embassy, Mirembe Nantongo, said that there has been an agreement with the Iraqi side so that there will be an agreement on the Iraqi conditions in particular. So we would like to know if there is an update about this.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, the money that we have allocated for Sadr City does not mean that there are no other projects. We have \$1 billion that should be spent in Baghdad. And also, I've been with...in Amanat Baghdad. We have a \$3 billion contracts and those go for several years and that's why we have a budget for that and plans for that. And there are also projects that are being conducted inside the city and those are one of the priorities in the...in providing the services like the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade have projects and the Ministry of Electricity, Amanat Baghdad – all those sides have projects to carry out. We also provide services to help the economic factor and li-...and also to raise the living standard for the people. Because we have to...you have to provide the basic services so that the people could live a normal life. And this is the right of the Iraqi citizen. That's why we'd like to raise the economic factor and the

level. We will not establish the infrastructure and work on it because the government is working on it. But we have seen now is that we are working on several aspects that...urgent ones that the people need in Sadr City. In addition to that, we have three soccer playgrounds. Those all will be rehabilitated. But, of course, there has to be a follow up for those projects and a follow up for those playgrounds that they could maintain a good status. But hopefully we will be...we will work on those things. Yes, General Bergner.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

There has been a great deal of discussion about the negotiations that continue. Ambassador Satterfield spoke to many of you here yesterday. Ambassador Crocker, in his remarks in Washington, and my friend, Mirembe Nantongo, from the U.S. Embassy has been a constant source and point of information. And we encourage you to continue to engage her on those questions as they present themselves because they very much want to make sure you have accurate and up to date and correct information on those issues. Among the things that they have pointed out very consistently is, first of all, there has been some misunderstanding and misinformation reported that there was a desire for permanent bases or a pursuit of permanent bases. And the truth is there is no intent to seek permanent bases, no desire for permanent bases for U.S. forces

here in Iraq. The other misinformation concerned how...what would be the use of U.S. forces that would be here. And some had suggested there might be some offensive purpose that they would be involved in and that is not true. And there is no...there is no desire to seek that kind of a purpose. U.S. forces would be here at the...for the specific purpose of supporting the Government of Iraq, the sovereign Government of Iraq in specific ways the Government of Iraq so decides in the course of these negotiations. These negotiations are underway and so there will be discussions back and forth about what the specific points and arrangements are because they are a work in progress. But both the Government of Iraq and Ambassador Satterfield and Ambassador Crocker have made very clear that once they get to a point where those negotiations come to some agreements that that would be a very transparent and public discussion about what those points of agreement actually end up being. And so that is the framework that Ambassador Crocker and Ambassador Satterfield have publicly explained which is one based on ongoing negotiations between two sovereign countries. The result of those will reinforce the sovereignty of Iraq and clearly respect the sovereign choices that Iraq chooses to make in defining that relationship that goes forward into the future. And once they get to that point, there would be a basis then for being transparent and public which, as the Government of Iraq has said, the Council

of Representatives will be the basis for deciding whether that agreement is acceptable to the Iraqi people. Shukran jaziilan.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP6:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Question to General Bergner. We know that the recent war in Sadr City or the operations caused several widows and orphanages[sic] and there were also widows and several due to the terrorist activities. Will you also provide financial support to them? And have you determined the amount of money that will be given to those people or the projects that will be allocated for those persons in particular? And how?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

There is a...as Dr. Sheikhly pointed out, the...part of the reconstruction program that the Government of Iraq has put in place is specifically to address the sacrifices of the Iraqi citizens that they have suffered during the course of the terrorist attacks in Sadr City and the military operations necessary to reduce the security threats there. And so part of that Iraqi program is specifically to compensate the families of martyrs and to provide for the fam-...for

the housing repair, reconstruction necessary for the citizens of Iraq. Coalition forces also accept claims. Claims are able to be submitted for consideration for damage that might have been conducted or might have been caused. And as Dr. Sheikhly pointed out, the coalition is also very committed to rapidly processing those claims as quickly as possible to provide for the needs of Iraq citizens. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP7:

As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

`Alaykum Salam.

REP7:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Question from Radio Sawa. Dr. Tahseen Sheikhly. Question about the Serafiya Bridge. This bridge is...has...was inaugurated but still not...it's not being used. And question to General Bergner. What is the stance of the American forces from the Iraqi...Iranian agreement now, the security and military one? How do you view

this Iranian-Iraqi agreement?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, we know that the Serafiya Bridge is a symbol of challenge. And, of course, we will...we do intend to open it but we need certain procedures so that we could establish some machines of detecting the explosives, for instance. And this takes some time. And in addition to that, the city council in Qadamiyah said that we need some time to pave the roads that lead to the bridge. And that's why we are giving them some time until they finish their projects. And it will be opened for the citizens, of course, because we did inaugurate it and Prime Minister Maliki was there and was...it has been inaugurated officially. But the bridge was built in a very fast time through Iraqis and Iraqi efforts. And thank you for the question.

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

Yeah. I am familiar with the media reports of what you asked about and certainly...we certainly respect the sovereign choice of the Government of Iraq to enter into agreements and commitments with their neighbors. Iraq has done that throughout its history. And so as they consider their arrangements and their relationship with their

neighbors, those are sovereign choices by the Government of Iraq that all of us in the Multi-National Force fully respect. But really to comment on the details of it is something I can't do much of today. We haven't seen this. This is something that is really the Government of Iraq's prerogative and it's still very much up to them to characterize what those agreements are and exactly what the circumstances of those are. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP8:

As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

REP8:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Asafiyah Newspaper. My question is since you've started the reconstruction in Sadr City, is it possible...do you have enough security in Sadr City now? And those outlaws. Have you eliminated the outlaws in Sadr City? And the second question. When will the Multi-National Forces and the Iraqi forces will leave Sadr City?

Because it's like a military operation or field there.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, the security situation in Sadr City now is better and we don't have any problems until now. And we have...we were...we will make a tour next week in Sadr City and...in several sectors. And our troops are there and this is an indication that there is cooperation between the citizens and the Iraqi security forces. You didn't ask me why do we have checkpoints in Karrada. You didn't object about the checkpoints in Karrada but you object about the checkpoints in Sadr City. And I think this is something you should take into consideration. There are certain procedures that we leave them to the experts, the military. Are you now secured? If you are secured inside Sadr City, this is what we want. The presence of the policemen and the soldier would give you more confidence that the government is there and the gangs will not go back to those places. And this is the main goal. And those people and those soldiers will not consider or hinder your movement. And you can go on living normally there. And they are there to provide security. And this is what we do. And those are only security procedures and....

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran jaziilan. You want to comment?

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

I think that was a great answer, Dr. Sheikhly.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Laughs.]

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

I would not presume to qualify your remarks. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Thank you. [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP9:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Al-Iraqiya TV. The Awakenings in Sadr City...have you established or formed any Awakenings in Sadr City? And was it formed from the citizens inside Sadr City? And question to General Bergner. Will there be any cooperation with the Awakenings in Sadr City? Have you...is there any cooperation between you and the Awakenings or it's just the Iraqis and the citizens? Or have you ever formed an Awakening in Sadr City.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Well, this is...this assumption is actually true. The citizens and their cooperation and all of them are cooperating with us and with the Iraqi security forces. There are some people that provide the services to the people and the Multi-National Forces provided that through providing some people and giving them some job opportunities and to provide the services. We are trying to create job opportunities. We are not trying to make obstacles. I don't think that there is Awakening in Sadr City. No, I have not heard about this. The Awakenings is a term that we call in places in outside Baghdad and those are the support councils. And I think...I don't know if General Bergner, do you have anything to add?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

No. I think Dr. Sheikly explained that very well. The point that I would re-emphasize is that the majority of Sadr City is a place where Iraqi Army forces and Iraqi police forces are operating. And so that question is really one better answered by General Abud and the Baghdad Operations Command in terms of how they are cooperating with local citizens and local neighborhoods. Shukran.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP10: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Salam TV. Question to General Bergner. In a joint press conference with the deputy chief of staff, the Iraqi one, you've said that there are no military operations in Shola because you don't have enough troops there. And now Shola neighborhood has one entrance and the people are suffering from going in and out from that place. And this created a huge problem and suffering for those citizens. So my question is in case that there will be military operations in Shola neighborhood, when will it start so that the people know how to resume their life normally? When will the operations start in the Shola neighborhood?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: I don't recall the specific comment that you made reference to. Certainly there are security operations underway in the vicinity of Shola neighborhood and they are a combination of Iraqi and coalition efforts to deal with the security problems that are there. Specifics about when there might...when there could be a broader effort or a broader application of force would certainly not be something that we would talk about ahead of time for all the reasons you would expect because that would very much undermine the security of Iraqi forces and coalition forces that might be engaged in those. And so that's...any future operations would

always come at the direction and the consideration of the Baghdad Operations Command. And the timing and the circumstances would be well coordinated with General Abud having the leadership, really, in determining how those would go forward. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I'd like to comment about your question. The...if you...if we open all the entrances in Shola neighborhood, do you think that it will witness a security...a good security situation? Because there will be a flow of the armed men from other places. Well, we did have one entrance and, yes, we do know that it causes suffering to the people but it also...it eliminates the violations and the flow of armed men from other places.

REP11:

As-Salāmu `Alaykum. [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Nina Agency. In a press conference the minister of defense said that there are three stages...security stages in Sadr City and the first stage is to enter the city and 'til finally eliminating the armed groups. My question is did the security forces accomplish all those three stages? And where are you if you haven't finished all of them?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:
INT:

[Speaks in Arabic.]

Well, Operation Peace in Sadr City and as the lady have asked, the troops are deployed there in all the streets and the intersections. And it's a secured area. The military operations depends on the circumstances on the ground because everything depends on the circumstances on the ground. And I think that the goals have been achieved because the secu-...the city is secured. We have captured all those who carry weapon outside the government and the outlaws and the search and operation are ongoing. And a lot of weapons that General Atta told about and said that there are several weapon caches found by our security forces. We want to provide security to the people so that we could provide the services to the people.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation. Laughs]

REP12:

[Laughs. Shukran. Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

IBA Agency. Question to General Bergner. There was a report by the president saying that the Iraqi-American agreement will be signed at any circumstances. Can you say that it will not be passed to the Parliament to review it? Because President Bush said that the

agreement will be signed at any circumstances or at any case.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

I'm not sure of the specific quote that you are referring to but what the leadership of the United States has said on a number of occasions is that they are committed to working with the Government of Iraq to determine the basis for an agreement that would define the relationship between our two countries into the future and that they are committed to pursuing those negotiations to their successful conclusion. And Ambassador Satterfield and Ambassador Crocker have made clear their...they have set a goal at the end of July for pursuing those agreements and they have made clear their commitment to continuing negotiations within that basic timeframe. Shukran.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

[Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

Why do you assume...well, I'm not talking about policy but probably we are ready to...so you are just making the assumption that it will not be passed to the Parliament?

REP12:

[Replies briefly in Arabic without translation.]

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Nothing in Iraq that doesn't go for the Parliament and especially this Parliament.

REP12: [Replies in Arabic.]

INT: The Iraqi-Iranian one was not approved by the Parliament.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in briefly in Arabic without translation.]

MAJ GEN BERGNER: I really...it's not my position...

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Laughs.]

MAJ GEN BERGNER: ...to get into that discussion. But I would point out the Government of Iraq...

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation. Laughs.]

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

The Government of Iraq has said that the agreement that is being negotiated between our countries is one that they intended to provide to the Parliament in a public and transparent fashion. So I believe that is the latest position that the Government of Iraq has established. Shukran.

**DR AL-
SHEIKHLY:**

[Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP13:

[Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Aswat Iraq to General Bergner. Through the daily reports on the commanders in field, the American forces, could you give us the number of the violations, the attacks in Sadr City? And also, the second question to Dr. Sheikhly. You've said that the minister of displacement and migration said that the allocations of money for Sadr City is not enough. So how would you comment about this?

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Well, first, we will get with the Baghdad Operations Command because, as I mentioned, the preponderance of operations and forces in Sadr City today are taking place with the Iraqi Army forces under General Abud's command. And so we will check with the Baghdad Operations Command and find out what the number of incidence is

and so forth. I can tell you that since they conducted...began conducting operations the Iraqi forces have found some 124 weapons caches in the course of their operations. And I laid out in my opening remarks the range in the scope that that encompassed. Shukran.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Shukran. [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT:

I think there was a briefing by General Qassim Atta and he will say that if there are any violations in Sadr City—and I don't think that there are any violations or any attacks in Sadr City happening. And finding those weapon caches is just an indication that the operation is going in a smooth way. And the minister.... Yes, the \$100 million is not enough. We do need more. And that's why Amanat Baghdad is going to disburse \$450 million about. But now the \$100 million are trying to invest it in a way that would serve the people. So I think...and I do think that the people do deserve much more than this. But for the time being, we have \$100 million allocated.

REP14:

As-Salāmu `Alaykum.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

`Alaykum salam.

REP14:

Ahmed Jassem. [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT:

Al-Arabiya Newspaper. The Iraqi citizen felt...he was pleasant that there were any...there were machines that will detect the explosives. But what we see now in Peace Operation that there are several kinds of weapons and explosives that come to Baghdad and we still don't know why those things enter Baghdad. And as you know, the citizen is...this is actually a problem for the citizen. So what do you have for the future so that you could prevent the entrance of those weapons to the safe places?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

Well, the use of technology is really a good one and it helps us. And it increases the explosives and how to find about those explosives. And...but everything has to do with the intelligence and also with the cooperation of the people. Now we are working from a...we have based...our work is based on the intelligence and the people are cooperating with us. And everything goes through the citizen. This is really a pleasant thing because it also builds confidence between both sides, the citizen and the Iraqi security forces. And this confidence will prevent the entrance of the...such explosives to

threaten the life of the people.

REP15: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: Dr. Sheikhly, what are the procedures after...that will be done after you open the four entrance in Sadr City and what will happen during the elections?

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Yes, of course, we will open further entrances in Sadr City and I don't know any details about the elections. And we will try to open as much entries as much as we can for Sadr City. And I hope this will be the last question.

REP16: [Asks question in Arabic.]

INT: General Bergner, is the American shortage or the incapability of...told you that or the Congress ask that Iraqis should pay for the cost of the money? Or is there any other reason to propose for that, that the Iraqis should bear the cost of the projects, for instance?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: I'm not sure I understood that question.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks briefly in Arabic.]

INT: Yeah. Even Dr. Sheikhly didn't understand. Oh, he's talking about the economic shortage on problems.

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Hmm.

INT: Is it a...is this the reason that you saying that the GOI should take care of the costs?

MAJ GEN BERGNER: Actually, what I was pointing out is that the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs has a specific program in place and underway that directly is available to Iraqi citizens for microgrants and small business loans to help them in a range of situations.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

MAJ GEN BERGNER: That has nothing to do with a shortage of infor-...or a policy decision. It's simply an important opportunity that's available to the

citizens of Iraq. That's the point that I was trying to make to you.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks briefly in Arabic without translation.]

REP16: [Replies briefly in Arabic without translation.]

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: [Speaks in Arabic.]

INT: Let me allow you...

DR AL-SHEIKHLY: The shortage of additional support from the United States makes you budget from the Iraqi balance not....

MAJ GEN BERGNER: I understand. But let me just...let me make this point which I think is what you're asking about. The Government of Iraq is undertaking a broad range of reconstruction programs. And those reconstruction programs are...they are in a number of communities but in particular [in] Basra, Baghdad, Mosul. And in those places the Government of Iraq has allocated funds specifically to address the reconstruction requirements. That has nothing to do with a balance of responsibility between the United States government and the

Government of Iraq. And if there is another component to this, I'd be glad to talk to you afterwards about exactly what your question is, but I still don't understand and that's the third time. So I think what we'll do is just come see me afterwards and we'll try to get to the root of what your question is. I do want to point out though that the effort here...

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:

[Speaks in Arabic.] briefly in Arabic without translation.]

MAJ GEN BERGNER:

... the effort here is very much a shared one. There is a great deal of effort underway by the Multi-National Force in Sadr City to support citizens there and generators and projects and compensation and so forth. There are microgrants and microloans being offered by Multi-National Force units. But there are also complementary and reciprocal programs that are being done by the Government of Iraq and so there isn't an absence of either one. There is the teamwork really. The co-presence of those efforts on both parts. Shukran jaziilan. Thank you very much.

DR AL-SHEIKHLY:
INT:

Shukran jaziilan. You are welcome. [Speaks in Arabic.]

Thank you very much for attending today and for coming for this

press conference. Thank you.

**MAJ GEN
BERGNER:**

Shukran jaziilan, Doctor. Shukran.