

Department Of Defense Press Briefing By Brig. Gen. Glynn Via Teleconference From Baghdad, Iraq

Press Operations

Brigadier General James F. Glynn, deputy commanding general, Special Operations Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve; Major Adrian Rankine-Galloway, Pentagon Spokesman

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MAJOR ADRIAN RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Good morning, everyone. Today we're joined by Marine Brigadier General James F. Glynn, who is the deputy commanding general of Special Operations Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve. General Glynn is currently -- briefs us from Baghdad, Iraq, and is responsible for U.S. special operations activities in Iraq specifically.

With that, we'll start with a radio check.

General Glynn, sir, how do you hear us?

BRIGADIER GENERAL JAMES F. GLYNN: I have you very well, Adrian. Thanks. How about me?

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Very clearly. Why don't we get started, sir? Do you have an opening statement for us?

GEN. GLYNN: Say that again?

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Sir, we'll get started. If you have an opening statement for us?

GEN. GLYNN: Okay, yeah, sure. I could open up with a few comments, and then we'll turn it over to you, there, for questions.

So good morning, everyone.

Iraqi Security Forces continue to pursue the few ISIS fighters that seek to threaten the people of Iraq, and clear previously ISIS-occupied areas, making them safe for residents.

The campaign against ISIS has resulted in over 4.5 million people in Iraq liberated from the evil of ISIS, and we congratulate the government of Iraq on their success, and are proud to stand beside them.

However, we must not lose sight of the fact that much work remains to ensure the enduring defeat of this evil terrorist ideology.

ISIS has demonstrated its desire to return to its terrorist roots, with the bombings and attacks that have killed innocent civilians in Ramadi, Nasiriyah, Baghdad and elsewhere over the past several weeks.

Our Iraqi partners continue to provide security, which will increasingly include policing and border control functions to prevent the migration and re-emergence of the ISIS threat.

Through this success, the Coalition Joint Task Force remains committed to working with our Iraqi partners to root out and destroy the remaining ISIS fighters and the influence they attempt to peddle.

We anticipate this will take some time, since ISIS fighters are hiding in the mountains and amongst the civilian population. But it is necessary, in order to ensure the sustained security to Iraq, and guarantee the safety of the Iraqi people.

The ISF has proven itself a legitimate fighting force that has, and will continue, their momentum, provide security for the people of Iraq, and quell the rise of new insurgencies.

This has been shown in the last few weeks, as the ISF has destroyed over a hundred IEDs and thousands of pounds of explosives across Iraq.

As we look forward to the next stage in the campaign, the coalition will continue to assist in consolidating gains made over the past few years. This involves the stabilization of security and essential services, focused predominantly in areas where ISIS once dominated. And our Iraqi partners will make this happen.

This does not consist of nation-building or large construction projects. It instead focuses on returning the nation and people of Iraq to a state of normalcy. Residents can concentrate on earning a living, taking care of their families.

It means enabling local governance, moving towards self-sufficiency; in other words, getting back to a normal life, free from the threat of ISIS, and ensuring it doesn't return.

The CJTF will continue to be value added to our partners by providing training, equipment, advice and assistance that enables security and ultimately expanding the government's and non-governmental organizations' access to offer assistance to the people of Iraq, which will ultimately lead to more regional and global stability.

The government of Iraq is currently focused on providing essential services for people most affected by the campaign against ISIS. This is evident across Iraq as schools continue to open, people return to their homes and local security forces are established. Several weeks ago, the Iraqi police conducted a graduation ceremony for 300 new police officers.

An international aid agency has provided over 280,000 people across Iraq with access to clean water. Iraqi soldiers have helped repair desks so that children can return to school. And the United Nations migration agency recently announced that, since 2013, the number of Iraqis that have returned to their homes exceeds the number of displaced Iraqis previously reported.

For us in the Special Operations Joint Task Force here in Iraq, as an element of the CJTF, we continue to work with Iraqi security forces in many training missions.

Since the beginning of January 2015, the coalition has helped train over 120,000 Iraqi security forces, to include the counterterrorism force, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense forces.

Within the past couple months, 1,000 Iraqi men have graduated from the counterterrorism service's basic training, and 500 more are scheduled to graduate from CTS in the coming week. There are about 4,000 Iraqis who are currently undergoing coalition-enabled training, as well.

And the SOJTF works closely with counterterrorism, commando and SWAT forces to ensure violent extremism doesn't threaten the livelihood of the people of Iraq ever again. They are professional and capable forces committed to the future of Iraq, and we quite honestly take pride in their successes.

I'll show you an example that demonstrates their professionalism. During the height of conflict in Mosul, there was a CTS soldier on guard who observed several ISIS fighters moving toward his position. With no time to warn his teammates, he engaged one of the fighters.

The four remaining ISIS fighters unleashed a hail of gunfire on the CTS position, hitting this particular CTS soldier five times. With bravery, he continued to defend his position as another ISIS fighter attempted to enter through the back of the house. CTS soldier was able to shoot the fighter before he entered the home, but not before the combatant was able to detonate his suicide belt.

The blast from the detonation threw the already wounded CTS soldier into a wall, further injuring him. Still fighting, however, now alongside his awakened teammates, they were able to drive away the remaining ISIS fighters. And his actions reflect the courage, tenacity and strength it takes to be a member of the elite counterterrorism service here in Iraq and explain a little bit about the culture of the organization.

We applaud the successes of other elements of the Iraqi Security Forces, just about all of whom we've personally seen in action against ISIS. Their success has been evident time and again in the dismantling of threats and tyranny held on communities. We see this not only through the defeat of ISIS on the battlefield, but also through the marked drop in ISIS propaganda.

Although ISIS has been militarily defeated, we recognize the post-conflict challenges they present. As we recognize these challenges, we wish to extend our sympathies to those who were killed and injured in the suicide attack in a Baghdad market just yesterday.

This attack is another example of the cowardice, evil and the desperate acts that ISIS and other violent extremists who remain -- who want to remain relevant throughout this area of operation will execute.

We're dedicated to working with our partners on the permanent defeat of ISIS. The coalition will be here to help, as we have been thus far, and we look forward to the future that we all see as a safe, secure Iraq, where people can live their lives freely, with a government dedicated to protecting them.

And with that, I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Thank you, sir.

We'll start with Joe Tabet from Al Hurra.

Q: General Glynn, I would like to ask you about the border force that the U.S. is backing in Eastern Syria. If you could explain, give us more details about this force. And what are the implications of this decision of Turkey, when we heard, this morning, the Turkish president saying that the Turkish military will attack Afrin, and mainly the YPG in Afrin?

So, if you could address that, thank you.

GEN. GLYNN: Yeah, thanks for that question.

Unfortunately, I don't -- I don't have a lot of information on that particular subject. As it was stated in the opening, my emphasis, here in Baghdad, is on operations in Iraq.

And so what I can tell you is, as I mentioned, as our emphasis here, the Iraqi security force emphasis, returns and focuses on local policing and securing their borders. As you're aware, they -- ISIS has tried to take advantage of areas such as that, that would be seen as vulnerabilities. So I can -- I can tell you that that is important for the Iraqi security forces and something they're focused on, going forward.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Thank you.

Laurie Myroie with Kurdistan 24.

Q: Hi, General. Thank you very much for this -- for this briefing.

Since you're special operations, I wonder -- on Kurdistan 24, we hear of the Peshmerga and think of them as a kind of conventional army. But are there -- is there a special operations unit within the Kurdish forces?

GEN. GLYNN: I had a little bit of trouble hearing you. I think you asked about the Kurdish forces and what kind of capabilities they have.

Across Iraq, the security forces are arrayed to handle the situations that are presented to them. And so, as an example, I think about Kirkuk, where they have both a SWAT and a commando unit that are capable of handling any and all threats that emerge.

And I think you'll find, similarly -- we find, similarly, in just about every large population center, that you'll have some force that's focused exclusively on counterterrorism and the special weapons and tactics that would come with a police SWAT unit.

Q: Maybe I could make sure -- is there an equivalent of special forces within the Peshmerga, distinct from the regular Peshmerga, like there is, say, in the Iraqi army or in the U.S. Army?

GEN. GLYNN: No, there's -- there's no element that's distinguished separate, that I'm aware of, within the Peshmerga or -- or any of the forces.

Q: Okay. And let me ask you also about -- there are news reports that the Iraqis are preparing to -- an offensive against ISIS around Tuz Khurmatu. Is there coordination still ongoing between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi forces in attacking these ISIS remnants, do you know?

GEN. GLYNN: That one was a little bit hard to hear. Could you -- could you say the question again? I caught Tuz Khurmatu and the Kurds or the Iraqi forces in Peshmerga.

Q: Okay. There -- there are news reports that Iraq -- the Iraqi forces are preparing an offensive against ISIS remnants around Tuz Khurmatu, which is very -- you know, one of the disputed areas. Is there coordination between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi army for -- that is still ongoing for such an offensive or would that be the Iraqi army alone? Would -- would you be familiar with that?

GEN. GLYNN: Yes. I'm -- I'm familiar with the -- with the situation in the area of Tuz Khurmatu. And I know that -- like any place that has that kind of challenge, the -- the challenges to security that would put at risk the stability of a local area that it has the attention of any security force in the area. And -- and so, at a military level, there -- there is always discussions between any of the forces that could cooperate to achieve security in a local area and that is the case in Tuz Khurmatu.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Jeff Schogol, with Task and Purpose.

Q: Thank you, General. Has ISIS become an insurgency? If so, has the mission changed to counter-insurgency?

GEN. GLYNN: Thanks for that question Jeff. I would say that there -- it would be too early to make that kind of an assessment. I would tell you that I certainly look for those types of indicators. However, I -- it's just too soon.

There are still remnants of ISIS who reside in a cellular structure who seek to bring instability to local areas, in particular population centers. And that remains as it has for some time the focus of the Iraqi security forces and their counterterrorism forces specifically. This did not allow those elements to form into a network or something that could look like an insurgency.

Q: If I could follow up, if you have cells of ISIS committing terrorist acts, how is that not an insurgency?

GEN. GLYNN: Jeff, there's no indicator of any coordination. It -- it's merely a matter of -- of disparate cellular structures trying to have some legitimacy, some recognition. And frankly, to be, at this point, to be disruptive. I think that's what you saw in the double suicide vest attack in Baghdad, which is a disruptive act on the behalf of an organization focused on violence.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Lita, from AP.

Q: Hello General. Lita Baldor, with AP. Just one quick follow-up on Jeff's question. You said there's no indicator of any coordination. Are you talking about ISIS as a whole across Iraq, that there is no indication that there is any coordination within the terror group at all?

GEN. GLYNN: Lita, what I'm -- what I'm saying is that there are -- there are remnants of ISIS who have been isolated and face some pretty dire choices. And they are to try to come together in -- with -- with potentially with other elements, or to try to relocate somewhere else and what the government of Iraq and their very capable security forces are focused on is ensuring that that doesn't happen. To lock them down where they are and to give them no alternatives but to be captured or killed.

Q: Can you -- can you give me an assessment of how much of your force is actively advising, assisting and working with the Iraqi units versus how much of it, you know, just doing, sort of, broader based training?

GEN. GLYNN: On the special operations specifically, Lita, I would say about -- I mean I'm pulling it out of thin air to be honest, but the vast majority, I mean, 75-80 percent of what we're doing is advising and assisting our Iraqi counterparts in -- in an active role.

Increasingly, the good news story is increasingly, they execute an operation on their own. And the advice and assistance we're providing them is in the planning and in the - in the post-operational aspect of exploiting what they've gotten when they have captured the individual who they're looking for and any of the associated materials they might have available to exploit.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Tara Copp, with Military Times.

Q: Hi. Thank you for doing this. I wanted to talk about contractors for a minute. Over the last year, the number of contractors in Iraq has increased significantly, even though major operations have dwindled. Is the U.S. transitioning all of these roles to contractors and, if not, why would that footprint be getting bigger if the kinetic mission there has reduced?

GEN. GLYNN: Thanks for the question, Tara. I honestly am not that familiar -- not familiar at all with the contracting numbers. So I would -- I would deflect to somebody there in the Pentagon to help you talk specifically about what direction they're trending. I can tell you, the few contractors that I work with every day play a very significant role in our operations. But their numbers have not changed at all.

Q: As the number of military operations against ISIS in Iraq has gone down, have the numbers of troops in Iraq gone down? And, if so, can you give us a ballpark number?

GEN. GLYNN: So, first of all, I wouldn't categorize the number of military operations in Iraq as going down. What has gone down are operations to liberate terrain that ISIS formerly held.

But you got to give credit to the Iraqi Security Forces who, quite frankly, night after night, day after day, are getting out there and getting after what they become aware of or, in some instances, just proactively moving out to patrol and secure local areas. So that doesn't lend itself to anything, numbers-wise, moving one direction or the other.

Q: Are U.S. and coalition...

GEN. GLYNN: With regards to numbers, I would say it's less about numbers -- as it is about capability. And what, I think, is -- can certainly be acknowledged is that what you'll see on our part is shift -- probably a shift in capability is what I would anticipate, based on what the needs are, going forward.

Q: And we lost you for just a part of your response. But, to get back to the shift in capability, so are you seeing the U.S. forces that are there, on the ground, and the coalition forces there on the ground -- what they are doing has changed?

GEN. GLYNN: You know, I would categorize it as we were very actively in a position to support the Iraqi Security Forces as they moved around the country, in some instances simultaneously, to liberate particular areas.

For example, during my tenure here, they left Mosul and went to Tal Afar and to Hawija, and then out west, to Al Anbar and Al-Qa'im. And so our positioning and our support was specific to those -- to those particular missions.

What we've done now, in particular, on the special operations side, is gone where our partners have gone and continued to support them with whatever they deem necessary.

Oftentimes, it comes in the form of intelligence, planning, some of the things like I mentioned earlier -- exploitation of materials after an operation -- and that the operations are increasingly done without us physically present with them.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Sir, if you could identify yourself and your affiliation, please.

Q: (inaudible). So, General, Iraqis are preparing for a parliamentary election in mid-May. Are you concerned that ISIS and other militant groups might increase their activities in attempts to disrupt the campaigns for the election?

GEN. GLYNN: So thanks for that question.

The -- the Iraqi election, upcoming in May, is actually a very exciting opportunity. And the types of activities that I just described a moment ago, in terms of what the Iraqi Security Forces, local police forces are doing, are exactly the types of things that they assess, and I would certainly agree, need to be done now to ensure that the conditions are set so we don't have to be concerned about exactly the types of -- types of things you just described.

And so, we're engaged in conversations and planning with our Iraqi counterparts right now, to talk about the things that need to be done, now, and in the ensuing months, to prepare for that election.

Q: Are you actually doing anything to assist the local forces to secure the country in preparation for the election?

GEN. GLYNN: At this juncture, with regard to the elections, I would say that we are focused -- it's really in a planning stage. And with a recognition that operations, on any given day, particularly in -- in a population -- population-dense area like Baghdad, like Mosul, Ramadi, those types of operations that are being done, day in and day out by the Iraqi army, by local police forces in the counterterrorism service, are being done to set the conditions for security going forward. But, certainly, with a mind towards ensuring that -- that it is firmly in place prior to the elections in May.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next we have Courtney Kube, from NBC.

Q: Hi, General Glynn. It's good to see you back in the Pentagon. Could -- could I go back to this -- this idea of some remnants of ISIS? Because there's been some confusion, in the last month or so -- month or so, about how many ISIS fighters are actually still in Iraq and Syria.

And there was a number put around that was just included where there was coalition fighters. What is the total number, if you have it, of -- of ISIS fighters you believe are in -- in Iraq, you believe are in Syria, and -- and does that include these ones who are sort of out and more disparate in the area, in these cellular structures?

GEN. GLYNN: Hey Courtney, thanks for the question. And thanks for the welcome. I don't have an exact number, in fact, we don't focus on the exact numbers, to be honest with you.

In much the same way that we focus on our partners, it's about the capabilities. And so, what we see, what -- what we're watching closely, is, as I mentioned, "Where are they going? Why are they going there?" And, at this point, unique to Iraq, "Why would you want to stay?"

The so-called caliphate has been dismantled at this point, and so ISIS has no recognizable structure of the bureaucracy that they had previously sought to achieve. And -- and so, with a very -- very few and dwindling options here in Iraq -- "What capabilities are they trying to sustain here? And where are they trying to locate them?" - - is really what we focus on more than anything else.

Q: Have you seen if -- if the consequence or the choices there are so bad, have you seen any large numbers of them leaving Iraq?

GEN. GLYNN: We watch their movement, and the Iraqis are -- are a great source of that watching, based on the local populace. And -- and we do have evidence of their moving, it's just not all that coherent.

And I, frankly, don't think that's a lack of understanding on our part. I think that is indicative of the desperation of ISIS at -- at this point. Trying to bring some coherency to what -- what has happened to them in the last -- certainly, at least in the last year.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Wyatt Goolsby, from EWTN.

Q: Thanks. Thanks, General, for doing this, by the way. You talked about Iraqis returning to a sense of normalcy. I'm wondering if there's any insight you can give us about what's happening in the Nineveh region, the Nineveh Plains region.

Because, as you know, there's so many towns and villages where religious minorities, like Christians and Yazidis, were previously under attack. Are there religious minorities who are returning to their homes? Is there more of a sense of normalcy there, in that area?

GEN. GLYNN: Yeah. I'll say it -- it's an encouraging situation, in most instances that, as I alluded to earlier, that you see more people returning to formerly ISIS-controlled areas than we were previously reporting by aid organizations in 2013.

And so, unique to the Nineveh Plains, it -- you're exactly right. A very diverse and rich area, and an area where there is now a sense of opportunity to return and see what the future may hold. And -- and so, that's true in -- in a number of areas, and some places are going to recover from ISIS' presence quicker than others.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: All right.

Next to Ryan Browne, CNN.

Q: Hello, General. Thank you for doing this. Quick question on the -- on the Baghdad suicide attack. Do attacks like these kind of highlight the need for additional training of Iraqi police? I know the focus had been, kind of, before, on offensive kinetic training. Is this -- does there need to be a shift, more coalition advisers with police units?

GEN. GLYNN: So, the bombing in Baghdad, as I mentioned early on, is, you know, I -- there's already, I mentioned in my opening comments, I'm trying to harken back. There -- there has already been a shift in focus on the part of the Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces. To -- to an emphasis towards local policing and border security.

And -- and so, I wouldn't categorize this as a shift that's necessary. It was anticipated. And that -- that training, that advising has already begun and is ongoing. A recognition on the behalf of -- of the Iraqis themselves.

Q: And one additional question. On -- have you -- have the Iraqis, in kind of these mopping-up operations, have they apprehended any foreign fighters in the recent months? In the last month?

GEN. GLYNN: Not -- not that I'm aware of. But the -- the foreign fighter issue in ISIS, writ large, is one that needs continued attention. I mean, the future of ISIS, or organizations like ISIS, lie in -- they had their hopes and aspirations in being, holding territory that have all but been shattered and dismantled.

At this point, it's a matter of the ideology. And what would attract someone from another country, to come here to Iraq or to anywhere else in the region and fight on their behalf. And -- and so that, that's the focus.

And what -- was it a month ago, maybe, I had the privilege, here in Baghdad, of attending what was the third annual conference on defeating Daesh propaganda and ideology.

I think that's indicative of the recognition, regional recognition, because it had folks beyond Iraq. Predominantly Iraqis, but beyond Iraq, with a recognition that this is about the ideology and -- and getting people to recognize -- particularly young people to recognize that there's no hope in that.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next, to Jack Detsch from AI-Monitor.

Q: Thanks, General.

You've mentioned that sort of the specific focus of this effort, now, is to reduce ISIS's capabilities and scale those back. Does the coalition have a specific metric or sort of

threshold they've been using to reduce ISIS's capabilities that might allow the mission to be scaled back or U.S. troops to leave the region?

GEN. GLYNN: A particular metric -- certainly, the things that we aspire to support on behalf -- is that which the Iraqis want, as well. And so those metrics are security and stability.

And I would tell you, in the places where I travel to in Iraq, it's measured by the ability of local governance to provide essential services by access on the part of the government of Iraq at a federal level, as well as for non-governmental organizations to come in and provide augmentation to those essential services that allow Iraqis to return to a normal life.

I was traveling the other day and had a conversation with a local gentleman and, you know, in the end it really comes down to the same thing you and I want. They want their kids to be able to go out in the street in front of their house and have a soccer game while they're preparing their dinner.

And so, you know, in terms of a personal metric, when I travel and I talk to local folks, that's the kind of metric I'm looking for.

Q: Got it. And you mentioned at the beginning of your remarks that several thousand CTS are scheduled to graduate from academy. Does the coalition have an update of how many CTS have been trained? And are you still on track to reach the 20,000 that are expected to be trained by the end of the next three years that the Pentagon mentioned last year?

GEN. GLYNN: And so -- thanks for that question.

CTS is our -- is our longtime partner on the -- both for the U.S. and for special operations -- have a very deliberate plan to get themselves refit and refurbished and ready for any emerging threats.

And so, this week alone, they have had the opportunity to rotate some folks back from what they have been doing literally, now, for 2 1/2 years and get some well-deserved leave and begin to focus on their training plan and some of their equipment updates that need to be provided.

I mentioned the numbers that are in the course now. The CTS has a plan -- an annual plan to get -- to keep themselves on track for what they think they need. And, just like any of the challenges any of the coalition nations face, in terms of what their target is, their target's driven by both what capabilities they need, how significant the threat is they face, and then, you know, like the rest of us, what can they afford.

But I'll tell you that they're on a very good path to maintain their capabilities, and they are, without a doubt, a force that will -- remains focused and dedicated towards the counterterrorism mission and ensuring that things like ISIS do not return to the lands, here, of Iraq.

Q: Sorry -- just real quick, are you still on track for that 20,000? Is that still the goal? Or has that goal changed specifically for the CTS? Are you not using that as a snapshot?

GEN. GLYNN: The goal itself is at Iraq -- it's at the CTS -- that's a CTS-driven objective. And what I would tell you is that is where they started to -- what they started to plan against in the last 2 1/2 years of fighting in urban environments every single day. They're getting right back to focusing on building their capabilities and less concerned with what number they need right now.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Thank you.

Lucas Tomlinson with Fox News.

Q: General, when Turkey's president says, "We will strangle U.S.-backed force in Syria before it's even born," is that helpful?

GEN. GLYNN: Lucas, the political comments and exchanges are clearly are not in my lane, nor in my area of expertise.

Q: (Off mic) a NATO ally, and this affects your forces in Syria and, potentially, Iraq. Does that give you some concern, General?

GEN. GLYNN: We pay attention to the dynamics between partners in the area. Certainly, in the case of Turkey and as it relates to how they interact on a state-to-state level, that -- nationally, that's something we pay attention to.

But where we have the most interaction is militarily. And so we keep track -- I keep track more on what their -- what their military intentions are.

Q: To Lita's question, when you said that U.S. Special Operations forces in Iraq spend 75 percent to 80 percent of their time advising the Iraqi counterterrorism service, what are you all doing the rest of the time?

(Laughter.)

GEN. GLYNN: So it's not just the counterterrorism service. It's special weapons and tactics units from the Ministry of Interior. It's other elements, commando units in the -- in the Iraqi army.

And, as far as the other percentage, you know, like I mentioned, there's an element of ours that's dedicated to supporting the training apparatus, like the question a moment ago about the CTS. And the CTS runs their own academy, or school.

What the coalition provides is some oversight and some assistance with development of future programs, based on lessons that they have learned from 2 1/2 years of hard fighting and what kind of skills they want to expand on and improve.

Q: Each week, how often do U.S. Special Operations forces accompany Iraqi forces on raids?

GEN. GLYNN: We don't -- we don't accompany the Iraqi Security Forces hardly ever, at this point.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next, to Carlo Munoz with Washington Times.

Q: Hey, sir. Thanks for doing this.

A quick follow up on Jeff and Lita's question about the existence or nonexistence of an insurgency in Iraq: In their claim of responsibility for yesterday's bombing in Baghdad, ISIS propaganda said that this was the beginning of a, quote, "vengeance campaign" which could lead to a string of bombings, similar to what we saw in the run-up to the Mosul -- the fight for Mosul.

What I wanted to ask: How does that sort of statement -- claim of responsibility square with what you're picking up from Iraqi Security Forces, as far as the existence of an insurgency in Iraq?

And, two, you mentioned that one of your main requirements is to see what capabilities is Islamic State looking to keep in the country.

What are those capabilities? Are they focused on, sort of, you know, these -- these bomb-making areas? Or, bomb-making facilities that they use to -- to great effect in Mosul and elsewhere? Or other capabilities that maybe relate to more of their conventional military skills?

GEN. GLYNN: So, thanks, Carlo. I -- I'm not familiar, first, with the -- with that statement that ISIS has put out, claiming responsibility. So I appreciate that insight. I'll have to go back and take a look at that.

The -- with regards to the capabilities, the -- the types of things that we see ourselves -- I'm trying to remember the first half of your question. It related something about insurgency. Could -- could you say it again?

Q: Sir, I just wanted to -- you said, earlier, that the Task Force, the -- the Task Force is focusing on looking at what capabilities the Islamic State is looking to maintain inside Iraq.

I kind of wanted to get some specifics on that. What capabilities are they trying to maintain? From what you've seen, what you've picked up from Iraqi Security Forces.

GEN. GLYNN: Okay. Thanks. Much clearer now. It -- it is a little bit early for us to tell exactly. I think they'd like to retain as much as they can. But that -- that's a -- that's an assessment on my part.

Certainly, the -- the ability to finance, and the -- the strengths of ISIS at their peak were their brand and their -- their finances. Their brand has been proven completely ineffective and their finances, from everything I -- that I can tell, are severely diminished and very much struggling.

And so, the types of things that the Iraqis are focused on, and that we cooperate with them most, is on intelligence and how intelligence is integrated and utilized to drive operations. Operations that are done to keep pressure on that cellular structure I mentioned earlier.

And then, to your point about Baghdad, it's also about counter-improvised explosive devices. The types of materials that are necessary to form those things, how they have to be moved, the types of conditions that are -- are required in order to put them together. And -- and the Iraqis are very much focused on -- on precluding those types of things from occurring.

And then, lastly, of course, is the security side, and -- and a lot of that shifts from what was clearing swaths of land that ISIS was holding, and focus more so on the local security and the border the security, the types of things that will allow all the capabilities that I just rattled off, to move around and -- and try to re-form into an effective network.

Q: Thank you, sir.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next, we'll go to Kasim Ileri, with Anadolu.

Q: General Glynn, thanks for doing this. I know you are -- you -- you're, you know, you are focusing on Iraq. But I will follow up on questions regarding the Border Security Forces in Syria.

Under which or -- under which legal premises does the coalition form the Border Security Force in Syria, General? For -- because, first, there should be a defined and synchronized border before you form a border security to protect that border. Which legal premises leads the coalition to that decision?

GEN. GLYNN: Okay. So, like I said earlier, and you acknowledged, my -- my focus, here in Iraq, doesn't put me in a position to comment on that directly. What -- what I will say is that border security, in this region, remains a concern for everyone in the region.

And it's a common objective to ensure that ISIS is unavailable -- is unavailable and -- and not able to move aspects of their -- whatever remaining capabilities they might have around, to build a structure that could threaten any government in the area.

Q: (inaudible) -- considering YPG, which is part of the SDF, as a connected group to the PKK, that's a terrorist organization. And Turkey is angered by that decision, saying that -- that the U.S. has said that they will stop arming, giving, providing arms to the YPG after the defeat of ISIS.

Now, U.S. is forming a 30,000-troop workforce and give it under to -- under the leadership of the SDF, which is led by YPG, which Turkey considers to be a part of PKK. So, how do you situate this into -- into the specific U.S. mission in Syria, with respect to defeating or fighting ISIS? And the alliance with Turkey, of course.

GEN. GLYNN: So, again, my -- my focus, here in Iraq, that doesn't -- doesn't really get me a whole lot of -- you clearly have more information on the -- on that than I do.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Next to Anna Varfolomeeva from Globe Post.

Q: (Off mic) thank you so much. General, thank you for doing this. I just want to follow up on Ryan's question, and clarify something. Are there any plans to transfer Iraqi military personnel to civilian policing or counterterror roles at the moment?

GEN. GLYNN: I missed the beginning of that. Could you -- could you repeat that, please?

Q: Are there any plans to transfer Iraqi military personnel to civilian policing or counterterrorism roles?

GEN. GLYNN: Oh, okay. I understand the question. Thanks. There are a number of discussions going on now, to -- about the capabilities that the Iraqi Security Forces have, where they reside and where they're needed most.

And so, to your point, there are, or could be, opportunities for folks who have performed one function previously to shift to another one going forward. And -- and as I've mentioned several times now, clearly, I would say the two most opportunistic areas would be local policing and border security.

Q: Is there anyone already in training at the moment, shifting these roles?

GEN. GLYNN: Is there training in those particular areas? Is that -- is that what you're saying?

Q: You are trying to shift these roles, trying to shift to policing from military?

GEN. GLYNN: I -- I don't exactly know, in individual cases. I do know that -- that there is a considerable effort going into -- into police training, as well as border guard training. And -- and both of those began -- well, they've been ongoing throughout, but there has been a definite increase in emphasis on those two particular areas since operations out

in Al-Anbar in terms of clearing ISIS-controlled areas concluded back in the middle of December.

Q: Thank you.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: We'll go to Tom Squitieri, from Talk News Media. Tom?

Q: Happy Tuesday, General.

I'm pulling together some of your responses to earlier questions and noted that you said most of the missions now is not to clear territory, but to secure territory and restore normalcy. How much -- pulling another figure out of the air, as you did earlier, how much territory still needs to be cleared of ISIS, please?

GEN. GLYNN: Here in Iraq, Tom, it has all been cleared once. So an easy answer would be none. The reality though, back to what I mentioned about ISIS remnants, is the Iraqis continue to see enough opportunities that they're going back to areas of concern.

It was mentioned earlier about -- about the Kuz -- (inaudible) -- region in Hawija. And they go back to revisit those areas and to determine whether or not there's people that need to be addressed and potentially captured, or at least spoken to, as well as, as you heard in my opening remarks, the number of IEDs and caches of explosive materials continues to be pretty substantial.

And it's those kinds of work when we talk about going back and clearing particular areas -- that's the kind of work that's ongoing at this time.

Q: Clearing that up.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Fatima al-Samadi, from Al Jazeera English.

Q: Thank you for doing this, General.

Excuse me. I'm wondering, what is the, sort of, as you talk about shifting to advising, it seems like -- (inaudible) -- Iraqi local forces in certain areas, an example, obviously, being the double suicide vest bombings. Do you think that with the shift that those kind of concerns will continue? Basically, is the shortfall with the local training -- is it a training issue?

GEN. GLYNN: No. So, I wouldn't so much categorize it as a shift. The advising and assisting has been ongoing for the entire time that the coalition has been side by side with Iraqi Security Forces. What -- as was asked earlier, what we've done much less of is the accompanying, so the direct support. And what that has allowed is an emphasis on the training and the preparation.

And so that's where -- that's where much of our attention is now and that's -- that's at the request of our partners. And so, it's working very well.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Luis Martinez, ABC.

Q: Hey, General. Two questions. One on the training aspect that you've talked about. Talk about intelligence being something that you're providing right now as they move -- CT continues in its operations. Is that a capability that you're training them specifically, organically, to the special operations community in Iraq? And how long do you think that process is going to take?

GEN. GLYNN: Hey, Luis, thanks -- thanks for the question. Good to hear your voice. The -- so, let's start with the Iraqi intelligence -- very good. They -- when we say -- you categorized it as we're providing it to them, I would more so say, we, on a daily basis, have an increasing awareness of just how good and effective their intelligence is. And so, it's much more a case of us providing some advice on how that can best be integrated into what they're planning and the kind of assessments they're making of what any organization -- in this case, we'll stay focused on ISIS, may be trying to do.

And so, while -- while we could continue to work side by side in the intelligence area alone for quite some time, and we'd be happy to, at the request of our -- our friends and

partners in Iraqi Security Forces, quite honestly, they'd be -- they'd be capable of doing it without our help, today.

Q: So you have this -- do they have an enhanced capability? Do you bring enhanced capabilities to them as well, with regards to intelligence, that maybe you may want to transfer to them in the future with enduring capabilities?

GEN. GLYNN: Yes. There are -- there are definitely some capabilities, often technical, that, for security reasons, you know, obviously aren't transferrable. And so we will, at their request, continue to support them with those kinds of technical -- the kind of technical assistance. But again, an increasingly capable intelligence infrastructure and it's -- it's the kind of areas that -- intelligence to prepare for operations, Iraqi Security Forces have been doing for quite some time, and obviously, have more experience with it than most of the rest of the world, based on the last 2 and a half, 3 years.

As an example, I would offer to you is, where some of our advice and assistance is focused now is on, after an operation, when there are -- there is information available on documents or on technical -- on a laptop for example, the exploitation of that type of stuff is what we increasingly find ourselves partnered with and teaching, going forward.

Q: Thanks for that, and just one last question. During the battle for Mosul and elsewhere, what we saw where special operations being used in large-scale formations. It's a little different than, I think, the original concept for special ops forces. How did you -- how did your teams adjust to that type of mission planning, versus what I guess is now a return to a more agile force capability that I think is what is happening now against these cells?

GEN. GLYNN: Yes, Luis, another good question. The -- our teams, in particular, we -- well, we're at the point -- at this juncture, we're at the point where we knew what we're getting into so we're well-prepared to provide that kind of advice and assistance. And the other half of it was that what we're asking, in this case, the counterterrorism service and commando units to do in Iraq, were the types of things that many of us would see as light infantry skillsets.

And so, for example, the counterterrorism service has -- has a very good capability in that regard, at this point.

What we're doing, literally this week, is having a conversation with their counterterrorism service about the training plan they put together for themselves, to get back focused on those elite counterterrorism school -- skills that they -- that they perceive they're going to need most, and the ones that they're going to need soonest, in anticipation of ensuring a stable situation here in Iraq, as was asked earlier, particularly in a run-up to an election, here, later this spring.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: And we're nearly at one hour, so we'll go to -- the last question will go to Laurie Mylroie from Kurdistan 24.

Q: Thank you.

I just want to follow up on stability operations. Can you give us a rough estimate of the number of IDPs who have returned to their homes, versus the number who are still in camps and they're still displaced?

GEN. GLYNN: I can get somebody there in the Pentagon to get you the numbers. I don't have them immediately at my fingers. But I do -- as I mentioned in the opening comments, I do increasingly see, as I travel and interact with the U.N. and with others that IDPs are returning to areas from where they came, and particularly to familial areas, where they had family or have family, to tribal areas.

And there's a growing -- a growing attitude of returning and rebuilding. But, as far as the exact numbers go, I'm not 100 percent sure.

(CROSSTALK)

GEN. GLYNN: I can have somebody there in the Pentagon get them for you.

Q: And, as you transition to stability operations, how does that change the composition of the U.S. presence in Iraq? Does that mean more contractors, State Department? Are you more engaged in stability operations than the conventional Army?

GEN. GLYNN: So I'd like to clarify the question a little bit. You know, as you say, "As we transition to stability operations" -- I wouldn't -- I wouldn't -- that wouldn't be the way I would poise it, to be honest. I would say that the -- we remain focused, the Iraqi Security Forces remain focused on the security aspect of it.

And that's where we remain side by side, in advising and assisting. So that doesn't shift things too much. Now, what's the end state of that security? It's to provide a stable local situation that allows for essential services, allows for clearing and rebuilding.

In terms of what that means for us, going forward, most of you have heard General Funk say in the past -- and he says it to us on a regular, recurrent basis -- we're not going to have more -- one more soldier, sailor, airman, Marine, contractor here than we assess we need to do what we're being asked to do by the government of Iraq.

What I think I can say with certainty and absolute confidence is I think what we'll see is a shift in what the capability of the force is here. And what those capabilities will be will go back along the lines of those types of things that we're seeing most frequently in terms of intelligence, in counter-IED, in security advising and some of the counterterrorism skills that we just talked about a moment ago.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: General Glynn, sir, thank you very much for taking the time to brief the press corps here. Do you have any closing words for the group?

GEN. GLYNN: There's some familiar voices. I can't see you all, but there's some familiar voices in there. So happy New Year to you all, and I appreciate you spending an hour with me. And we'll (inaudible) -- if you need anything in the interim, you know where to find us. We're here just about all day, every day. So drop a line anytime.

Thanks.

MAJ. RANKINE-GALLOWAY: Thank you, sir. Have a great day.