

Participants:

Col. J.B. Burton

Kimberly Kagan

Kimberly Kagan: Col. Burton, thank you so much for joining the Institute for the Study of War today to talk about the course of operations that the Dagger Brigade has undertaken in northwest Baghdad over the past year. I'm Kimberly Kagan, President of the Institute for the Study of War, and Col. J.B. Burton, you are the commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division, and of course you've been in Baghdad since November of 2006, in command of northwestern Baghdad. I'd really like to talk with you today about Dagger Brigade's activity and if you could just begin by briefly describing the mission of the Dagger Brigade over the past year.

Col. J.B. Burton: I'll be happy to, Kimberly. If you've got the slide in front of you, I've titled it the "Dagger Mission." And that really sums up everything. When we came into southwest Asia, we were initially titled as the CENTCOM reserve; we had a theater-wide mission. Very shortly, though, after arriving in Kuwait and began dispatching our home-stations, Task Forces forward, the Dagger Brigade headquarters was called forward to assume control of Coalition Force activities in northwest Baghdad. And we looked at the problem set from multiple different angles, and we came up with a mission statement that ((pause)) laid out, we had to look at the problem from a combined perspective, through partnership. So, the mission statement is pretty simple and straightforward; we are to conduct combined, full-spectrum operations focused on protecting the population, by defeating extremist and criminal actors within the Dagger area of responsibility. The key to that whole bit was understanding the population base that we were dealing with in northwest Baghdad. Northwest Baghdad is largely secular, highly moderate, highly educated, throughout the majority of northwest Baghdad, and the people that live in northwest Baghdad, then and now, the majority of them did not embrace violence as a solution for anything. So what we started to understand very quickly was that the problem set, in terms of security in northwest Baghdad, was not that every Sunni is an al Qaeda member and not that every Shia is a Jaysh al-Mahdi extremists, or one of their surrogates, but there were extremist actors within both camps that were creating this sectarian violence across the line. And so what we had to do, we had to focus on defeating them because by defeating them, we would begin protecting the population, and then gain a partnership with the local Iraqis in pursuit of our mission success here. We had to

focus on reducing sectarian-focused cleansing, and that was really the manifestation of the sectarian problem in northwest Baghdad. We understood that in a large metropolitan area we would probably have murders and gangland activities, and retribution-style killings, and probably a handful of psychopaths running around just wanting to kill people. Although, what we really focused on is figuring out what is sectarian-motivated cleansing operations, which were designed to remove large portions of the population, through intimidation and fear, by conducting murders against fellow members of their local population or local communities. So we sought to eliminate that as part of our primary mission statement.

We had to increase the professional capabilities of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) that were going to be operating across the same area of responsibility that we were operating in. And when we looked at the problem set from Taji, while we were at the counterinsurgency academy, what I realized is that we were operating across northwest Baghdad from a large Forward Operating Base (FOB), called Liberty. And the ISF were living and breathing out on the battlefield, you know the city of northwest Baghdad, 24 hours a day. And we weren't with them; we were going back to the base every night. So, in order to professionalize the ISF, we had to get out there and live with them. We had transition teams in the battle space as well; but they weren't living out with the ISF members either. They were going back to the FOBs at night. And so, part of the foundation of increasing the ISF professionalism was to get out into the city, partner up with them, and then formally integrate the transition teams into the brigade combat team's mission and into the Task Forces' mission, by providing Task Force commanders additionally capability to help train the staffs of these ISF battalions. And meanwhile, platoon sergeants and squad leaders, and platoon leaders out there in the city could focus on training alongside the Iraqi company commanders, platoon leaders, and squad leaders to increase professionalism through partnership at echelon. And so that's how we sought to get that part of the mission statement.

And then bolstering local governance efforts to deliver essential services. At one point, my mission statement read that we probably ought to be focusing on an end-state that has the Government of Iraq recognized as legitimate by all members of the Iraqi population. And when I looked at this thing from the moon, and said "I've got about 12 to 15 months to deliver this thing," I knew that we probably wouldn't get at that. But what I could focus on, is focus on local government capacity to deliver equitable access to essential services. But there was a limit that I could get to, before I had to go and affect the national level of government. And so, focused on local level leaders, municipal level leaders inside of Baghdad, we were able to increase the delivery and somewhat equitable access to essential services. That's a long explanation of the

mission statement, but I hope it gives you a little bit of perspective before we go forward into this dialogue a little bit more.

Kagan: Absolutely, it does. Let's take a look at the enemy situation in northwest Baghdad, prior to Fardh al Qanoon in February. Can you tell me more about what enemy groups were operating in the area and how they were in fact deterring the population from cooperating with the government?

Burton: Yeah, Kimberly, if you would turn to the next slide, it's got a bumper sticker on it, up at the top, that says "A Campaign of Exhaustion ...by Kinetic and Non-Kinetic Means." I think you have seen this slide before when you visited with me in Baghdad previously, but this slide is what I have used for the last year, plus, to describe the environment of northwest Baghdad. And if you'll bear with me, and follow along with the colors and arrows, I will try to explain it to you a little bit.

Kagan: Terrific.

Burton: When we came into northwest Baghdad, we came in on the tails of Operation Together Forward (OTF) II. And OTF II was a focused program inside of Baghdad that selected specific areas for clearing and the establishment of safe neighborhoods, with the design that essential services would then fall in line behind these clearing operations; and within these safe and gated communities. Also, when we came into northwest Baghdad, a large portion of our future battle space had already been transitioned over to the ISF, so about 50% of our current area of responsibility had already been handed over to the ISF. And we took transfer of authority in early November of 2006, and by that time, we had done a pretty robust analysis of the area of responsibility. But we really didn't understand all of the move-in parts and pieces that were affecting or that would affect the security environment inside northwest Baghdad. If you look up in the northeastern portion of our area, from Kadhamiya, you'll see a large blue area that extends across to the northwest, to Shula, and then southeast across Hurriya; and then it runs south along what we call Alternate Supply Route (ASR) Crew, down into Aamel and West Rashid. That dark blue area indicates what is now, under primarily a Shia support zone. That doesn't mean its all Shia extremists, but it is a Shia support zone. And that area expanded through the town of, through the hayy of Hurriya or the neighborhood of Hurriya, beginning in November. Hurriya wasn't really under Coalition Force control, but there was a large displacement of Sunni families from Hurriya that pushed that blue area further south, to about where you see it today, along in Adl. The light blue lines that run throughout the dark blue areas are the expansion lines for Shia extremists. And we'll talk about that a little bit more, about who all is involved and that, when we

initially came in, we read the expansion being propagated by the Jaysh al-Mahdi, because that was the only Shia extremist group that we knew of. But what we didn't understand was that there were multiple flavors of Jaysh al-Mahdi, and that there were also multiple actors moving across our area of responsibility that were operating under the banner of Jaysh al-Mahdi, that may not have been responsive to the directives of Moqtada al-Sadr or to the Office of the Martyr Sadr. So, you look at those light blue lines, you can see that we were faced with a Shia expansion program from Shula through Hurriya and then down into the eastern portions of our zones. And I truly believe in my heart of hearts that there was a desire on the Shia side, to secure a pure Shia constituency ahead of any provincial elections that might take place in northwest Baghdad. Concurrently, to the south, we had Shia expansion going on as well. It started in the hay of Shurta, and then began to expand outward from there, and to the point that they had pushed the Sunnis out of West Rashid, into two pockets, one in Saydiyah and then along that red zone that you see, just along Route Irish.

The green areas demonstrate the Sunni support zones. That runs all the way to the Anbar province, through Ramadi, Fallujah, into Abu Ghraib, and then you see what I refer to as the two primary rat lines that came into western Baghdad—one along ASR Sword, and that's the northern one that goes into the southern portion of Ghazaliya, and then one to the south along ASR Michigan that feeds into southern Khadra and into Ameriya. The al Qaeda and their surrogates, were, you know you've got to ask the question, "Ok Burton, you've got a very large moderate population, highly educated, why would a population basis like this allow such radical fundamentalists into their neighborhoods?" And so, we got to thinking about that, and they were allowing them, the al Qaeda and their surrogates, to come into their neighborhoods because al-Qaeda was promising the Sunnis protection against the expansion of Jaysh al-Mahdi. And the story line was this—you know that the Government of Iraq is sectarian; you know that the ISF are sectarian-motivated and they're all members of the Jaysh al-Mahdi; and you know that the Coalition Forces are leaving. So, the only hope that you have for survival as a Sunni in northwest Baghdad, is to allow al Qaeda to come in and fight the fight against Jaysh al-Mahdi for you. And so that's what we were faced with; and so you had this, these opposing efforts—Shia expansion on the backs of extremists to secure a pure Shia constituency, by removing a very large, moderate Sunni population from northwest Baghdad; and that was being confronted by those same moderate Sunnis that were allowing these extreme al Qaeda guys to come in to fight the Jaysh al-Mahdi and their surrogates to stop the expansion in northwest Baghdad. Coupled to that, you had honorable resistance members moving throughout the area. You had the 1920s Revolutionary

Guard; you had the Omar Brigade; and a host of other entities that were members of the former Iraqi Army, that were now disenfranchised because they had been removed from power, had been removed from jobs and employment and were looking to oust the occupying forces from their nations. And the way to get weapons and support was through support of al Qaeda. So there was a, there was a confederation built, I believe, on the part of this honorable resistance group, to take on the fight against Coalition Forces, deny them free access to the neighborhoods, while al Qaeda went in more extreme efforts to deny any hope of progress, of growth in northwest Baghdad, while concurrently defeating the Shia expansion. Ultimately, though, al Qaeda promised nothing, nothing but despair and terror, to the people of northwest Baghdad.

Now let me talk to you a little bit more about the environment, the threat environment that we see. If you see where the red areas are between the blue and the green areas, those are the battle zones that were, that are in place now. And in some places, like in north Ghazaliya, we call it a battle zone, but it's really just where the Shia and the Sunni populations come together. There are some interesting things happening up in there that I'll talk about in a few minutes, but those red areas are where we saw sectarian conflict taking place. And many of those were much farther south than they are today, that's a graphic depiction of what we see in northwest Baghdad now. The large orange area that runs through Ghazaliya, Khadra, Jamiya, and Ameriya demonstrates where there are no standing Iraqi police forces, funded and supported by the Government of Iraq. So you've got a security problem that's circular in nature; you've got extremists coming from both sides and you've got no enduring local police force of the local citizens to help protect any of the population in these areas, so that the rubix cube starts to get mixed up a little bit more.

Compounded on top of that, I truly believe that there was a sectarian-motivated denial of essential services to large portions of the Sunni population in northwest Baghdad. And all those little dots that you see, some of them have an H in them, some of them have an X in them, those are, there's a legend out there to the side to show that those represent the food centers, financial institutions, fuel distribution sites, and medical sites, both hospitals and clinics. And if you look at that real closely, you'll see that up in the Shia areas, things are functioning, marginally to fully-functioning and prospering. In the Sunni areas, they're marginally operating to failing because the government had yet to push forward any formal effort that I can see to deliver essential services equitably across northwest Baghdad. So now what you have is, you have a storyline that says if the Shia extremists can't kill you and remove you from Baghdad through threats of violence, then they'll exhaust you and cause you to quit the field and evacuate yourself to the Anbar province.

So that was the enemy situation that we confronted when we came into northwest Baghdad. I hope that makes sense.

Kagan: It certainly does. How did you begin to reduce these problems? What was your first priority and why?

Burton: OK. When we came in, you're going to have to bear with me because I am going to have to give you snips and bits of history. When we came in, the mission statement that we were handed focused on the defeat of al Qaeda and associated movements, but when I was looking at the problem set with my staff, it became very apparent to me that what we had to do was that we had to stop the cycle of violence that was going on inside of northwest Baghdad. In order to do that, we had to stop the expansion of Shia extremism into the largely Sunni areas of the Mansour Beladiyah and that includes Ghazaliya, Khadra, Jamiya, Adl, all those green areas that you are looking at right now. We had to stop Jaysh al-Mahdi and their surrogates and the extremists that were operating on the banner of Jaysh al-Mahdi and deny them access to the communities. Meanwhile, we had to defeat al Qaeda wholesale, across the board, we had to deny them freedom of action throughout the zone, to deny them access to the International Zone, the seat of government for the Government of Iraq, and we had to get them out of our town.

So here is what we did. In November, when we took command of this area, we were a brigade combat team in transition. We were looking at the Task Forces that were currently assigned to the Dagger Brigade. [They] were going to be relieved over the course of about the next four to six weeks, so we started an analysis of the terrain across the zone and I came to a decision that I was going to move the Task Forces and the companies from FOB Liberty and any of the other main, enduring FOBs out into the neighborhoods, and we were going to focus planting our combat outposts, as we called them at that time, on the sectarian fault lines to stop the cycle of violence. Meanwhile, we went into dialogue with the citizens of northern Ghazaliya and asked them what would you do to stop the spread of violence in north Ghazaliya and their answer was put up a wall. These guys come down in the middle of the night in their black Kia Sophias, and they kidnap our brothers and our sons and they take them away and ransom them off for money, or they murder them; so you got to keep them out of the neighborhoods. So if you look to the north of Ghazaliya, right at the red zone, at the combat zone, you will see a black and yellow honeybee stripe. That was the first set of barriers that we put up in northern Ghazaliya in cooperation with the local leaders in that area to stop the Shia extremists and criminals from coming south, and by the emplacement of that wall we cut murders in Ghazaliya by 50% the very next week.

Meanwhile, we put in Joint Security Station (JSS) Casino, and that is the northern most security station in Ghazaliyah, right next to the green and white star that you see there. That was really the first JSS that we pushed out into the neighborhoods. We did it with Charlie 2-12th Cav. We put it in the middle of a driving rain storm, the sewer systems in Ghazaliya were backed up, one of the cranes broke as we tried to put the concrete in, the crane fell over on its side, the soldier came up smiling, but the JSS got in. What was supposed to be a 48 hour operation took us between four to six days, but the JSS got in. Immediately, we saw an increased partnership on the part of the local nationals, but more importantly, what happened was almost the next day, the commanding officer of the 4th Battalion, 1st Brigade, 6th Iraqi Army came forward to JSS Casino and linked up with the company commander out there and asked if he could base his ISF there as well. We welcomed them in. That set a tone for one of the other objectives that I had to achieve inside of Baghdad, and that was partnership at echelon across the entire zone. Since [JSS] Casino went in, we have put in an additional thirteen security stations across northwest Baghdad. Each of those are co-occupied with Coalition Forces and ISF who live and work and plan out of those JSSs, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The key to that is that it [the JSS] provides the local nationals a constant touch point of security and information inside their neighborhoods. It also provides us [with] the ability to partner up with the ISF, with their transition teams, and with our company command teams out in these joint security sites to develop the staff and command planning capabilities, and the resources capabilities necessary to sustain the security operations in northwest Baghdad.

Now some other activities took place as we went to building these fourteen Joint Security Stations (JSS); there was a lot of concurrent activity that happened. We began also the establishment of what we called Operation Virginia Creeper. Virginia Creeper was the establishment of a line of concrete barriers out to the west of Ghazaliya along Main Supply Route (MSR) Sword, which leads in from Abu Ghraib. Those double barriers were designed to prevent al Qaeda and their surrogates from getting off the highway and driving back into the neighborhoods and rearming and refitting their associates so they could continue their campaign of violence against Coalition [Forces], ISF, and local nationals. What those barriers did is that [they] funneled every vehicle through a series of formal checkpoints manned by legitimate security force personnel. So what you have is a series of gates that fed the traffic into northwest Baghdad. As the traffic moves off to the north or to the south, they go into other gated communities. In those gated communities, where you see the green triangles inside the black and yellow stripes, you have a JSS with Coalition Forces and ISF living together, operating together,

and patrolling together every day inside a walled neighborhood so that the local nationals are [now] protected from the extremists because their freedom of maneuver has been denied or significantly disrupted, to the point where they cannot threaten those neighborhoods. Those green and white stars are kind of the last bit of addition to the ISF problem, and what we saw in Ghazaliya and in Ameriya was the stepping forward of local nationals who wanted to now become part of the solution in securing northwest Baghdad from al Qaeda and from Shia extremists. I make that point clear because it is important to understand that the Iraqis themselves, in northwest Baghdad, once we put in the safe neighborhoods and put in the JSSs, became more active and participatory with both the security and the economic aspects of an enduring security solution in northwest Baghdad. And those green stars represent local security force volunteers that came forward in partnership with the Coalition Forces, and ultimately ISF, to create organizations of local men and women, women by the way, local men and women from the local areas who live in local areas to provide security to the local population, which is no different than a local police force, that is what they wanted. And look where those green stars are [located]. They are in that orange area that I talked about earlier that has been absent of a robust and effective police force since we arrived in theater. These security volunteers have provided us an increased capacity in northwest Baghdad to defeat the extremists and the criminals and to protect the population inside these safe neighborhoods. What we see as a result of all that, Kimberly, is a dramatic increase in economic growth, economic and business enterprise, through some areas that were absolutely war-torn and impoverished as a result of extremist combat across northwest Baghdad. So, things are on the upswing with the participation of the local nationals in both the security and the reconstruction of northwest Baghdad.

Kagan: The group of insurgents in Ameriya was, I think, the first concerned citizens group in Baghdad to support the coalition against al Qaeda. How did you ensure that the local leaders in Ameriya adhered to their agreements to support the coalition?

Burton: Wow, you know what, that is a great question. What we have right now, Kimberly, I think is fragile, but I will go back to what happened in Ameriya. Ameriya, as you may recall, had been identified as the headquarters of the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), and if you go, well we won't go there right now. I've got a slide that shows you when the Battle of Ameriya actually took place. The ISI claimed that Ameriya would be their headquarters for the future, and it got pretty ugly in there. We were having 750 pound bombs that were attacking our soldiers, deep buried into the streets, very violent activity, a very hard-won fight, and the local nationals were passively supporting al Qaeda and their surrogates inside that neighborhood. The neighborhood was not

closed off, the neighborhood had some gates and barriers around it, but you could still walk in and out whenever you wanted to. We went into an effort to isolate the entire community. A kidnapping took place against one of the leaders of Ameriya's families, and that leader of Ameriya said, "That is enough. We have gone too far." The leader contacted Lt. Col. Kuehl [phonetic], commander of the 1-5 Cav and said, "I have my men and we are going to go and fight al Qaeda." Col. Kuehl asked if there was anything we could do to help. He said, "No, we don't want your help. We just want you to stay out of our way." Over the course of the next day or so, they came back to us and asked us for assistance in terms of medical support and in terms of ammunition and supplies. Well, we weren't about to start handing over ammunition and supplies without some authority, so we grabbed a hold of the ISF leadership in the area, Brig. Gen. Ghassan, a great patriot and son of Iraq, and he provided, under the authority of the Ministry of Defense, some additional ammunition for these guys, who at that time were known as the Baghdad Patriots. The Baghdad Patriots then established a joint command and control center in southeast Ameriya, where Coalition Forces, ISF, and the volunteers came together inside the walls of a mosque to coordinate actions against al Qaeda [across] all of Ameriya. No-kidding partnership at echelon to get out to the fight. They established this command post and they maintained that command post for about two weeks. Meanwhile, we were working feverishly with other agencies across Baghdad on how we could integrate these folks into the security effort, because at that time they had demonstrated true commitment to securing Ameriya against al Qaeda and against any other operatives. But what we knew we could not have, we could not have any relationship built with the volunteers that would be disruptive to our relationship with the ISF. What we ultimately had to do was get the volunteers legitimized as members of the ISF.

So, we came down with some pretty simple rules. We said every operation with the security volunteers would be transparent and coordinated fully with the Coalition Forces and the ISF, and that would require that liaison elements be placed inside our command and control structures inside of Ameriya. At that time we had one JSS established in northwest Ameriya, and we had that command post I talked about inside the walls of a mosque down in southeast Ameriya. We agreed that there would be a handover of any detainees captured by the volunteers over immediately to the ISF, but if there was going to be any questioning done of the detainees by the volunteers, that it would be done under the supervision of trained American interrogators, so that we did not have any slips in our treatment of detainees once they were pulled from the battlefield. From that point, we began the development of a formal contract that specified the rules for the employment of the volunteers, with a volunteer signer and a contract-oversight/responsible party,

[who] would then be responsible for employing these forces. What we wound up with was an organization in Ameriya that was originally very cellular in its structure - something that we have all been very familiar with these last five years as we have tried to tear apart these terrorist networks - very cellular in structure, but extremely effective in getting in and amongst the local population and finding out who was not supposed to be there and getting tips that were worthwhile to defeat al Qaeda and their supply lines. I don't have all the numbers here in front of me, but almost immediately we began the discovery of very large caches of homemade explosives and military-grade munitions. We began the capture of al Qaeda emirs and their command elements that had bedded down and [were] seeking sanctuary in Ameriya. And so through this partnership and this trust, along with this contract that we had, we have been able to maintain a professional relationship with these volunteers. So how do you keep them inside Ameriya? How do you make sure they abide by the contract? You got to develop a relationship, and you got to trust people. If people don't do what they are supposed to do, or they violate the rules, you investigate them and you hold them accountable, which is the same thing we do with our partnered ISF units throughout the area of responsibility.

Kagan: After the volunteers in Ameriya came forward and you started to see the spread of the concerned citizens groups through your area, did that alone reduce sectarian violence within your area or did it provide an opportunity for extremist militia groups to expand further?

Burton: I want to make sure I got the question right. I don't think it did either. It did not allow for the expansion of extremist militia groups. I'll tell you what, that is a bumper sticker that a lot of people like to use; they say that these volunteers are just another organized militia. They are not. Did it allow for the expansion and propagation of continued sectarian violence? I think that it allowed for the defeat of it in a lot of cases. Let me tell you an interesting thing that happened two weeks ago. We have a Shia policeman and a Sunni volunteer leader who work together every day to provide security for the population of Ghazaliya. They were sitting down together planning operations with the Coalition Force leader in the middle of Ghazaliya, [talking] about patrol schedules and [about checking in] on this fuel station, and [about] what they are going to look [for] and where the targets might be for that night. They got into talking, just like people do when they sit down and talk with each other, about families, and lo and behold, after about an hour, they discover that they were both relatives, they were members of the same tribe. Immediately, that Shia police officer made the formal commitment to this volunteer leader that his policemen that are now operating inside of Ghazaliya would be more professional and more committed to the mission. What an amazing thing! So did that allow for the expansion of sectarian violence?

No. What I think it does is it creates more and more of a commitment to each other as concerned members of the Iraqi society to defeat extremism, because the majority of people in northwest Baghdad, Kimberly, just want to get on with the reconstruction of their city. They are tired of the violence, and they are tired of the nonsense that these extremists bring, that offers no solution to anything. Whether they operate under the banner of Jaysh al-Mahdi and propagate violence under the banner of Jaysh al-Mahdi, the citizens know that they [extremists] are not delivering anything. The citizens know that al Qaeda offers nothing but terror and hardships on their children and for their futures and they don't want that any more than we want that. The joining of volunteers inside these neighborhoods with the legitimate ISF and with the Coalition Forces has created an incredible capability to see the area better, to understand the local nationals better, and to get after those disruptive agents that used to operate freely across northwest Baghdad, that now are significantly disrupted, to the point where we are seeing more and more leaders of extremist groups seeking audiences with us at tables to reconcile differences.

Kagan: There was an extraordinary drop off in overall incidents in your area of operations in August. How do you account for that sharp drop off at that time?

Burton: While if you go to the slide that says the "Battle for NW Baghdad," it's a little graph. Can you see that?

Kagan: Yes.

Burton: It says "Incidents Over Time" at the bottom of it. That kind of tells the whole story. There is a series of conditions belong set over time, from November when we put the, when we established JSS Justice part of the Brigade Combat Team [unclear] out at Camp Justice along with my Deputy commanding officer. To the interest of Task Force 1-325 in January, the Great Red Falcons from the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne. And there you see up on top those yellow triangles are JSSs that were established. So you can see the continued increase of JSSs coupled with Safe Neighborhoods till Task Force 2-32 came in. And then in April and May what we have done is we have increased our presence in the neighborhoods. While we were putting the JSSs in, I truly believe that our adversaries were in a reconnaissance mode. They're trying to figure out what we were doing. What is going on in northwest Baghdad? They didn't want to approach is you know in a frontal fight because they couldn't win that fight. But they needed to understand what we were doing, what our patterns were, and how they would get after us. And so in April and May after we completed the combined operations called Arrowhead Strike IX, I believe that al Qaeda and extremists Jaysh al-Mahdi felt that that was the time that they could then take the

fight to the coalition. And they did. And they came after us hard in the principally Sunni areas of Ameriya, south Ghazaliya, Khadra, and Jamiya we saw a heavy increase in violence indicators with improvised explosive devices, indirect fire, and you can see the graph over there on the side of what was going on. But you also see that murders were down by the way, if you pay attention to that. So the sectarian violence had reduced itself because we had stopped pretty much the expansion of sectarian motivated violence. So the target then was the Coalition Forces and the ISF that were out in the neighborhoods now working in partnership with each other.

And then what you see in June is you see the first contract of security force volunteers. And that is when we bought in the Ameriya volunteers with the JSS formally established down in Ameriya. And that is why you see that little call out there that says "The Battle for Ameriya." May and June was the pitch fighting inside of Ameriya to wrest the capital of the ISI from the hands of al Qaeda, meanwhile getting our soldiers out in the neighborhoods, patrolling inside those neighborhoods, working daily with the sheikhs of those neighborhoods, to create a commitment from the people of Ameriya to secure that neighborhood using Ameriya's sons to fight the al Qaeda and remove them from the fight. That then spread to Ghazaliya; well, it didn't really spread because in Ghazaliya we had a similar activity happening concurrently with the volunteer leadership coming forward and linking up with Task Force 2-12 and saying "we want to be part of the security situation too." The Ghazaliya folks for more of a neighborhood watch program: stationary checkpoints, limited patrolling, whereas in Ameriya it was an all out fight to kill al Qaeda. In Ghazaliya we had a safe neighborhood established and so we had the ability to operate checkpoints to keep al Qaeda out and work off of tips to eliminate caches. So the traction game, Kimberly, inside the safe neighborhoods, inside the controlled mechanisms to deny extremist access to the population while partnering with the ISF and local security force volunteers inside these neighborhoods all but defeated the extremists. It put them to grounds. It denied them free access and ready access to arms and munitions and equipment to the point where they have been marginalized. And now that they are marginalized we have an increasing number of Iraqi citizens, both Shia and Sunni, that want to come forward and be active participants in the reconstruction and security of their country. You know I meet once a week with former Iraqi Army officer leaders in, in one of our Joint Security sites. And these are men we are very comfortable with. They are military men, prideful members of their nation's former military that now have come forward and want to be part of the security situation. They are not asking for pay. They are not asking for any special benefits. All they want to do is partner up and

provide us information to assist us in the reconstruction of Baghdad and the formal reintegration of the Sunni population into the Government of Iraq's processes.

Kagan: One of the questions that we all have in Washington is how sustainable is this security as we move into the coming year? And there are a couple of questions that leap to mind. One is have you been able to, through your partnership with the ISF, ensure that the ISF in your area will be able to continue the kinds of operations in partnership with the 101st when you leave? And are they facilitating extremist actors or sectarian cleansing at this point or are they facilitating the rebuilding of Baghdad?

Burton: Ok, excuse me, that is a complex multifaceted question, so let me see if I can answer it as simply as I can. First off, the 101st is going to be just fine. Remember that just because the Dagger Brigade HQ is leaving Baghdad not all of my units are leaving Baghdad. I've still got... a host of the Task Forces will remain in battle space for some time to come. And so there is one stability and traction on relationships that have been built and that will be enduring. We have also, if you look at slide number four it says "Current Efforts." Have you got that?

Kagan: I certainly do.

Burton: That will help us paint some pictures for you. Operation Marble Arch is really my campaign plan northwest Baghdad to stop the expansion of Shia extremists that feed al Qaeda, to create the conditions for the emergence of local security groups through the integration of the Safe Neighborhood Joint Security site effort. Operation Seventh Veil kind of gets at what I think you were talking about. You know when we went out to stop the expansion of Shia extremists in northwest Baghdad. There was a lot of, I kept getting reports. That while the ISF did this, the Jaysh Iraqi are facilitating this, the National Police are facilitating this. And I said "stop it!" Let's start investigating this stuff. We cannot fight a war on rumors and innuendo. We have to fight a war on facts and intuition gathered from those facts. And so we began an operation called Seventh Veil which is focused on identifying complicit ISF and Government of Iraq officials and then holding them accountable for their transgressions against the law. And this doesn't mean just rolling up an Iraqi Army Colonel and putting him in jail. In some cases you take the targeting packet and the data that you have and you just sit down with the guy and you say, "This is what I understand you to be involved in and I think this is inappropriate and if you continue with this activity I am going to put you in jail." And 9 times out of 10 that will cause an immediate change in behavior because the gig is up. And there is a great relief in many cases when someone finds out that "hey you know what the Americans know what I am doing and so I can't do it anymore

so I am not going to participate in that thing.” Seventh Veil has gained us great effects and here is why. Go back to what I have told you the al Qaeda were telling the Sunni population about the ISF, remember? The ISF are all sectarian-motivated and they are the front for a sectarian-motivated Iraqi government. While as soon as we started pulling Iraqi leaders and Iraqi, correction, ISF soldiers and policemen off the street and putting them in jail, the citizens of northwest Baghdad said, “You know what these Americans are serious. This is the real deal. There out to protect the population. There out to get rid of the illegal activities that are being propagated by these legitimate ISF and government of Iraq officials.” So we have put them officially on notice and we have done that in partnership with some our more senior ISF leaders that back us all the way. Both Marble Arch and then Operation Seventh Veil, I believe set the conditions for what you see in their call Operation Switchblade. And that is now that the local nationals gain trust and confidence in our designs and our campaign plan they came forward and they became more participatory. That is the sustaining element. It is the commitment of the local nationals to the enduring idea of a prosperous Iraq, with a government that can take care of its people, and is not an overt threat to its neighbors, and it can participate actively in the global economy. And these Iraqis that live in northwest Baghdad have seen that the Coalition Forces and in large measure the ISF leaders are committed to their protection and are committed to the re-birth and re-growth and reconstruction of Baghdad. And so they come forward under Operation Switchblade and become part of an enduring solution for security.

The problem with Operation Switchblade comes when the contracts run out. We are setting conditions daily in partnership with the ISF for the Government of Iraq to make some choices to formally integrate these volunteers into the legitimate ISF process. There is an entire vetting process that must go on and we have learned through some hard knocks along the way about what you have to do to recruit local security force volunteers. And so we have reengineered everything we have done. We have gone back and reintegrated our of our volunteers through this process so that they can get a nod from the National Reconciliation Committee and then get hiring orders from the Ministry of the Interior to become Iraqi Police forces, legitimately uniformed [unintelligible]. We don’t see a lot of movement on the part of the Government of Iraq, and that is a great risk with these volunteers and with these locals who have seen an opportunity and who want to participate. The Government of Iraq now has to make some hard decisions to integrate the Sunni population and to integrate parts of the Shia population that have also been left without. Integrate them back into society by extending equity access to essential services, and equal opportunity to participate in the security functions and the governance functions of this city.

There are limitations thus far on the capacity the Government of Iraq can deliver services across northwest Baghdad. Operation Our Town attempts to do that. And what Operation Our Town attempts to do, is to take local volunteers, not security volunteers, but the wherewithal that is out there in northwest Baghdad, the electrical engineers, the guys that understand how to run a sewer system. I don't know how to run a sewer system but somebody in Baghdad understands how to run a sewer system and I want to find out who that is; how to run the electrical program, and the power generation business, and how to get the power grid back online; how to get the streets clean and paved; how to remove the vestiges of war and turn that into economic enterprise; how to re-grow the economy and revitalize the economy so that northwest Baghdad can grow. Operation Our Town is an attempt to take the Beladiyah capabilities, the municipal capabilities of the city of Baghdad, and extend them out into these areas of Baghdad where the Beladiyah is not yet working full swing and use local know-how and want-to to deliver these services to the people of northwest Baghdad. I tell you what, its working. In Yarmouk right now there is a what Colonel Mike Lawson calls his Civil Service Corp. and that is volunteers that are rebuilding Yarmouk. They are out there everyday. They are professional. They are disciplined. And they are beautifying Yarmouk and they are redelivering that city back to the local nationals. And behind there efforts shops are opening up, people are back on the streets, kids are going to school. It's a powerful commentary. We're seeing that in Ameriya. We have started the hiring process for assistant zone directors in Ghazaliya, Khadra, and Ameriya who will be extensions of the local government right now under Coalition Force CERP dollars as a jump start mechanism so that we have the equipment and the capability out in the neighborhoods linked to the security apparatus to deliver essential services to the local nationals. So all these processes are in motion. Is it sustainable? Its going to take some hard decisions on the part of the Government of Iraq to recognize that a window of opportunity, as slim as it is, has been opened. And that window of opportunity provides the Government of Iraq to reach out and reintegrate the totality of the Iraqi population who wants to be involved in the reconstruction and revitalization of their nation.

Kagan: Col. Burton I could talk with you all day and indeed all evening, your time, but I see that our allotted time has expired and so I really want to thank you so much for joining the Institute for the Study of War, today, via DVIDS interview and I really do hope that you come visit us sometime in Washington, DC. Thanks for everything that you've done and I look forward to seeing you gain soon.

Burton: Kimberly, it's always my honor and a pleasure to speak with you. And I know that you are committed to gaining a formal understanding of this war, lets call it what it is. I know that you

understand it's not just a counterinsurgency; it is full spectrum in its nature. And I appreciate your total commitment to better understanding this, so we can communicate it to the profession of arms and to our political leaders as they endeavor to resource and win this thing for the American people and for peace-loving people across the world. I look forward to seeing you in Washington, DC and hope that you stay in touch.

Kagan: Thank you very much.

Burton: Bye now.