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## LTG Sean MacFarland

### *Press Briefing on Operation Inherent Resolve*

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First of all, thanks for coming out here during the holidays to see our troops; and I just want to say they're doing a magnificent job. We are making good progress against the enemy; and sometimes it's hard to see because it's incremental, but if you step back and take a look at how far we've come, it's really pretty significant.

Most significantly and most recently, we've begun to really make some progress with our Iraqi security force partners in and around Ramadi. And that really validates the strategy of training and equipping, advising and assisting our Iraqi security force partners; and although they have their own ways of doing things -- and it may not always be our way -- it is, in the end, becoming increasingly effective as they've pushed the enemy out of that very important city of Ramadi and begin to set the conditions to go back and take Mosul from the enemy as well.

I'd also like to say, although we're in Iraq, the campaign is not limited to Iraq. It's also going on in Syria -- and we're making some good progress there as well with our partners in the north and through our air campaign.

So we're putting pressure on the enemy throughout the breadth and depth of the battlespace, and it's beginning to take its toll.

And with that, I'll open it up for questions.



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**Q:** General, do you think that some of the political concerns of the Iraqis about the U.S. footprint is hindering at all your effort in the campaign? And do you expect that to change or shift over time?

**LTG MacFarland:** Yeah, this is a very complex environment that we're operating in and we have to be attentive to some of the political realities that surround us every single day. And there are a number of complex relationships that the government of Iraq has to tend to, and we are here in Iraq at the behest of that government. So we sometimes have to adjust the things that we would do [like] on a chess board. We have to recognize that it's not that clean.

**STAFF:** Missy? [ph]

**Q:** Sir, can you just give us an update on situation with the Turkish troops in northern Iraq? And just to clarify something that Secretary Carter said: Do you expect that there will not be American Apaches and combat advisers requested for the Ramadi operation?

**LTG MacFarland:** Let me take the second part first because that's more in my wheelhouse, with the respect to the Apaches. Right now, things are going pretty well in Ramadi, and so the Iraqi security forces haven't asked for us to provide Apache support to them. If they were to ask, we could do that, and we're prepared to do that. So going back to your first part of your question about the Turks. I'll just reiterate what the Secretary said, which is we are in full support of Iraqi territorial sovereignty and the Turks are partners with us in the fight against Daesh. We're partners with them and with the Iraqis, and we're doing our best to get this issue sorted out. But the overarching principle for us is: Iraq is a sovereign country and forces should only be here at the request of the government of Iraq.

**STAFF:** Andrew and then Kim.

**Q:** General, in your military view -- setting aside the Iraqi political issues for a minute -- do you think that bringing Apaches into the fight and putting ground combat advisers of the brigade level, would that hasten the defeat of ISIL?

**LTG MacFarland:** It could. It's going to depend on the situation as we move forward in the campaign. One of the things that we watch everyday is how are the Iraqis doing? And do they need additional enablers? And if those enablers are required, or appear to be required, then that's a conversation that I have with the prime minister or the minister of defense, and then I message that back to my superiors in the United States. We're prepared to do that and the government of Iraq knows we're prepared to do it. Right now, you're asking me to speculate about a fight tomorrow or the next week or the next month and one thing I've learned in all my years of combat is, I'll probably get it wrong if I try. So my answer to you is "We'll see." And we're prepared to "yes", if requested.



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**Q:** Sir, I'm just wondering, do the U.S. and Iraq see eye to eye on how to fight this battle? Or is it a sort of negotiating over what is the best way --

**LTG MacFarland:** It's a conversation. It's a discussion. We have a Western way of war, and we are disciples of Clausewitz. They are more disciples of Sun Tzu. And if anybody knows their military theorisms, you recognize that those two ways of war don't always align perfectly. But we're partners, so we talk it out and they adjust towards us sometimes and we adjust towards them.

**Q:** But what if, for instance, they don't want the Apaches and they lose, or they fail to retake Ramadi? What would happen then?

**LTG MacFarland:** Well, it's kind of hard to inflict support on somebody. So, we try to provide support and the kind of support we provide has to be consistent with the way Iraqi security forces fight.

**STAFF:** Bill, you got one? And then we'll start to wrap it up.

**Q:** Sir, how often do you make suggestions to the Iraqi government and are turned down? Is this a frequent type of thing? And also, when do you estimate that the ISF will route ISIL from Ramadi and turn toward Mosul?

**LTG MacFarland:** Okay. We talk all the time, and the answer is very seldom "no." The answer is usually, "Let's think about it"; and we'll talk some more and maybe make some adjustments until we get to "yes." And in terms of how much longer Ramadi's going to take, I think the enemy there has been attrited very significantly -- and we're optimistic. I'm never going to put a timeline on these fights -- because if I had done that a couple of months ago, you'd be saying, "Hey, didn't you say x date." So I'm not going to do that. But what I will say is that the conditions, I think, are properly set for the full liberation of Ramadi and we're doing everything we can to expedite the completion of that operation, and I remain very optimistic -- pretty bullish -- on it.

**STAFF:** Last one, Gordon?

**Q:** Not to beat a dead horse -- but are there other offers that we're not asking you about that are kind of on the table that you're hopeful the Iraqis will act on?

**LTG MacFarland:** So, what we're really looking at right now, Gordon, is as we begin planning future operations, what additional enablers might facilitate those operations. And we're not necessarily limiting ourselves to anything that's already been discussed. We're looking at the things that Iraqis need to succeed. This has to be an Iraqi victory at the end of the day; but they need a little bit of help. I'll give you one example -- and that's with more sustainment.



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As the Iraqis move themselves farther and farther up the Tigris and Euphrates River valleys, pushing the enemy out of Iraq, sustainment becomes more of a challenge. I mean, your lines of communications get longer. Nobody does sustainment, nobody does expeditionary operations better than the United States of America, so there are ways that we can help them with that and we're actively looking at that now.