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Fallujah 80 Percent Under Coalition Control, General Says

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American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Nov. 12, 2004 – As fighting continues in Fallujah, Iraq, coalition forces control 80 percent of the city, a top U.S. Marine general said in Iraq today.

Still, Lt. Gen. John Sattler, commander of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force, cautioned that "each and every house" still needs to be cleared to remove stashes of weapons and ammunition.

The general said he believes enemy fighters have been unable to get reinforcements from outside the city because of the tight security perimeter U.S. and Iraqi troops have established.

Sattler had no details on whether the insurgent fighters were predominantly foreign fighters or former-regime loyalists. "In the fight up to this point, we have not had the opportunity nor the time to go ahead and analyze who exactly we're fighting," he said. "As far as the Iraqi warrior or the U.S. soldier (or) Marine on the ground is concerned, they are fighting a very stubborn enemy in most cases.

"And the goal right now is to continue -- we feel we've broken their back and their spirit -- to continue to keep the heat on them," he added.

Sattler said the U.S. and Iraqi forces "have lost 22 coalition warriors who have made the ultimate sacrifice." Approximately 170 others have been wounded. The general said 40 of those have returned to duty. "They were treated, took their weapons, and went back into the fight," he said.

Five of those killed and 40 of the coalition wounded were Iraqis, Iraqi Gen. Maj. Gen. Abdul Qadar Mohammed Jassem Mohan said. Sattler estimated that roughly 600 enemy fighters have been killed in Fallujah since Operation Al Fajr began Nov. 8.

Coalition troops have detained 151 individuals, Sattler said. That total does not include any of the 300 individuals who negotiated surrender from within a mosque today. The general said officials believe many of those individuals are civilians. All 300 are being vetted now, and any found to be civilians will receive humanitarian aid, he said.

"And those who are determined to be hostile will then be put into the detention channels," he added.

Sattler stressed that Iraqi forces handled the situation regarding the people surrendering from within the mosque. "That was a complete Iraqi armed forces operation," he said. "There was no U.S. involvement in that."

Sattler also mentioned that coalition forces have come across few civilians in Fallujah. He mentioned one group of 30 people that were moved to a "humanitarian-assistance area," one civilian who was injured, and a family of three that was "picked up by Iraqi security forces and brought out."

The Iraqi government has already sent medical and reconstruction teams to the area, a spokesman for Iraqi Prime Minister Ayad Allawi said. The spokesman said 14 trucks of medical supplies and humanitarian goods have been sent to the region and are standing by to deliver aid. He said officials hope to have "the green light" to start delivering the aid from the military forces by Nov. 13.

The spokesman also said the interim Iraqi government has already earmarked \$100 million for reconstruction in Fallujah once the security situation has stabilized.

"Everybody is ready to start the reconstruction of Fallujah the contractors and the interim government and the people who's in charge of the ministries," he said. "So the projects are there. The money is there. We are ready to go."

Sattler said U.S. military forces have been very careful to target only legitimate military locations: "either troops in contact, a sniper in the building, or a cache of weapons or ammunition inside that building.

"We have not nor will we conduct indiscriminate bombing with either our aircraft, our helicopters, our fixed-wing or our artillery," he said.

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