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Iraqi Police Priorities

James M. Dubik

Whether in Iraq or in the United States arguments remain as to the origins of the war as well as how it was conducted. But equally certain is this: most of the Iraqis that I've talked to are grateful for the American troops and families who have sacrificed so much and to the other nations of the coalition who have also contributed sons, daughters, and treasure to eliminate the Saddam regime and help create the evident progress in their country. They know that war is not over in Iraq, even if Iraq's enemies are far weaker than they had been. They also understand that Iraq is in a far better place today than it was in 2006, and each year finds more progress. They may be frustrated that progress is not faster or more widespread, but they are not ungrateful for the freedoms and opportunities they now have.

Acknowledging this progress, President Obama outlined a "new page" for Iraq and highlighted the importance of a continued Iraqi/US relationship. This relationship appropriately rests upon Iraq's growing ability to "help itself," but recognizes the essential role the US can play in Iraq's future. I have returned to Iraq three times since I had responsibility for accelerating the growth of the Iraqi Security Forces during the 2007-8 surge, and in my view, the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi Police Forces need assistance in the following three important priority areas.

1. The Ministry of Interior. Thanks to the efforts of the ministry's work force and coalition assistance, the ministry's institutions and systems are far stronger than ever before. The ministry is still underdeveloped in several critical areas, however. The quality of the ministry's civil service system, the efficiency of ministerial bureaucratic processes, and the overall effectiveness of ministerial management practices all require more improvement. The ministry needs also to improve in the areas of strategic planning, programming and budgeting, equipment acquisition and systematic logistics, continuous training and education, and internal affairs to combat corruption. The ministry must improve its consistency in producing and promulgating national-through-local police and law enforcement standards as well as in supervising performance to those standards. These improvements are a natural part of our transformation from an Iraq under Saddam to the Iraq that all desire.

2. Provincial Directors of Police. Again, the Iraqi Provincial Directors of Police have improved significantly in the past four years. In many parts of the country, Iraqi citizens have increasing confidence in their police forces. This improvement is due in part to a more rigorous selection process the ministry and governors have put into place and to the changes and expansions the ministry has made in police training and national police academy education. The improvement

is also due to the assistance the Provincial Directors have received from the coalition's training and partnership programs. But the path to police professionalization is far from complete.

The Provincial Directors of Police must improve in administrative and managerial capability. The provincial level is the critical link between national level policies and standards and local level performance. Each province needs strong pay, promotion, and personnel management methodologies; continuing training and education programs as well as provincial academies in which to execute these programs; and internal affairs, property accountability, and maintenance management systems.

Finally, the Provincial Directors of Police are key in achieving the goal of shifting from a confession-based system to an evidence-based one set by both the Ministries of Interior and Justice.

3. The Federal Police. The Iraqi Federal Police play a major role in the overall national policing strategy. Like the Carabinieri in Italy (who have already helped accelerate Iraqi Federal Police development significantly), the Iraqi Federal Police back up local police in situations beyond their ability. The Federal Police also provide law enforcement presence in rural areas that have no local police, and they provide the Government of Iraq with a way to address national-level criminal activity without having to resort to military forces.

The day has not yet come when police primacy exists throughout Iraq. But the Iraqi police do have primary security responsibility in many areas. Ultimately the police will have primary responsibility throughout the country, and the Federal Police play a critical part in hastening the arrival of that day.

The Federal Police would benefit from continued assistance in their drive to full professionalization. The ministry intends to grow "one Federal Police Brigade per province." Part of that growth must include improvements in nation-wide administrative systems, continuing training and education programs, support and sustainment procedures, command and control policies, and internal enforcement mechanisms associated with a professional force of this type and size.

The assistance needed in the three priority areas above is not as extensive as it was just four years ago at the start of Prime Minister Maliki's government. Thankfully, the Ministry of Interior and the Iraqi Police Forces are far more capable and mature. And all understand that the United States has a broad set of responsibilities to its own citizens as well as internationally. Assistance in these three high-payoff areas, however, is essential for Iraq to continue its progress to becoming a stable and more democratic nation. Improvements at the ministerial level, within the provincial directors of police, and within the Federal Police will have geometric positive effects in police performance at the local and district levels. As the United States correctly shifts responsibility for police development from the Department of Defense to the Department of State, these three areas should receive priority consideration. The Ministry and Iraqi Police Forces benefited from the assistance received from partnering with US military forces because that relationship was based upon full, open, and respectful dialogue as well as

collaborative planning and execution. Both may benefit from the new partnership with the US State Department if it is similarly based.

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