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IRAQI SECURITY FORCE CAPABILITIES

Summary

Coalition recruited sufficient numbers of Iraqi security forces. Retention fell during Easter crisis but recovering. ICDC perform reasonably well, the police generally poorly. Iraqi Intelligence starting slowly but performing reasonably well. Training accelerated but more needed. Fresh equipment starting to come through but more required. Iraqi command and control embryonic. To be successful Iraqi leaders needed. Army to be reorientated from external threat to counter-insurgency. A solution is to soften de-Ba'athification and rehire selected senior and middle-ranking officers of the former regime. Only just starting to happen.

Matthew Rycroft asked for a note on Iraqiisation: recruitment, retention, operational effectiveness and command and control. This is a revised version of the quick piece produced on 27 April, including new information and comments from departments. It also incorporates information on Iraqi civilian casualties and the security handover in MND (SE) subsequently requested.

Army

2. Iraqi Army personnel were not involved in the recent security crisis. In response to recent events, the Iraqi Army is being tasked with internal counter-insurgency as well as external defence. The previous target of recruiting 35,000 soldiers by September has been brought forward. An Iraqi MOD is being established and an Iraqi Chief of Staff and other senior officers have been appointed. An Iraqi National Task Force, or internal mobile reserve, intended to be three battalions strong will start training on 1 May. Plans are in hand to form the first Iraqi Division and an Iraqi Joint HQ by 30 June. Recruiting for the Joint HQ is proceeding. 100 officers are in place, but it will be some time before the HQ can control the army and ICDC effectively. Lobbied by the UK, the US are working on MNF/Iraqi consultation mechanisms post-transition. Overall, only about 3,700 soldiers of the required 35,000 have been recruited. Pay has recently been increased as an incentive. To be capable, training will need to be more thorough than for the ICDC, but this will slow the prospects of deployment.

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3. Another objective, softening de-Baathification, is the recruitment of 4-5,000 former Iraqi army officers for both the Army and ICDC. 750 officers are to be embedded in the Coalition command chain down to brigade level by 15 May. This process will start at Centcom and Baghdad level on 1 May. The change in the Army's focus may be necessary. The Iraqi Army was an underused asset, but we must recognise that its intervention in internal security does pose a political risk for the future.

Iraqi Civil Defence Corps

4. 36 ICDC battalions under direct Coalition military command, with a ration strength of 40,000, reached about 35,000 personnel in early April. The ICDC performed better in the current crisis than the police but still face severe problems, including serious levels of desertion in central Iraq. Numbers have fallen to 25,000, but are recovering as soldiers return. The special 36 battalion has since operated relatively successfully alongside US forces in Fallujah. Further leadership training and better equipment (a particular ICDC complaint) is to be given (although there are delays in existing equipment provision). The 5,500 ICDC in MND (SE) are fully recruited and have completed initial training. They are now capable of independent operations. MOD assess that they are performing well (but it must be said that they have not faced the level of test of some other ICDC units in Iraq).

Police

5. With 75,000 men, the Iraqi police are fully recruited. High wages have helped with retention, despite the threat of suicide bombings of police stations. Training was already being accelerated before the April violence. However, fewer than 15,000 police have been properly trained so far, with another 4,000 in training. Poorly led, ill-disciplined, inexperienced, lacking equipment and local credibility, faced with armed confrontation in the Easter crisis, units faded away. (Most have now returned to their posts.) In the worst case, in both Najaf and Fallujah, individual policemen joined the opposition. Performance was also linked to the extent of relationships with local MNF forces. With some contingents this has been limited.

6. Generally, the performance of the police remains poor. The exceptions are in the Kurdish areas in the north, where the police force developed some capacity prior to the occupation, and in MND (SE), where the police forces have faced less threat and, at least in Basra, have performed reasonably well in recent operations, for example, responding to the recent suicide bombings in a professional manner.

7. In reaction to the problems identified, the Iraqi police units which performed least well are being reconstituted. Their police leaders will undertake one week refresher training, under the supervision of International Police Advisers starting to arrive. Police stations will be reoccupied with protection provided by the Iraqi Army and ICDC. Police will continue to be mentored by International Police Advisers thereafter (where available and the security situation allows). Police station security is to be improved. Efforts will also be made to improve command and control from

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the Ministry of Interior downwards. On a national basis, public safety committees will be established of local notables to which police chiefs will report in an effort to improve police/community links. Separately, there are 8,000 border police, a further 5,000 are now being recruited.

8. This looks fine in theory and genuine advances have already been made in improving training, but this will be long-term process. The key problems will remain:

- **Equipment.** This is arriving but contractual problems with the US Supplemental have caused delays. Shortages are worst for the Army where contracts are now two months behind schedule;
- the slow arrival of **International Police Advisers as mentors.** The original CPA plan was for 1,500 Advisers, of which 1,000 would be supplied by the US. Currently, the US has just 300 in Iraq. Further deployments are on hold pending the arrival of equipment. In MND (SE), the deployment of the first of 40 UK police mentors is under review because of the security situation;
- strengthening **Iraqi leadership** both in the Iraqi police and other Iraqi security forces; and
- establishing **working co-ordination mechanisms between Iraqi security forces and the MNF.**

Intelligence

9. The Iraqi National Intelligence Service (INIS) was established in April 2004. Over operational officers agents, plus support staff, have been vetted and completed training. They will operate from a new HQ building in Baghdad shortly. The first outstation is also planned to open in Basra soon.

Other regional offices are planned. The INIS has started to provide the Ministerial Committee for National Security with assessments. The national target is for operational agents by 1 July. This should be achieved. In addition, there will be a separate INIS paramilitary unit of about . There are around former Iraqi intelligence officers within the INIS and no plans to recruit more.

10. , the INIS was slow to get started.

However, after the transition. The Interim Government could decide to remove officers with links to the old regime.

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In addition, post-transition, there are risks of nepotism and corruption returning

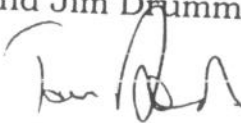
Local Control in MND (SE)

11. The training, mentoring and monitoring of Iraqi Security Forces is proceeding relatively well in MND (SE). Most ICDC battalions should operate without full-time MNF presence by 30 June. The Iraqi police in MND (SE) should also reach this level by 30 June. These objectives will be subject to continuing Shia consent in south-eastern Iraq, which is fragile, and influenced by developments elsewhere, particularly by the Coalition response to the problems of the Sadr Militia and Fallujah.

Civilian Casualties

12. There are no accurate estimates for the number of Iraqi casualties since the start of combat operations. Numbers range from 5,000 to 20,000. In response to Parliamentary and public questions, the MOD line has been that it is not possible to determine the number of civilian casualties. UK forces have taken every effort to minimise the impact of military operations on the Iraqi civilian population, consistent with their legal obligations. Since the end of major combat operations, UK forces in MND (SE) have only been allowed to use lethal force in self-defence and in response to a hostile act or intent. An initial assessment in February 2004 indicated that 36 civilians had died as result of UK actions since 1 May 2004. For this purpose, civilians who have attacked Coalition forces, and thus lost their protected status, are classed as civilians. UK forces, acting in self-defence, killed around 30 people during the upsurge of violence in Maysan province in recent weeks. The MOD are now undertaking a comprehensive assessment of unit records to produce a more accurate estimate of civilian casualties caused by UK actions. This started at the beginning of April and should be completed by the third week of May, when Ministers will be presented with figures. Even then, given that some Iraqis have been removed from firefights before assessment by UK forces or subsequently died of wounds, the figure will be subject to caveats.

13. We are taking a fresh look at Iraqiisation to see what would be the optimal number of fully-trained Iraqi security forces and how we (and the Coalition) would go about achieving it. I am copying this note to Private Offices of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Group; PS/Home Secretary, PS/Caroline Flint, PS/Paul Boateng; Desmond Bowen and George Fergusson; John Scarlett; John Buck and , IPU, FCO; Ian Lee and David Johnson, MOD; SIS; , HMT; Cathy Adams, LOD; , UKTI; Jim Acton, HO; and Jim Drummond, DFID.


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