

Lessons from Iraq

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The initial performance of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) against the self-proclaimed Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was not encouraging, neither from an operational nor an institutional perspective. With few exceptions, the ISF was unable to beat back the advances of ISIS without considerable U.S. assistance.¹ In some cases, units of the ISF completely collapsed and disintegrated in the face of the enemy.² These failures caused the Obama Administration to revisit the commitment of U.S. forces to assist the ISF in defeating ISIS and making itself more effective and self-sufficient.

The ISF's initial shortcomings and failures have brought U.S. efforts to build capable military forces and effective institutions overseeing those forces into sharp relief. Unfortunately, the United States has less to show for the considerable investment in lives, time, materiel, and capital than one would hope. This is reason enough for the Department of Defense (DOD)—and the U.S. government as a whole—to step back and take a critical look at the effectiveness of its efforts over the past fourteen years. What went right? What went wrong? What could have been done better? What were the main obstacles faced, and could they have been addressed in a more effective way? This chapter attempts to answer those questions.

Any critical analysis of U.S. and coalition efforts in Iraq would be remiss if it did not put these efforts in context as events unfolded. Context is critical to understanding how U.S. efforts at defense institution building (DIB) unfolded over time and why they succeeded or failed. For this reason, the analysis that follows takes the reader sequentially through events—from pre-war planning through Operation Iraqi Freedom to the drawdown of U.S. forces and the establishment of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq—to illustrate particular lessons learned as events unfolded.

The story of U.S. involvement in Iraq highlights the difficulty of building effective security forces—difficult under the best of circumstances—while fighting a full-blown insurgency. Fighting an insurgency greatly complicates defense institution building, drawing away critical attention, effort, and resources. Operational conditions and political decisions often force the defense institution builder to take a sub-optimal approach at the outset, thereby inhibiting or delaying some of the longer-range DIB goals, or at least making them a secondary priority. The insurgency, after all, is the more

urgent priority. That said, the two efforts are inextricably intertwined, and separating the analyses of them is not only nearly impossible but also counterproductive. In this chapter, counterinsurgency operational concerns are addressed to the degree they affected DIB.

For the purposes of this chapter, the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MOI) are both incorporated under the rubric of “defense” institutions. Ordinarily, the MOI would not be part of such an analysis, as the Department of State has statutory responsibility for such efforts under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961. In Iraq, however, President Bush chose to assign this responsibility to the DOD to ensure unity of effort and because of the scope of the effort required to build an effective MOI. Both ministries were considered part of the Iraqi security forces, and the same coalition military organization oversaw their development.

In most cases, defense institution building is really about improving existing defense institutions. In Iraq, however, the coalition was faced with building the ISF from the ground up. To a large degree, this was a self-inflicted wound and should have been anticipated and planned for. Nevertheless, the coalition was able to adapt over time and make progress, despite setbacks along the way. At the end of the drawdown, success would be a question of whether the Iraqi government would accept and sustain the system the coalition had worked with Iraqis to put in place. However things turn out, the story of U.S. defense institution building efforts in Iraq is instructive on many levels. It begins with pre-war planning.

Pre-War Planning for Phase IV

Planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) began in 2002. While U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) ultimately had responsibility for the complete operation plan, a number of other planning and analysis efforts were initially commissioned at the behest of the National Security Council (NSC) and other agencies.³ Because these efforts were conducted in secrecy and compartmentalized, the individuals in most of these efforts were unaware of parallel efforts. This precluded early and effective synthesis of a U.S. government position on what would likely happen after the defeat of Saddam Hussein’s regime. Though several groups across the government recognized serious problems could arise after the invasion, the most serious concerns either were not addressed by the planning or not addressed effectively, resulting in a plan based on flawed assumptions about what would happen in its aftermath.

General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM Commander, and the CENTCOM staff found themselves focused primarily on forming the invasion plan to Secretary Donald Rumsfeld’s satisfaction, which gave them little time or resources to address the aftermath of the invasion—“Phase IV” of the plan. Throughout the effort, Rumsfeld

pushed to minimize the forces employed in the invasion and maximize the speed at which they took Baghdad. Phase IV planning focused primarily on humanitarian assistance, securing weapons of mass destruction, and restoring critical infrastructure (reconstruction), not the complete rebuilding of governmental institutions destroyed by the war, and certainly not the possibility of an insurgency.⁴

Nine flawed planning assumptions about post-invasion conditions, combined with CENTCOM's operational approach, would put coalition forces in the worst possible position to address the conditions they faced after the defeat of Saddam:

- The Iraqi people would welcome the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and concomitantly welcome coalition forces as liberators.⁵
- As a result, civil unrest would be the exception, not the rule.
- The Government of Iraq's administrative bureaucracies, including its ministries, would remain largely intact and could be quickly restored to an acceptable level of functionality after the war.
- Because the Iraqi governmental bureaucracy would remain largely intact, an interim Iraqi government would assume power quickly, and the coalition would transfer control rapidly to it. Thus, a significant U.S. presence in the Iraq would be short-lived.
- Iraqi oil revenues would fund reconstruction efforts.
- A "demobilized" but standing military would be available for civil reconstruction.
- Iraqi police forces would remain intact and be capable of maintaining law and order after Saddam Hussein's regime fell.
- The international community would contribute substantially to coalition efforts in Phase VI.
- "De-Baathification" would be minimal to preserve Iraq's administrative capacity.

For all practical purposes, these assumptions removed the need for a plan to ensure stability and security and to rebuild the country. Underpinning them was a distressing lack of appreciation of the potent influence of Iraqi culture, religion, sectarianism, and history of strong-man rule. U.S. civilian and military leaders underestimated the power of these factors in a post-Saddam Iraq.

Bad assumptions can render a plan ineffective, or even irrelevant. Thus, good planning recognizes those key assumptions that are most tenuous and accounts for their potential inaccuracy through "branch" plans ("the Plan B") for operations that do not go as expected. In the case of the plan for Operation Iraqi Freedom, this did not occur. Consequently, as Phase IV unfolded, those on the ground found

themselves unprepared to deal with the reality they faced. This turn of events put the coalition immediately in a reactive posture and forced it to deal with the post-invasion occupation in an ad hoc manner. Early improvisations in the aftermath of the invasion would have unfortunate—if not disastrous—results.

Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

To oversee reconstruction and address a potential humanitarian crisis after the war, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld appointed retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner to be the head of the newly created Office for Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) on January 9, 2003, over a year after planning began. Given his success in leading U.S. efforts in Operation Provide Comfort after the first Gulf War, Garner seemed to be a good fit for the job. Little did he know that he would be beset by huge political, operational, logistical, financial, and staff challenges throughout his short tenure, not the least of which would be the effects of inadequate Phase IV planning. Garner was largely left to fend for himself in defense and interagency bureaucracies that saw him as an unnecessary outsider. He had been given mission impossible, but that was yet to become clear.

Garner arrived in the Pentagon to find virtually no staff and no one prepared to bring him up to speed on the plan. Largely on his own initiative, he cobbled together an ad hoc team with little institutional assistance from the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or the Commander of CENTCOM. Although ORHA expanded significantly once Garner deployed, most of his people were military officers with little expertise or experience in the tasks they were expected to perform. Having already missed over 15 months of planning, Garner found himself struggling to get his arms around a maturing plan and organizing for his mission. Complicating matters, he was never well-integrated into the broader planning effort—either inside DOD or the interagency—or the command and control structure for Operation Iraqi Freedom.⁶ Further, his late arrival meant he had almost no opportunity to influence the post-war plan in any significant way.

Garner envisioned his Phase IV responsibilities as falling under three “pillars”: humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and civil administration. He believed his first order of business once Baghdad fell would be humanitarian assistance. Reconstruction of key national infrastructure (electricity, oil, water, etc.) would be next. Based on pre-war estimates, civil administration (e.g., the restoration and development of Iraq’s governmental institutions) would likely be the least of his concerns. Thus, he devoted the least amount of organizational and planning effort on this pillar. Unfortunately, restoring civil administration would be central to Phase IV.

Once Garner arrived in Baghdad, he was faced with a reality that essentially invalidated his priorities and pre-war planning. The confluence of a number of actions created a perfect storm that forced ORHA and the coalition to begin improvising from

the very start of Phase IV. Unknown to the coalition, Hussein had freed thousands of criminals, instructed state agencies to sabotage infrastructure, ordered the shooting of dissident Shia clerics, and directed the destruction of the regime's records if coalition forces entered Baghdad. These actions contributed to the general state of lawlessness and confusion as the occupation began. Compounding their effect was the military's and police's abandonment of their posts during the invasion. As they dissolved into the countryside, the country was left with no apparatus for maintaining stability and order.

CENTCOM's goal was to take down Saddam Hussein's regime as rapidly as possible, before it could employ weapons of mass destruction or generate other mayhem. The speed of the war, coupled with a relatively small invasion force, resulted in ground forces bypassing or ignoring key areas like Anbar, and facilities such as banks (which provided large stores of cash that were later used to fund the insurgency and other organized criminal activity), military bases, and ammunition dumps (which supplied criminals and insurgents with thousands of tons of ammunition).

Already overstretched U.S. forces had no orders to address the widespread looting and inter-sectarian fighting between Iraqi militias that began almost immediately after the fall of Baghdad.⁷ The coalition's military leadership chose not to—and probably could not—impose martial law.⁸ Inaction fostered a descent into lawlessness and criminal violence that was soon beyond the capability of U.S. forces to handle. Further, random lawlessness soon evolved into organized theft by Iraqi criminals and insurgents, and the first indications of a nascent insurgency appeared.

Lack of action by the coalition contributed to a lost opportunity to restore government services quickly. The looting and civil unrest resulted in considerable damage to an already dilapidated and crumbling infrastructure. Government buildings were rendered unusable, as anything useful inside them was stripped out. As a result, Iraqi ministry officials abandoned their offices and would have nowhere to return to in the coming months. Beyond ready cash on hand (a few billion dollars), the Iraqi state was essentially out of money—with no means of producing new revenue. If there was a window of opportunity to restore responsible governance and effect a rapid transition to Iraqi self-governance after the invasion, it was closing rapidly.

Once he arrived in Baghdad in April 2003, Garner did his best to set up operations as quickly as he could. He did so over General Frank's objections and the uncertain state of stability. Once in Baghdad, coordination with military units proved to be next to impossible, because ORHA was not granted access to DOD's classified computer networks and the civilian phone exchange in Baghdad was inoperable. Further, ORHA had no communications plan to calm the Iraqi people and give instructions that might tamp down unrest. Nonetheless, Garner set to work on his organization's eleven goals (see *Figure 1*), which were enormous undertakings and likely unachievable in the time he thought he would have before turning over the Phase IV effort to a successor.

Figure 1: ORHA's Goals

Orha's Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Security ▪ Salaries paid nationwide ▪ Return police to work and train them ▪ Return the ministries to functionality ▪ Restore basic services to Baghdad ▪ Prevent a fuel crisis ▪ Purchase crops ▪ Solve food distribution challenges ▪ Install town councils nationwide ▪ Deploy and integrate Government Support Teams with local government ▪ Prevent cholera and dysentery

Back in Washington, the White House was increasingly uneasy about the coalition's inability to get a grip on the situation in the face of growing lawlessness in Iraq. There was great concern also that the coalition was rapidly losing the support of the Iraqi people. Further, it appears that the administration had shifted its position on the speed of turning over governance to the Iraqis, deciding to delay this transition a year. As no one in Washington informed Garner of this policy shift, he continued full steam ahead with transitioning power to the Iraqis as quickly as possible. As Garner was desperately trying to cope with the situation, Rumsfeld called him shortly after his arrival in Baghdad to inform him of the administration's intent to replace him with retired Ambassador L. Paul Bremer.

Coalition Provisional Authority

With Bremer came the standup of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and the stand-down of ORHA. This transition was bumpy at best. Ambassador Bremer arrived in-country without Garner having been informed of significant policy changes made in Washington regarding post-war Iraq. Some of these changes pulled the rug out from what Garner thought had been his mandate (i.e., the rapid creation of an interim Iraqi government and an abbreviated occupation), and were not what he would have advised Rumsfeld and other senior leaders in the U.S. government to do.

Bremer, for his part, had been given the responsibility of "temporary governance of Iraq" without all the authorities and resources necessary to carry out his immense responsibilities.⁹ He found himself with little policy guidance from Washington, no detailed plan to work from, no formal authority over the vast majority of U.S. personnel in-country (at that point they were under the command of Joint Task Force-7 [JTF-7] commanded by Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez), and having to build his staff from the ground up. Bremer also found himself forced to improvise from the outset of his tenure and react to

unanticipated and constantly changing conditions on the ground.

Although Bremer was able to bring on experienced and talented senior people, he was rarely able to fill over half of the CPA's civilian positions. Generally, the junior and mid-level people he brought on were inexperienced, young, and with little knowledge of the country, its culture, and the Arabic language.¹⁰ Tours of duty were typically three to six months in length, which drove high personnel turbulence, a lack of continuity, and a continual cycle of bringing inexperienced people up to speed. Further, it did not help that the CPA's staff was largely tethered to the Green Zone in Baghdad. The CPA was simply not adequately staffed with qualified people who could properly advise the key ministries of the Iraqi government on rebuilding and administering their institutions.

Bremer hit the ground intent on quickly taking charge. Almost immediately, he made three momentous decisions in succession—against Garner's advice—that would serve as accelerants for the insurgency and drastically undermine the building of support for his program by the Iraqi people.¹¹ First, he fired the vast majority of senior Baath Party members (known as De-Baathification). Second, he officially dissolved the Iraqi military. Third, he postponed the transition of governing authority to the Iraqis until 2004.

The firing of Baath Party members at the military or civilian-equivalent rank of colonel and above effectively stripped the country's ministries of mid- and senior-level managers experienced in running the bureaucratic machinery of the country.¹² This order put as many as 85,000 Sunni bureaucrats, policemen, and senior military officers out of work and served to alienate the Sunni community, which feared ceding power to the Shia majority. This order, coupled with the wide-scale physical damage to the ministries in the aftermath of the invasion, effectively destroyed the ministries' capacity to run their respective institutions. Importantly, it effectively stripped all the key leaders out of the MOI, which was central to keeping law and order and keeping a lid on the nascent insurgency. In a country deeply divided along sectarian lines, the order disempowered one of the key institutions most likely to play a unifying role in Iraq. Further, it required that this critical institution would have to be completely rebuilt.¹³

Bremer's second directive disbanded the Iraqi military.¹⁴ This decision put about 350,000 armed men out of work in an economy where there was no other work to be had. This humiliating action turned them into a disaffected and antagonistic pool of potential recruits for the insurgents and criminal gangs that would later undercut stability. This directive left the country with only the MOI to address lawlessness and a budding insurgency. It was not up to the task.

U.S. leaders in Iraq knew the police force was corrupt, but initially thought they were generally capable. That assumption proved false. The police were not even competent under Saddam, so there was no cadre of proficient junior and mid-level leaders to draw from after senior leaders were removed. Hence, police forces at all levels were incapable of restoring public order.¹⁵ Bremer was adamant that the police needed to be reformed quickly to restore order and engender public confidence. The requirements for training, however, quickly overwhelmed the CPA and police forces—both because of the large requirements for new

people, and the rising amount of crime and insurgent activity. Further, reform efforts were severely constrained by funding and staffing shortfalls. This initiative depended almost entirely on Iraqi funding (about \$2.4 million) because no one in the U.S. government had anticipated this sort of need on the scale required. Consequently, no U.S. money had been appropriated for this task.

To supplant the now defunct Iraqi Army, Bremer proposed building a “New Iraqi Army” to replace the forces he had disestablished. He wanted to inculcate Western concepts of accountability and the rule of law into this force. In his vision, these forces would have to be accountable to Iraq’s civilian authorities and capable of maintaining national security. Bremer’s subordinate responsible for security sector reform was former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe. Bremer charged Slocombe with creating the new Ministry of Defense and its subordinate defense forces, as well as reforming the Iraqi police and establishing intelligence capabilities for the ISF. Bremer fully recognized the importance of creating a strong, functional MOD and the need to build institutional capability:

In addition to creating the new Iraqi army, we will also be working with the governing council . . . on creating a law-based system for civilian oversight and control, creating the institutions and mechanisms to run the national security policies of what will be a major state in the Middle East. And that is in itself an important part of the creation of a democratic, law-based, constitutional system, which is of course our overall strategy.¹⁶

Given the number of institution-level functions that had to be performed by the coalition, however, it is likely that Slocombe made little headway in filling the two ministries with capable, experienced people or training them to perform the functions necessary to make them viable entities. It is also unlikely, given the manning of the CPA, that he had enough capable senior people to properly advise the ministries down to the bureaucratic levels where the work actually gets done.

Responsibility for building the new Iraqi military fell to Major General Paul Eaton, who arrived in Iraq in June 2003 to take charge of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT), which was charged with training and fielding a 40,000-man army.¹⁷ CMATT would work for Bremer and the CPA, not Lieutenant General Sanchez, Commander of JTF-7. Eaton’s counterpart for police training was Bernard Kerik, a former New York City police commissioner, who led the Coalition Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT). Plagued by a lack of strategic guidance, effectively no plan, shoestring budgets, small staffs, and insufficient time to execute their respective missions adequately, both organizations struggled.¹⁸

Recognizing CMATT’s struggles to generate forces, General John Abizaid, then Commander of CENTCOM, pressed for the military to take over the training of Iraq’s

security forces.¹⁹ Also uneasy with what he was observing, Rumsfeld sent Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry to Iraq in February 2004 to determine how best to ensure there was a sufficient number of trained Iraqi forces in the field to take over security responsibilities. Rumsfeld accepted Eikenberry's conclusion that coalition military forces should oversee the training of Iraq's army and police, and directed the formation of an Office of Security Cooperation led by Eaton and under the command of Sanchez.²⁰ Eaton thus consolidated army and police training under his oversight.²¹

Bremer's third fateful decision was to postpone the transition of governing authority to a sovereign Iraqi Interim Government to 2004—despite earlier plans to do so in the summer of 2003.²² In the intervening year, the CPA established a representative “Iraqi Governing Council,” which provided governing counsel to Bremer and drafted an Iraqi constitution, a necessary precursor for establishing a democratic government.²³ While Bremer and other U.S. leaders may have believed that this was the prudent action to take given the level of unrest and the apparent lack of residual Iraqi governmental structures, this decision surprised the Iraqis and angered key sectarian groups, most notably the Shia.²⁴ This decision served to enhance the perception among Iraqis that the CPA and coalition forces were “occupiers” rather than “liberators.”²⁵

The combination of Bremer's three decisions, however well-intentioned, proved to be a recipe for political, social, and economic upheaval. Collectively, they engendered enmity from disenfranchised Sunnis and opposition to a lengthy foreign occupation from others. They were, in short, a “recipe for instability.”²⁶ For all the many good and important things the CPA accomplished, it failed to accomplish its top goal: stability and security. In fact, the CPA actively contributed to a worsening of security. Resistance to the coalition would increase, and lawlessness would mutate into alarming inter-sectarian violence between Sunni and Shia extremists.

By early 2004, it was becoming clear that the insurgency was increasingly virulent. Despite CPATT's best efforts, rushing training and transition proved to be a mistake. Iraqi forces were undertrained and underequipped to fight unexpectedly competent and well-armed insurgent forces. It should not have been surprising, then, that the ISF performed disastrously during the April 2004 uprisings—refusing to fight other Iraqis. This mutiny made clear that the United States was pushing security responsibilities to the Iraqis prematurely.²⁷

In this context, CPA's official handover of control to the Iraqi Interim Government came quickly, occurring on June 28, 2004, in a small, quiet ceremony removed from the public eye, conducted two days in advance of schedule for security reasons, and protected by multiple levels of “T-walls” and security forces.²⁸ Bremer informed the president that the transfer of control was complete and, without ceremony, quietly left the country. An important shift had been made. The Iraqi Interim Government was in charge, and this changed the dynamic of the coalition's relationship with the ISF. U.S. advisors now supported Iraq's military leadership.

Multi-National Forces Command–Iraq Takes Over

As the insurgency increased in power and security conditions deteriorated, the U.S. Embassy and Multi-National Forces Command–Iraq (MNF-I) replaced the CPA and JTF-7. The creation of MNF-I marked the beginning of detailed campaign planning designed to create stability in Iraq and set the right conditions for the coalition’s eventual withdrawal. This transition, while suffering major setbacks along the way, nevertheless resulted in dramatic changes to the nature and scope of the coalition’s support to the ISF. It marked a robust commitment to building the ISF for the long term, and was a vital component of the U.S. exit strategy. MNF-I recognized that the ISF was not ready to take on the insurgency and that far more—and higher-quality—police and military forces were needed than were on hand.

MNF-I was responsible for conducting coalition operations in Iraq and for overseeing the development and fielding of Iraqi Security forces. It split responsibilities for the ISF between two subordinate commands: Multi-National Command–Iraq (MNC-I) and Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC-I). MNSTC-I had responsibility for overseeing the initial training, equipping, and fielding of the ISF. Once MNSTC-I trained and equipped them, Iraqi military units transferred to the operational control of MNC-I, where they were assigned embedded advisors who took them through more advanced training before deployment. MNSTC-I would bear the responsibility for building the ISF for most of the remainder of the U.S. military’s presence in Iraq.

Given the worsening security situation and the ISF’s poor performance, Lieutenant General David Petraeus, the new MNSTC-I commander, focused most of his initial efforts on generating competent army and police forces.²⁹ From the outset, Petraeus recognized the huge challenges before him. Procurement could not keep up with the training plan, and the ISF was unable to sustain itself logistically in the field.³⁰ Security forces were heavily dependent upon the coalition for transportation, logistics, fire support, and funding. Almost immediately, he consolidated the following three organizations under MNSTC-I:³¹

- *Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT)*: responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the Iraqi Army
- *Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT)*: responsible for organizing, training, and equipping the Iraqi Police
- *Joint Headquarters Advisory Support Team (JHQ-ST)*: responsible for assisting the joint headquarters of the Iraqi Army in developing a command and control system and assisting in operational planning.

Notably, MNSTC-I did not immediately assume responsibility for advising and training the Iraqi Ministries of Defense and Interior.³² When the CPA shut down, it transferred this responsibility to the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office (IRMO) under the Embassy’s management.³³ This forced Petraeus’ staff to coordinate MNSTC-I’s programs on a daily

basis with the advisors at IRMO, who assisted the ministries. This was a cumbersome bureaucratic arrangement that could slow progress and, if not managed well, result in institutional policy, strategic planning, requirements determination, force design, force sustainment, and personnel systems being disconnected from the actual organizing, equipping, manning, training, fielding, and basing of Iraqi forces. Petraeus made this split arrangement work because he recognized that creating self-sustaining forces was absolutely critical.³⁴ Eventually MNSTC-I would inherit responsibility for the ministerial advisory mission, but that would not happen until October 2005—after Petraeus had handed over command to Lieutenant General Martin Dempsey.

To help the ISF expand rapidly and increase its operational competence, Petraeus pursued a number of initiatives. The first put in place flexible contracting mechanisms for procurement and construction. His success in this arena soon paid off in widespread military and police construction projects for military bases, police academies, and police stations. In terms of training and advising, he greatly increased the numbers of advisors and introduced the concept of “embedded advisors,” wherein advisors from MNSTC-I joined Iraqi units in basic training and remained with them as they graduated and deployed into operational sectors.

To solve chronic resource shortfalls that were not covered by other sources of funding, MNSTC-I developed its own request for supplemental funding to specifically address funding shortfalls for training and equipping security forces. Congress approved this request in May 2005, and allocated nearly \$5.4 billion dollars to the Iraqi Security Forces Fund (ISFF). The ISFF was noteworthy because it gave MNSTC-I great flexibility in how to use the funds. With ISFF, the commander had the latitude to reallocate funding for different purposes than originally planned without having to go back to Congress for approval. The ISFF would prove to be a lifeline for the ISF over the next five or so years. It also would serve a useful role in providing the MNSTC-I Commander leverage to get recalcitrant ministries to invest their own funds in the capabilities needed to make their ministries and forces independent and self-sustaining.

While there was still far to go, the ISF was showing signs of improvement on the battlefield. Petraeus and MNSTC-I made great strides during his tour, but major problems and shortfalls still plagued both the MOD and MOI. Most of the command’s attention and effort was focused on getting as many trained and equipped tactical units into the fight as possible. This emphasis reflected the operational need at the time. As a result, other important tasks were deferred, given lesser emphasis, or provided fewer resources.

At the tactical and operational levels, the ISF was still suffering from key capability shortfalls. Iraqi military and police units could not sustain themselves for any length of time and were dependent on U.S. forces for logistical and transportation support. Most, if not all, units struggled with the maintenance of their vehicles and equipment. The Iraqi systems for distributing and tracking equipment were completely inadequate. Iraqi forces were largely dependent upon coalition forces for medevac and medical support. Further, the ISF had no artillery or close air support to back up its units.

At the institutional level, MNSTC-I had yet to assume the ministerial advisory mission from the IRMO and the Embassy in Baghdad. Ministerial capacity-building was still in its infancy, and the two ministries had very limited capacity to perform essential functions. These shortfalls were most evident in the logistical realm, but they were manifest in other areas such as strategy, planning, programming, budgeting, budget execution, requirements determination, force design and management, acquisition, intelligence, medical, and personnel. The MOD and MOI were still essentially ineffective and would not achieve a level of basic effectiveness in these areas for several more years. This inadequacy is particularly troubling because building effective institutions can take years—even decades—of concerted effort. To this point in the Phase IV effort, unfortunately, building capable ministries had been given insufficient attention. MNF-I and MNSTC-I would have only a handful of years to get the two ministries running properly. This task would require a consistent and adequate stream of ministerial advisors with the background and training to properly fill their assigned roles, including a basic proficiency in Arabic and a good understanding of Iraqi culture. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

Over the next four years, succeeding MNSTC-I commanders built on what Petraeus had begun. Over this span, the MNSTC-I mission expanded to encompass four elements: provide basic individual and unit training to the ISF; organize, equip, and generate Iraqi units for the ISF; develop Iraqi security institutions capable of sustaining themselves and providing security to the Iraqi people; and promote a professional ethic in the ISF. Moreover, MNSTC-I as an organization would grow and adapt to take on new missions and adjust to the changing U.S. role in Iraq. By 2008, MNSTC-I would expand to 10 subordinate training and advisory teams. *Figure 2* shows that MNSTC-I assumed responsibility for advising the two ministries as well as overseeing the training of Iraqi intelligence organizations under the MOD and MOI. Further, it established a Security Assistance Office to assist the Iraqis with purchasing U.S. equipment through the Foreign Military Sales system.

Figure 2: MNSTC-I Training and Advisory Teams

MNSTC-I Training and Advisory Teams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Defense Transition Team ▪ Joint Headquarters Assistance Team ▪ Coalition Army Advisory Training Team ▪ Coalition Air Force Transition Team ▪ Maritime Strategic Transition Team ▪ Ministry of Interior Transition Team ▪ Civilian Police Assistance Training Team ▪ Iraqi National Counterterrorism Task Force ▪ Security Assistance Office ▪ Intelligence Transition Team

Also under MNSTC-I's purview were the Iraqi-run Ministerial Training and Development Center (MTDC) and a MNSTC-I school that provided preliminary training to MNSTC-I advisors. The MTDC, run by Iraqis and advised by professional U.S. academics, provided standardized educational courses to Iraqi civilians and military personnel based on Iraqi business models, government regulations, laws, and MOD policies. The courses addressed, among other things, budgeting, contracting, program management, and basic computer skills.

Instruction was frequently presented by Arab-Americans who were fluent in Arabic and well-attuned to Iraqi culture and approaches to learning. Often, Iraqis assisted U.S. instructors, with the intention of eventually taking over the responsibility of teaching the courses. By 2009, the MTDC's reputation as a center of learning was such that it was able to expand its mission beyond servicing the MOD and MOI, to helping other ministries in the Iraqi government.

Institutionally, however, the MTDC struggled to obtain sufficient resources from MOD to sustain itself, let alone expand. Part of the problem was MOD resource constraints, and part was the Minister of Defense's apparent apathy toward the center. He did not appear to value MTDC and the instruction it provided, despite the fact that it was well-received by the students. As a result, only junior and mid-level bureaucrats generally attended these courses. While they were receptive to the courses and their technical competency increased, they were not in a position to drive institutional change in the two ministries. Too often, senior bureaucrats in the ministries were unwilling or unable to make the most of these individual's new skills and knowledge. Senior officials were more comfortable with "traditional" Iraqi business practices. Consequently, this education was not used or not exploited to its full potential.

MNSTC-I created its own school for ministerial advisors, because personnel assigned to this task received no such training before arriving in country. In a one-week course, advisors were presented basic insights on Iraqi culture and language, as well as the proper way to work with Iraqis in a culturally adept way.³⁵ Because many of the advisors were assigned to MNSTC-I for only six to nine months, the command assessed that one week was all it could afford to address this training shortfall. The course included roundtables with MNSTC-I's finest and most seasoned advisors, who provided insights on how best to work with Iraqi leaders and emphasized key "do's" and "don'ts." While ministerial advisors were smart, hard-working, and motivated, it was often pure luck if they had the actual institutional-level experience and skills to perform the mission they were assigned. MNSTC-I attempted to mitigate this problem by identifying people who had the right knowledge and skills, and moving them into advisor positions that best used their talents. While this ad hoc approach often helped place talent in the right place, it played havoc with military and civilian personnel assignment systems and took considerable time and effort to sort out—both in Iraq and back in the United States.³⁶

The most successful ministerial advisors were those who possessed excellent interpersonal skills and who established their credibility as experts in fruitful ways early in

the advisory relationship. Because the MOD did not have a history of civilian control of the military, military officers often had a distinct advantage over their civilian counterparts in establishing credibility with Iraqi senior officials. That said, age and seniority matters greatly in Iraqi bureaucratic culture. Assigning comparatively junior officers or civilians to senior officials was not particularly effective and often resulted in the officer or civilian having marginal, if any, positive impact. This disadvantage could be overcome, but it required considerable effort on the part of the advisor to establish his *bona fides*. Likewise, Western women were at a considerable disadvantage in establishing their credibility among Iraqi men, who dominated MOD and MOI. This fact of life in Arab culture often deprived the Iraqis of considerable talent and expertise. Women advisors almost invariably ended up advising the very few women officials in MOD and MOI or pursuing other responsibilities inside the command.

The most effective advisors were those who helped the Iraqis understand their own bureaucratic systems—both their strengths and their weaknesses—and aided them in applying effective remediation where it would improve these systems. The simpler the approach, the better. This methodology helped to engender Iraqi buy-in to the advice provided and take ownership of any changes made. Inherent in this approach was the need to convince the Iraqis that it was in their best interest to invest in an approach or system—or even that it was their idea. Where that happened, MNSTC-I advisors were quite successful. Effective advisors also took a heuristic approach to working with their counterparts. They did not do the work at hand for the Iraqis.³⁷ To the degree that Iraqi personnel were immersed in hands-on learning with coalition partners subtly guiding them, the advice was more likely to stick. Open or direct criticism of leaders is counterproductive in many cultures, so advisors need to be particularly careful about how they frame a problem—especially if that problem could highlight a leader's weaknesses or lack of competence. For Americans used to giving and taking direct criticism, this was often counterintuitive and difficult.

Good advisors also tried to steer their counterparts away from complicated and expensive systems that were beyond their standing capacity to exploit. This was not always possible, as evidenced by the Iraqi's insistence on building up their overall capability by purchasing M-1 tanks and the F-16 fighter. Encouraging the Iraqis to invest in complex Western systems was problematic on several levels. First, they were difficult for the Iraqis to understand and master. Second, they were typically expensive to purchase and sustain—often beyond the Iraqi's budgetary capacity and willingness to maintain. Finally, they involved a type of "systems thinking" that was foreign to Iraqi bureaucratic culture. The resulting decisions too often resulted in incoherent systems.³⁸

From a systemic point of view on the advisory effort, it is worth noting that while MNSTC-I did attempt to measure its progress in training and advising the Iraqi Security Forces and the two ministries, this analysis tended to focus more on what could be readily quantified—the outputs—rather than on the more elusive qualitative results of their efforts—the outcomes. In simple terms, the outputs were the products of MNSTC-I's

efforts, such as numbers of units fielded according to schedule, the fielding of a personnel system, the production of an Iraqi strategic document, or the creation and execution of a budget. The outcomes were the difference these products made or their effectiveness. Output-oriented measurement was reassuring and gave the sense that the coalition's efforts were on track. Unfortunately, these results may have been illusory in terms of the actual capability of the ISF and the ministries to do their respective jobs reliably and effectively. Further, such measurements did not account for the inevitable degradation of capability over time, if capabilities were not refreshed.

The MNSTC-I Commander was also dual-hatted as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Training Mission–Iraq (NTM-I) Commander. NTM-I partnered with MNSTC-I in providing key training to Iraqi officers and non-commissioned officers, and supported out-of-country specialized training for Iraqi officers in NATO schools. In addition, it assisted the Iraqi military with developing doctrine and provided help to the Iraq military in developing its command and control structure. The development of this doctrine reflected a close partnership between NTM-I and its Iraqi counterparts. While the starting point was proven Western military doctrine (largely shared by NATO partners), the officers at NTM-I worked in tandem with their Iraqi counterparts to tailor that doctrine to meet the Iraqi military's needs. The result was a doctrine that the Iraqis felt like they owned and were responsible for. As for the command and control system, NTM-I again worked closely with the Iraqis to build a system that was appropriate for the Iraqi military's (particularly the army's) organization and ways of operating. The hardware purchased was suitable to the Iraqis' needs without being too expensive and beyond their capability to maintain. At the same time, NTM-I and the Iraqis jointly developed standard operating procedures for the nodes to this C² system—the national and regional command centers—that proved workable and acceptable to the Iraqis. The result was a functioning command and control system.

One of NTM-I's most important and successful contributions to the professionalization of the Iraqi police was through Carabinieri-led training. The Carabinieri are Italy's National Military Police force, an elite force that is recognized globally for its high standards and superior performance. This contingent of 60 to 90 officers focused their efforts on training the basics and professionalizing the force. Because many Iraqi police officers were semi-literate at best, the Carabinieri used practical, hands-on training to inculcate modern police investigative techniques, crowd control, and counterterrorism tactics. Part of the program was to train the Iraqi trainers. In this regard, the goal was to make the Iraqis self-sufficient after the Carabinieri departed Iraq. Importantly, the Carabinieri worked hand-in-hand with the MOI to identify capability shortfalls and rectify them.

By May 2008, due to the Surge and the Awakening, stability in Iraq had improved. Security incidents declined to levels not seen in four-and-a-half years and remained at lower levels until U.S. forces departed Iraq. This achievement gave MNSTC-I room to address force structure shortfalls and institutional capabilities that heretofore had been deferred or underdeveloped. During 2008 and 2009 the security situation improved

enough for Iraqi forces to become the lead for security across the country, with MNF-I pulling its combat forces out of Iraq's major cities and increasingly playing a back-up role to the ISF. On January 1, 2009, the Iraqi government became fully responsible, through its security ministries, for providing security and ensuring the rule of law for its populace. The question at this point was how and when to begin transitioning the Iraqi military from a force dedicated to internal security to a traditional force with the mission of defending the country against external threats.

MNSTC-I had been increasingly successful at assisting the MOD and MOI in generating competent army and police forces. The MOD was also becoming increasingly competent at unit set fielding, which resulted in units with higher cohesion and levels of readiness than in the past. Most units were manned at greater than 100 percent strength to account for attrition (casualties, leave, AWOL, desertion, etc.). That said, army units still had considerably fewer officers and non-commissioned officers assigned than required. The MOD and MNSTC-I at this point were in the early stages of generating combat support (engineers) and combat service support (predominantly logistics support and motor transport) units. At this point, fielding efforts were primarily directed at creating divisional logistical support, transportation, and maintenance units to offset glaring weaknesses in the ability of Army units to support themselves.

The Iraqi Air and Maritime Forces were another matter. Still in their infancy and comparatively small compared to the army, they struggled to receive attention and resources from MOD. The air force and navy's development lagged far behind that of the army primarily because of the urgent need to field ground units to fight insurgents and the "ground-centric" culture of the ministry and joint headquarters. From late 2008 through 2009, MNSTC-I leaders urged ministry leaders to recognize the need to build a navy sufficient to protect Iraq's two oil platforms in the Gulf—the principal source of Iraq's revenue. As with the navy, MNSTC-I pressed the ministry to accelerate and expand its investment in the air force. This would entail building nascent capabilities for monitoring and controlling Iraq's air space, which was vulnerable to foreign incursion without the presence of the United States.³⁹ Fortunately, MNSTC-I was ultimately able to carry the day.⁴⁰

Progress—or a Lack Thereof—at the Ministerial Level

By 2009, the MOD was still a work in progress. Though MNSTC-I had established a training center for Iraqi civil servants, the ministry still struggled to institutionalize and strengthen basic business processes that would underpin the full range of institutional capabilities required for a fully-functioning organization. Part of the problem was over-centralization at the top, with the Minister and top officials refusing to delegate even mundane decisions to subordinates.⁴¹ This sort of behavior had been culturally ingrained in Iraqis and was a prominent feature of officers and high-level civilians who had grown up under Saddam Hussein's regime. While MOD and the Joint Headquarters were making strides in force

management, operational planning, personnel management, and training, logistics capabilities (acquisition, distribution, maintenance and sustainment) were a serious concern and needed significant attention.⁴² To help with these shortfalls, MNSTC-I pushed the Iraqis to rely increasingly on Foreign Military Sales (FMS) while MOD developed effective acquisition and logistic support capabilities.

Despite consistent MNSTC-I efforts to the contrary, the ministry resisted or ignored efforts to develop a strategy-to-plans-to-requirements system that would inform force design, acquisition, manning, and budget expenditures. While the ministry claimed it did so, its process and resultant “strategy” resulted in nothing more than a long, non-rationalized⁴³ shopping list of equipment untethered to either a real threat, doctrine, force design, or budgetary realities. Capabilities analysis and planning remained foreign concepts.

Budget planning and execution were equally problematic. MOD appeared incapable of setting priorities, again against repeated urging to do so. Further, leaders did not balance budgetary requirements well across the budget portfolio. This tendency was compounded by the Iraqis’ desire to acquire as many advanced weapons systems as they could, as fast as they could; every investment in weaponry was a high priority. Further, ministry budgets looked only one year out and were perpetually late.⁴⁴ As a result, budget execution typically lagged months behind schedule, causing under-execution and a last-minute flurry of spending. The worldwide recession of 2008 and 2009 did not help matters. As the global recession set in, the bottom fell out of the oil market with oil prices dropping close to 70 percent. Because the Iraqi economy is almost entirely dependent on oil revenues, this drop had an immediate, adverse effect on the MOD’s budget, as it was almost totally based on expectations of higher oil revenues than occurred.

The Ministry of Interior, on the other hand, was better at many institutional functions than the MOD at this point. The difference was that the MOI had embraced modern methods of strategic planning and programming, and thus did much better at establishing a rational and effective program for effectively using its resources to do what its strategy required. Equally helpful was the minister’s initiative to conduct management reviews, which assessed how well the ministry was executing its strategic plan. As a result, the MOI was better than MOD at articulating its requirements and managing its resources.

The MOI largely used a civilian model for its logistics and thus was in a slightly better position than MOD, with the exception of maintenance shortfalls. As of late summer 2009, the MOI was in the process of assuming its life support contracts from the coalition. While it continued to build training bases around the country, it still faced a significant training backlog. To alleviate officer shortfalls, the MOI continued to recall former army and police officers and put them through a three-week transition and integration program.

MNSTC-I still had to keep a close eye on the MOI and police forces for corruption and rule of law violations. That said, the MOI was becoming increasingly aggressive against corruption. It had made continuing progress in establishing credible internal affairs and inspector general offices to address corruption and prevent the abuse of prisoners and

detainees. As a result, it had some success in taking adverse action against employees who broke Iraqi laws or otherwise abused their positions. While the number of cases—over 4,300—indicated that significant problems remained, the MOI had shown a willingness to go after “bad cops” and other employees who violated the law.

While the combat capabilities of the two ministries and their subordinate forces had improved significantly, they were not yet capable of operating without U.S. assistance. In mid-2008, before the U.S. elections, it appeared that MNF-I and MNSTC-I would have ample time to help the Iraqis reach a point where the ISF was self-reliant and required minimal U.S. training and advisory assistance. The election of President Obama in November 2008 would change this mindset dramatically. Upon taking office, Obama made a series of decisions that shortened the amount of time U.S. forces had to provide robust and comprehensive assistance to the ISF.

Impact of President Obama’s Drawdown Decision and Timeline

In a February 27, 2009 speech at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, President Obama announced his timeline for the drawdown of U.S. forces. He declared that the U.S. combat mission in Iraq would end on August 31, 2010, and Operation Iraqi Freedom would officially conclude. U.S. forces would draw down from about 147,000 troops to between 35,000 and 50,000 troops and become a transitional force responsible for training, equipping, and advising Iraqi security forces; conducting targeted counterterrorism missions; and protecting ongoing U.S. civilian and military assistance efforts within Iraq.⁴⁵ This announcement immediately concentrated MNF-I’s attention on preparing for the drawdown, how it would reorganize itself to execute the revised mission starting September 1, 2010, and what it must help the ISF accomplish before all U.S. forces departed Iraq at the end of 2011. These were all major tasks. It was immediately clear to all involved that there was much to do and comparatively little time to do it.

While MNF-I and MNC-I put the bulk of their planning effort into reorganizing the command and addressing the massive personnel and logistical effort before them, MNSTC-I focused on its own internal reorganization and what absolutely had to—and could—be accomplished in terms of Iraqi capabilities before the drawdown was complete at the end of 2011. Two factors outside the coalition’s control had a major impact on planning and executing those plans with the two ministries. The first was the global recession that began in 2008 and continued through 2009. During that period, crude oil prices collapsed from a high of \$147 per barrel to a low of \$32 per barrel. Even though the market began a recovery in 2009, oil was still selling for less than half its price at the high-water mark.

As might be expected, this collapse had an immediate, adverse impact on Iraq’s budget, requiring severe cutbacks across all the ministries, including the MOD and MOI. The immediate result was putting a hold on any plans for expansion and greatly slowing budgetary expenditures. This was precisely at the time that ISFF assistance was supposed to begin declining, from \$3 billion to about \$1 billion.⁴⁶ MNSTC-I planners were deeply

concerned that MOD and MOI would be unable to make investments necessary for ensuring that the ISF would be prepared to assume full responsibility for the security mission once the United States departed. One immediate effect was a hiring freeze.⁴⁷ A second effect was the extension of timelines for procuring weapons systems and other equipment. The third effect was MNSTC-I's request for an increase in ISFF.

The second factor was the impending Iraqi parliamentary elections to be conducted in March 2010. While this election was a critical milestone in solidifying democratic processes in Iraq, it resulted in significantly slowing governmental processes, as key officials played a delaying game to see who would assume power and assess how that would affect them and their roles in the government. As the election approached, MNSTC-I entered a prolonged period of relative inaction that would not end until well after the elections had concluded. During this period in late 2009 and early 2010, it was difficult to get Iraqi ministerial leaders to make major plans or decisions about the future of the ISF. It was in this context that MNSTC-I planners began to think about what was achievable to make the ISF self-sufficient and capable of defending the country from threats—both internal and external—before the United States departed.

MNSTC-I planners came up with the concept of “Minimum Essential Capabilities” (MEC) to determine what was in the art of the possible in the two remaining years it had given the resources projected to be available. After a great deal of internal debate, MNSTC-I's leaders determined that the broad end-state for the ISF should be institutions and forces capable of providing internal security and the minimum foundational capabilities to defend against external threats.

In this regard, the MOI was in comparatively better shape than it had been a few years earlier. It had most of the vehicles and equipment it needed, and its force size was reaching maturity. The operational goal for MOI was to achieve “police primacy,” which meant police forces taking the lead for internal security in cities so the Iraqi Army could focus on external defense. For them to achieve this goal, the MOI needed to develop a self-reliant ministry with sustainable and enduring systems, professional staff, and capable leadership that enabled the manning, training, and equipping of police forces.⁴⁸ This task was well within the realm of possibility, and no major shifts in size or mission were required.

The situation with the MOD was more difficult. The key was in determining what exactly constituted “minimum foundational capabilities to defend against external threats.” The Minister of Defense wanted a large, conventional force capable of executing the full range of missions against a conventional external threat—in addition to fighting the insurgency. In part, this aspiration stemmed from the MOD's inability and unwillingness to do the necessary strategic planning and attendant requirements analysis to determine what realistically could be done in the remaining two years. The Minister's goal was simply not feasible. The MOD did not remotely have the funds to achieve it, and even if it did, the laws of management and physics militated against it. There simply was not enough time or institutional capability to acquire the equipment, get it delivered, train the force with it, and field it. As important, he had not even considered building the doctrine, training, or sustainment capability for such a force.

Across the two ministries, MEC initiatives fell into two groups. The first was to establish sustained capabilities for ensuring internal security, and the second was to expand the MOI's and MOD's capabilities to protect Iraq from external threats. At the institutional level, MNSTC-I determined it would have to make a full-court press to develop modern logistical systems in both ministries—but particularly in the MOD—that could sustain them over the long term. The ministries had considerable deficiencies in this arena, not the least of which were an inability to assess, record, and address logistics requirements in a systematic way; develop effective contracts that used ISF resources well; and conduct maintenance and supply operations effectively.

At the same time as MNSTC-I was going through its MEC analysis for the ISF, it also recognized that no U.S. organization in Iraq (either the U.S. Embassy or MNF-I Headquarters) or in Washington had yet begun to think through the creation of an Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I), which would fall under the control of the Embassy and functionally replace MNSTC-I once U.S. forces departed Iraq. Given the president's announcement, this was understandable. Every organization in Iraq was scrambling to react to his direction because time was short. By April 2009 the MNF-I staff was inundated with drawdown planning.

It was in this context that MNSTC-I volunteered to do the staff work needed for establishing the OSC-I. Even though it was only three months into the new administration, MNSTC-I's staff knew that they were already late to this task, particularly with regard to providing input into the U.S. FY12 budget cycle.⁴⁹ They immediately began to research the requirements for standing up an OSC-I and, just as importantly, the legal and policy limitations that would constrain any planning for the OSC-I. One major consideration was that the police training mission would be handed back over to the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, which would execute this mission as a separate entity under the Embassy's oversight. Given the uncertainty of the post-2011 environment, MNSTC-I began developing a variety of options for the organization, manning, and missions of this new organization. Options ranged from a small, traditional organization to a robust and large organization with a broader mission set. Clear from the start of this planning, though, was that the OSC-I would have greatly diminished capability to assist Iraq with building its defense institutions.

Transition: U.S. Forces-Iraq to Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq

In January 2010, MNF-I, MNC-I, and MNSTC-I folded together into the newly created U.S. Forces-Iraq (USF-I). The creation of USF-I, an interim step in the drawdown and transition to the OSC-I, streamlined staff overhead for the theater. USF-I's principal focus would be managing the monumental effort of the drawdown, overseeing the transfer of its responsibilities to the Iraqis, and ensuring that conditions were such that U.S. forces could cease combat operations and transition to a pure advise, train, and assist role on September 1, 2010.⁵⁰ Under this reorganization, the Commander of MNSTC-I became the Deputy Commanding General, Advise and Train (DCG-A&T) for USF-I. Three organizations fell

under him: the Iraq Training and Advisory Mission (ITAM), the Iraq Security Assistance Mission (ISAM), and the Iraq National Counterterrorism Task Force (INCTF). ITAM would focus on institutional training while ITAM would be responsible for foreign military sales and associated Security Assistance missions. *Figure 3* shows the composition of ITAM and ISAM under this reorganization. ITAM and ISAM would serve as the basis for the Office of Security Cooperation–Iraq (OSC-I) in late 2011.

Figure 3: ITAM and ISAM Teams

ITAM Advise and Train Teams	
▪ ITAM-Army	▪ ITAM-Intel TT
▪ ITAM-Air Force	▪ ITAM-MOD
▪ ITAM-Navy	▪ ITAM-MOI
▪ ITAM-Police	▪ Partnership Strategy Group-Iraq
ISAM Teams	
▪ ISAM Army	▪ ISAM Logistics / End Use Monitoring
▪ ISAM Navy	▪ ISAM International Military Education and Training / Out-of-Country
▪ ISAM Air Force	Training

The DCG-A&T's mission set was virtually the same as MNSTC-I's. All of MNSTC-I's initiatives begun in 2009 continued under this new organization. The only difference was that the DCG, A&T performed these tasks with fewer people. Although the mission and associated tasks remained the same, it was clear to the Iraqis that the United States was on the way out. Receptivity to U.S. counsel noticeably declined in some quarters, and several key ministerial advisors found themselves increasingly doing less advising and more liaison work. The opportunity for instituting modern business practices to address Iraqi deficiencies was declining rapidly.

One exception to this trend was the work of USF-I's Strategic Logistics Directorate, which was established in 2010 for improving the ISF's logistics and industrial capability to sustain the minimum materiel readiness of the two forces.⁵¹ This initiative almost immediately resulted in notable improvements in a number of areas. It was more successful than other ministerial advisory efforts because, first and foremost, a few key leaders in MOD, MOI, and the Joint Headquarters saw the need for this effort and embraced it. It was also more successful because USF-I put the necessary resources into the effort. The directorate was headed by a senior executive with deep experience in Service- and DOD-level logistics. He was also provided a staff whose size and talent was commensurate with the mission. Other ministerial-level bureaucratic functions received neither this kind of emphasis nor commensurate resources.

As planning in 2010 for the new OSC-I progressed, the U.S. Government sought to negotiate a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) with the Government of Iraq.⁵² A SOFA would be necessary if Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki were to ask the U.S. president to leave residual military forces behind to continue the train and advise mission.⁵³ When the United States and Iraq were unable to reach such an agreement, it became clear that any military personnel who remained in Iraq would have to be assigned to the U.S. Mission, where they would enjoy a form of diplomatic status. The issue then became how big an office would be needed to perform the full range of normal security cooperation activities plus additional responsibilities requested or agreed to by the Embassy, and approved by Congress.⁵⁴

The final design of the OSC-I included just 157 military personnel and civil servants. Many of the training and advising functions performed at the Embassy and six field sites would be performed by a large contractor contingent. This new organization would be much smaller than MNSTC-I yet be responsible for many of the same tasks.⁵⁵ Importantly, this OSC would have a very small staff to address key institution-building initiatives and advise the Ministry of Defense staff. While this organization would be larger than most other OSCs around the world, it also had to attend to many tasks for which other OSCs were not responsible.

On October 1, 2011, three months before U.S. forces completed their withdrawal from Iraq, the OSC-I officially stood up and took over the DCG-A&T's responsibilities. The OSC-I faced challenges from the beginning. The first had to do with dated CENTCOM guidance.⁵⁶ The second had to do with whether the Departments of State and Defense saw eye to eye on the nature and scope of the OSC-I's mission. Operating under less than clear guidance, the OSC-I forged ahead with establishing its plan, believing it was consistent with the latest guidance from CENTCOM and that CENTCOM was in sync with the Embassy and the State Department.

Over the next two years, the OSC-I would learn that its goals and supporting activities were out of sync with the Embassy. This disconnect would put many of the OSC-I's activities, and related facilities and personnel, in jeopardy. Even so, the OSC-I fought to maintain a "Senior Advisor's Group" for the purpose of developing Iraq's institutional capabilities. This very small contingent, however, did little to offset the OSC-I's devolution principally to security assistance tasks.⁵⁷ Complicating matters, inadequate training and other pre-deployment preparation would continue to plague the OSC-I.⁵⁸

The departure of U.S. forces came before USF-I could bring the ISF to full capability, competence, and self-sufficiency. While the Iraqis possessed increasingly complete capabilities for internal security, they were still in the early stages of transitioning to a more traditional division of responsibility between the Ministry of Defense and a Ministry of Interior. The MOD was only on the front edge of developing the ability to defend against external threats, while the Ministry of Interior was hampered by a lack of effective courts, a criminal justice system that was not fully functioning, and substandard detention facilities.⁵⁹ The two ministries, not fully effective before the United States departed, increasingly

reverted to traditional bureaucratic practices, which undermined much of what the United States had tried to accomplish. Further, they were still beset by corruption and sectarian animosity.

Institutional Reversion after U.S. Withdrawal

The remaining work was left to a small cadre of military advisors and trainers who, in some respects, were undertrained for the challenge that lay before them. Their task would have been difficult even if the prevailing sentiment in Iraq had been pro-United States. Unfortunately, Iraqi sentiment was just the opposite. Many in the Iraqi government still saw the United States as occupiers, and not particularly effective ones at that. In particular, many of those who surrounded Prime Minister al-Maliki neither liked nor trusted the United States. Although it is not clear what Maliki's personal feelings were, he seemed to be swayed by those who surrounded him. It was in his interest that he not be perceived as under the sway of Washington and a puppet of the United States. At any rate, Maliki did much to polarize his country and undermine the effectiveness of his own forces.

From 2009 on, Maliki accelerated his reversion to the strong-man tactics so prevalent in Iraq's past history.⁶⁰ These tactics revolved around the centralization of political and military power and played on religious and tribal allegiances through patronage and nepotism. He began by creating the extralegal Office of the Commander-in-Chief (OCINC), staffed by loyalists, which he used as an informal command and control apparatus to exert direct operational control over forces in the field. This organization clearly acted outside of Iraq's official chain of command. Further, he diverted U.S. arms and vehicles to equip his praetorian guard, the Presidential Brigades.⁶¹

Using the OCINC, he also brought the elite Baghdad Brigade under his control and then employed them to conduct special missions and target political rivals. He created the Counterterrorism Command to bring Iraq's highly trained and effective special operation forces under his control via the OCINC. These forces were used to target political rivals, both Sunni and Shia. To extend his control over the military, he replaced competent military commanders with loyalists of his own choosing—who may or may not have been militarily competent and effective leaders.⁶² Lastly, he brought the intelligence services under his personal control. Maliki also used temporary appointments to control the two security ministries. When the Iraqi Council of Representatives was unable to agree upon replacements for the Ministers of Defense and Interior after the 2010 elections, Maliki had himself selected as the acting minister for both ministries.⁶³ All of these actions systematically undermined the legitimate chain of command and the legal levers of power.

The ISF also suffered from rot at lower echelons. As soon as they were no longer under the careful watch of U.S. advisors, many Iraqi units began to regress in training, sustainment, military professionalism, and ethics. Tribal and sectarian patronage re-emerged and often trumped loyalty to the state. Some leaders of lower-level units put commissions and positions up for sale. Others failed to remove killed, wounded, or AWOL

(absent without official leave) soldiers from unit rolls so they could pocket their salaries. Gains in getting leaders at lower levels to show initiative and competence were gradually lost, as many commanders gave their subordinates little latitude to act independently. Units came increasingly under the senior command of Shias, which heightened sectarian tensions. Finally, with U.S. impetus to maintain their capabilities and sustain their equipment gone, Iraqi units slid back into bad practices, and their combat readiness declined significantly.

It is little wonder that when faced with a capable and determined opponent like ISIS, large elements of the ISF collapsed and ran. The Maliki government, in creating security institutions that served its particular political and sectarian interests, sowed the seeds of the force's failures. It did much to undo years of U.S. investment in building a capable force that would serve a democratic state. Maliki's actions also illustrate the danger of creating forces that are as much a threat to stability as they are a force for achieving it.⁶⁴

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

The foregoing highlights the difficulties of overcoming ingrained practices and instituting new methods for building sustainable defense institutions. The United States not only underestimated the power of Iraqi culture and history, it also overestimated its ability to overcome this culture in a few short years and make lasting change. For the Iraqis' part, the ISF lacked the political and cultural incentives that would motivate the lasting transformation that U.S. forces desired. Institutional change of this sort takes a long time, possibly decades, to inculcate. It requires a substantial, long-term investment in creating a strategic partnership. The United States, however, was unwilling to make such an investment for the long term. That said, the onus was ultimately on Iraq to embrace and internalize change.⁶⁵

Notwithstanding these major considerations, there is much to be learned about the U.S. and coalition's DIB experience in Iraq. The following discussion highlights five major areas where the United States fell short in the early days of Phase IV and the lessons learned from these shortfalls. To their credit, the coalition and the United States generally learned from their early mistakes—though not in every case—and took corrective action over time.

Planning

By all accounts, Phase IV planning generally got short shrift and did not benefit from the expertise and involvement of agencies outside the DOD. Moreover, Phase IV planning suffered from a late start and fatally flawed assumptions. Better Phase IV planning could have precluded many of the coalition's early problems after seizing Baghdad.

Two major lessons can be derived for future DIB planners. First, a detailed, thoroughly wargamed Phase IV plan, based on carefully vetted assumptions, is essential to success. As much—or more—planning effort should go into Phase IV as the other phases of the operation. This should be a unified civilian and military effort overseen by the highest levels of the government to ensure that the proper perspectives and expertise are brought to bear.

Such planning should be overseen by the NSC, and conflicts should be adjudicated by them. At a minimum, planning should address the initiation of humanitarian assistance, reconstruction, and civil administration as quickly as possible once major combat operations begin to wind down. Planners should identify which of the Phase IV plan's critical assumptions are most fragile (have the greatest possibility of being wrong and the greatest potential for negatively affecting the plan if wrong) and develop contingency plans for the possibility that these assumptions prove wrong.

Second, planners should anticipate an initial period of public disorder and collapse of governance during Phases III and IV (this has been the historical norm). Planners should be prepared to establish martial law swiftly, and have a plan to quickly recall or reconstitute the police—and the military if necessary. This will include ensuring enough forces are on the ground to keep the peace until the police can be reconstituted and formal governance reinstated. Civil order is a vital precondition for institution building. Relatedly, planners should prepare for the need to establish interim government institutions, and put them in place as quickly as possible after major combat operations have terminated. Given that the police and military may have been part of the problem in the past, deep concern about past practices should be balanced with a measure of practicality and common sense in restoring order.

Unity in Decision-making and Policy for Phase IV

The United States and its coalition partners greatly complicated their job of maintaining security and rebuilding the Iraqi military after the invasion by disbanding the army and firing senior ministerial officials who were Baathists. The military leaders of the coalition were not fully in agreement with the *what* and *how* of these two early initiatives. These decisions resulted in leaving the two ministries bereft of critical experience and expertise—and resulted in the coalition having to rebuild the Iraqi military's operational and institutional capabilities from scratch. These well-meaning but misguided initiatives took years to overcome. Ultimately common sense prevailed, and they were—at least in part—walked back over time. It was not clear, either, how much these decisions enjoyed the support of the White House and NSC, which should have been closely involved in their promulgation.

In addition, the efforts of military leaders in the coalition forces and civilian leaders in the ORHA and CPA were not well-synchronized. In fact, they too often worked at cross purposes or needlessly duplicated initiatives pursued by the other. To say the least, communication and unity of effort were not optimal.

These experiences highlight two lessons for future DIB efforts. First, national-level policies and decisions regarding an occupation and subsequent institution building efforts should be coordinated with, and understood by, all involved in Phase IV on the ground well before their implementation. Such decisions should be vetted in interagency forums, and conflicts and concerns should be adjudicated before they are instituted. Second, during the transition from Phase III (led by the military commander) to Phase IV (where a civilian

leader takes over), it is vital that the major decisions and policies are promulgated in a unified and integrated manner. Close consultation and unity of effort will serve to prevent civilian and military leaders working at cross purposes and undermining each other's efforts. Such decisions and policies should be jointly wargamed to ensure as best as possible that they do not unintentionally damage U.S. goals of reconstituting effective and efficient administration of military institutions and effective governance as a whole.

Balance between Building the Operational Force and Defense Institutions

Building lasting defense institutions requires commensurate efforts between building the operational force and putting in place higher-order systems to design, build, arm, man, and sustain those forces. The creation of competent tactical-level forces can be done faster than building capable, self-sustaining institutions. For far too long in Iraq, the coalition put the majority of its emphasis and resources on getting forces into the counterinsurgency fight. It waited too long to address major institutional deficiencies. When it did do so, it put too few resources toward this important task. By late 2009, the Iraqis knew the United States would be pulling out in force and they would soon be back in charge. At that point, the U.S. window of opportunity began closing—and to a large extent the Iraqis waited the coalition out. Unfortunately, too few senior Iraqis appreciated the need for defense institution building or pressed their government to invest in it. There is an important lesson to be learned here: to the degree possible, do not delay engaging in DIB, even if tactical conditions make such engagement difficult. Those engaged in institution building will likely have a limited window of opportunity for making a major positive impact. Engagement is most effective when the partner perceives the need is greatest and least effective when the partner believes that U.S. involvement has begun to subside.

Establishing and Maintaining an Effective Defense Ministerial Advisory Effort

Building effective institutions is a difficult, complicated, and long-term task. It requires advisors and trainers with the right preparation, aptitudes, and skills who can provide expertise and continuity. Too often the advisors for this mission lacked the requisite experience and preparation. The U.S. military and civilian personnel and training systems did too little to prepare these advisors for the task before them. Too often they were learning on the job, which caused them to be less credible and competent than they needed to be at the start of their tours. Finally, short tours caused high personnel turbulence, which in turn caused problems with continuity, experience, expertise, and credibility.

This highlights the importance of pre-building—well in advance of need—DIB teams adequate to the scale of the task and staffed with individuals who have the requisite expertise, experience, and gravitas to have credibility with ministers and their principal assistants. They should train and work together as a team before deployment. These teams should be robust and well-versed in the language and culture of the country to which they will be deployed. The U.S. government should be prepared to deploy these teams as soon as it is prudent to do so. To the degree possible, these advisors—particularly the most senior

advisors—should be left in place as long as possible to build strong relationships with their counterparts and ensure continuity of effort and policy. Very little can be more disruptive and frustrating to the partner than dealing with an ever-changing parade of inexperienced advisors—with little to no seniority and attendant credibility—who constantly change the direction and content of the overall advisory effort.

Co-opting the Partner in Building the Defense Institution

Too often during Phase IV, coalition and U.S. ministerial advisors attempted to put in place Western systems and practices that were either alien to Iraqi culture or to which the Iraqis did not subscribe wholeheartedly. As a result, the Iraqis often reverted to their own traditional systems and practices once U.S. advisors left because they felt no ownership in what the United States had put in place.

Two important lessons can be taken from this experience. First, the partner must have the major say in all new or modern systems to be instituted. To the extent that they own it and it becomes their system, it will be more likely to survive the advisor's departure. Such an effort should, wherever possible, seek to exploit and optimize well-accepted bureaucratic practices and policies in the partner country. The artificial imposition of practices alien to the country's bureaucratic policy are likely to fail or have limited effect. To the degree possible, the partner should believe bureaucratic improvements are his idea and see that these improvements are in his best interest to implement.

Second, as with developing the operational force, a “train the trainer” technique can be effective at instituting new systems and bureaucratic practices at the ministerial level. The partner, however, must own the facility, provide the instructors, and have a strong hand in the development of the curriculum for such an effort. It is best that such courses be taught by respected teachers from the partner country.

Given past errors, current turmoil, and the limitations of the OSC-I, it is very much an open question whether the Iraqis will develop truly effective, accountable, transparent, and responsive defense institutions in the foreseeable future. It can only be hoped that the U.S. and Iraqi governments recognize the precariousness of the current situation and reinvest in a partnership designed to help the Iraqis with this important task. Their failure to do so invites outcomes that neither country wants.

Notes

1 Ben Kesling and Matt Brady, “Victory Marks Turnaround for Iraqi Army,” *Washington Post*, December 29, 2015.

2 Jonathan Marcus, “Factors Behind the Precipitate Collapse of Iraq’s Army,” *BBC News*, June 13, 2014. See also Eric Schmitt and Michael R. Gordon, “The Iraqi Army was Crumbling Long Before its Collapse,” *The New York Times*, June 12, 2014.

3 Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR), *Hard Lessons* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), 8-22. See also Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 102-103.

4 The CENTCOM planning effort begs a detailed discussion of “end state” analysis, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Rumsfeld, rather than focusing on what a post-war Iraq should look like, concentrated on “options”

for defeating Iraqi forces. That is, he focused on the “means” and “ways” first before doing a thorough analysis of the “ends.” From a planning perspective, this puts the cart before the horse. At best, the defeat of the Iraqi armed forces was an intermediate objective to a broader goal, which should have included a well-defined, desired state of affairs for post-invasion peace and the conditions under which that peace should be secured. Rumsfeld, instead, chose to assume that military defeat of Iraq would automatically translate into an acceptable post-war state of affairs. Rumsfeld’s approach to planning is not uncommon among inexperienced decision makers, who pay far too little attention to what it is they want to achieve before looking at how to conduct the operation. The end state should have driven the planning, not the reverse.

5 Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2006), 98. Deputy Secretary of Wolfowitz stated this belief succinctly in 2002 stating, “I am reasonably certain that they will welcome us as liberators, and that will keep requirements down.”

6 Illustrative of this failure was the fact that he was located less than 50 yards from the Office of Special Plans, the Office of the Secretary of Defense’s organization dedicated to planning for Iraq. He never saw its products or even knew of the existence of this office until just days before the invasion, finding out about it only by accident. Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *Hard Lessons* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2009), 36.

7 Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe* (New York, NY: Random House, 2008), 5. See also Ricks, *op. cit.*, 135-138; and Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 59-60.

8 *Hard Lessons, op. cit.*, 54. See also, Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 57.

9 Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, Memorandum to L. Paul Bremer, Presidential Envoy to Iraq, “Designation as Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority,” May 13, 2003.

10 James Dobbins et al., *Occupying Iraq: A History of the Coalition Provisional Authority* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2009), xvi. See also Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 82-83.

11 Ricks, *op. cit.*, 158-162.

12 Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1, “De-Baathification of Iraqi Society,” May 16, 2003.

13 Ultimately, low- and mid-level former Baathists would be readmitted after vetting.

14 Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2, “Dissolution of Entities,” May 23, 2003. This decision, in the opinion of Bremer and his key advisors, merely reflected the status quo, for the Army had effectively disintegrated anyway. CPA Directive 2, however, left police forces intact.

15 Donald P. Wright et al., *On Point II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Press, 2008), 429.

16 Wright et al., *op. cit.*, 430-432. See also Dobbins et al., *op. cit.*, 62-63.

17 Later in the year, CMATT would be given the responsibility for creating the Iraqi Air Force and Coastal Defense Force (later to become the Iraqi Navy). Wright et al., *op. cit.*, 432.

18 For example, Eaton was given only \$173 million for his budget. Compounding Eaton’s problems was Rumsfeld’s decision to greatly accelerate training. Rumsfeld wanted to ensure that a military force was in place by the disestablishment of the CPA and turnover of control to the Iraqis in September 2004. This meant cutting CPATT’s two-year training plan in half. Kerik estimated it would take him six years to create a competent force; Bremer gave him two years to do it. At the same time, Sanchez pursued a parallel initiative to address unrest. He directed the creation of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps (ICDC) to assist with constabulary duties, give jobs to former soldiers, and provide Iraqis a sense of ownership for security in their communities. The ICDC’s creation, unfortunately, put forces on the ground that competed with the local police and undercut the Army’s regional authority. Ineffective coordination between the ICDC, the Iraqi Army, and the police aggravated these problems.

19 Abizaid realized he was facing a growing insurgency. Deeply concerned that the Iraqi Army would not be large enough—fast enough—to address the threat posed by the insurgency, he lobbied to “really put the muscle of DOD behind the training effort.” Ambassador Bremer and General Eaton opposed this initiative for a variety of reasons but were ultimately overruled by Rumsfeld. Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 132.

20 This Office of Security Cooperation should not be confused with the OSC-I created after the U.S. drawdown in Iraq. MG Eaton’s OSC ceased to exist once MNF-I came into being. His responsibilities were subsumed by MNSTC-I.

21 Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 133.

22 Wright et al, *op. cit.*, 404. See also Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 72. See also Ricks, *op. cit.*, 165.

23 Bremer claims to have received such direction directly from President Bush.

24 “Sistani to Declare Handover is Illegal,” *Dawn*, March 28, 2004 available at <<http://www.dawn.com/news/392867/sistani-to-declare-handover-illegal>>. See also Dobbins et al., *op. cit.*, 269. The Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the most prominent Shia cleric, issued a fatwah claiming that the IGC was illegitimate. This was representative of deep Iraqi concerns about not regaining sovereignty over their own affairs quickly enough.

25 Ricks, *op. cit.*, 166.

26 *Ibid.*, 165.

27 Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 133. See also Thomas E. Ricks, “Iraqi Battalion

- Refuses to ‘Fight Iraqis’,” *Washington Post*, April 11, 2004, available at <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/21/AR2006062101420.html>>. See also Ricks, *op. cit.*, 338-341. See also Wright et al., *op. cit.*, 449.
- 28 Ricks, *op. cit.*, 391. See also Dobbins et al., *op. cit.*, 325-326.
- 29 The coalition did not transfer full responsibility for force design and force generation to the MOD and MOI until near the end of the drawdown. Part of the reluctance to do so had to do with capability and part had to do with lack of trust that the MOD and MOI would actually follow through and create the planned forces as designed. The actions of the Maliki Government and elements in both the MOD and MOI gave good reason for this distrust.
- 30 Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 194.
- 31 Subsequent commanders in chronological order were Lieutenant General Martin E. Dempsey (September 2005–June 2007), Lieutenant General James M. Dubik (June 2007–July 2008), Lieutenant General Frank Helmick (July 2008–October 2009), and Lieutenant General Michael D. Barbero (October 2009–2010).
- 32 It is important to note that intensive work with the Ministries of Defense and Interior would begin in earnest only after LTG Martin Dempsey succeeded Petraeus in 2005.
- 33 Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction, *op. cit.*, 157. IRMO was in charge of reconstruction policy and continued using the senior advisors from the CPA. Under IRMO senior advisors functioned principally as consultants to Iraqi ministers, helping them coordinate ministry operations and reconstruction projects. They were apparently not resourced to build ministerial capability at all bureaucratic levels. This would not happen until later.
- 34 Wright et al., *op. cit.*, 453. Petraeus emphasized, stating “we can develop all the battalions, brigades, divisions and ground forces, and police, and so forth, in the world, but they’ve got to be supportable and supported by the Ministries of Defense and Interior to ensure eventual self-reliance and transition to complete Iraqi control.”
- 35 Later, the course was split into two parts: the first was conducted online, and the second was addressed in a one-day classroom session.
- 36 A series of MNSTC-I reorganizations and recurring downsizing from 2008 until the creation of the OSC-I only amplified this problem.
- 37 This was a significant problem in some quarters. Such action did not help the Iraqis. Rather, it made them dependent on the United States rather than autonomous. Additionally, the Iraqis were more than happy to let the advisors do their work for them.
- 38 While the terminology “incoherent system” is an oxymoron, by “incoherent” the author means the system as an entirety is internally inconsistent—the components do not fit together in a logical way.
- 39 Fortunately, the Iraqis were much better at supporting their counterterrorism forces, the two Iraqi Special Operations Force (ISOF) Brigades. Although undermanned, these units were highly-trained and effective, perhaps the best trained units under MNSTC-I’s oversight.
- 40 Convincing the Minister of Defense required an intense personal effort by the MNSTC-I commander and other senior leaders in MNSTC-I. The commander at the time, LTG Frank Helmick, was personally instrumental in cajoling the Minister to make these important investments.
- 41 Defense Minister Abd al-Qadr was renowned for working late into the night reviewing and signing hundreds of documents—important and trivial. He delegated very little.
- 42 This problem is intimately connected to an Iraqi cultural disposition to address supply or maintenance only when equipment breaks down or supplies run out. For example, the concept of “preventative” maintenance was foreign to ISF forces and the Ministries. Typically, units focused only on maintenance after a vehicle or weapon broke down. Only then would they put a demand on the maintenance and supply system, if at all, especially when cannibalization of another vehicle was quicker and cheaper. This resulted in abysmal operational readiness rates and large numbers of inoperable vehicles.
- 43 A non-rationalized set of equipment is one that is non-standard and built from a variety of sources. This sort of scattershot acquisition practice, plays havoc with establishing parts replacement systems and maintenance. It also greatly increases the costs of life cycle maintenance because it makes it difficult, if not impossible, to establish any economy of scale in the logistical system.
- 44 This was a function of one-year national budget cycles and an almost total reliance on oil revenues.
- 45 President Barack Obama, “Responsibly Ending the War in Iraq,” Remarks at Camp Lejeune, NC, February 27, 2009 available at <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/02/27/responsibly-ending-war-iraq>>.
- 46 ISFF was flexible in that it was allocated in two-year tranches, which gave MNSTC-I significantly more latitude in expending it than a traditional one-year allocation.
- 47 Both ministries would not be able to pay their employees’ salaries for the year if the ministries continued to expand. Salaries and basic life support consumed roughly two-thirds of each ministries’ budget, which left comparatively little money for infrastructure, procurement, maintenance, logistics, and other expenditures. For both ministries combined, this amounted to about \$1.5 billion dollars for addressing these other categories of expenditures.
- 48 DOD Report to Congress, “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” June 2010, available at <<https://www>.

defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_9204_Sec_Def_signed_20_Aug_2010.pdf>, 48.

49 Department of Defense Inspector General Report, "Assessment of Planning for Transitioning the Security Assistance Mission in Iraq from Department of Defense to Department of State Authority," Report No. SPO-2011-008, 2-5.

50 At that point Operation Iraqi Freedom would officially conclude. Operation New Dawn would begin on the assumption of this new mission.

51 DOD Inspector General Report, "Assessment of U.S. Government Efforts to Develop the Logistics Sustainment Capability of the Iraq Security Forces," Report No. SPO-2011-001, November 17, 2010, ii.

52 Such a follow-on agreement would give U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq after December 31, 2011, but not assigned to the U.S. Embassy, certain privileges and immunities.

53 Anthony Cordesman and Sam Khazi, "Shaping Iraq's Security Forces," *Center for Strategic Studies Report*, June 12, 2014, 4-5. DOD initially considered leaving 10,000 to 15,000 personnel in country, but later estimates decreased to 3,000 to 4,000 personnel under Secretary of Defense Panetta.

54 DoD Inspector General, "Assessment of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Mission Capabilities," DODIG-2013-136, September 18, 2013, 136.

55 The OSC-I's responsibilities included overseeing Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programs, managing Foreign Military Sales (FMS), training the Iraqi military on newly fielded weapons systems, conducting joint military exercises, overseeing International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs, as well as what remained of the advise and train mission.

56 "Assessment of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Mission Capabilities," *op. cit.*, 15-16.

57 Because they were too small to accomplish much of anything in the way of actual institution building, they focused their efforts on maintaining situational awareness of the MOD, facilitating a long-term security relationship, fostering a partnership with MOD and Joint Headquarters counterparts, and facilitating key leader engagements.

58 "Assessment of the Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq Mission Capabilities," *op. cit.*, 35-36.

59 Cordesman and Khazi, *op. cit.*, 6.

60 "Foreign Intervention: From Beirut to Baghdad," Special Report: The Arab World, *The Economist*, May 14, 2016, available at <<http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21698441-america-tired-policing-arab-world-and-vice-versa-pulling-out-could-be-just>>. Ryan Crocker, Ambassador to Iraq from 2007 to 2009 referred to Iraqi politicians' instinct to revert to narrow sectarianism in the following way, "compromise is a concession, a concession is a defeat and defeat is death."

61 Cordesman and Khazi, *op. cit.*, 18.

62 Marisa Sullivan, "Maliki's Authoritarian Regime," *Institute for the Study of War Middle East Security Report* 10, April 2013, available at <<http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Maliki-Authoritarian-Regime-Web.pdf>>, 18. To illustrate this point, 13 of 14 Army division commanders were Shia at the time of her report.

63 Sullivan, *op. cit.*, 17.

64 Cordesman and Khazi, *op. cit.*, 3.

65 This leads to the uncomfortable conclusion that perhaps the coalition should have taken the training wheels off the ISF earlier and pushed the ISF to take full responsibility for operations sooner.