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**REFORMING THE IRAQI INTERIOR MINISTRY, POLICE AND
FACILITIES PROTECTION SERVICE**

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee for inviting me to speak this afternoon. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this hearing on the progress and challenges toward transitioning security responsibilities to the government of Iraq. As Senior Program Officer in the Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations at the U.S. Institute of Peace, I have analyzed police systems in a number of countries. However, the views I express are my own and not necessarily those of the U.S. Institute of Peace, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

Summary

In December 2006, the “Year of the Police” ended with the completion of the Multi-National Security Transition Command’s (MNSTC-I) program to train and equip 135,000 members of the Iraq Police Service. Training and equipment was also provided to the 24,400 members of the Iraq National Police (constabulary) and 28,400 members of the Border Police. Nearly 180 American Police Transition Teams and 39 National Police Transition Teams were embedded with Iraqi forces, while a 100-member Ministry Transition Team was assigned to the Ministry of Interior to improve its operations.

Achievement of these quantitative goals, while impressive, masks a troubled reality in regards to the loyalty and quality of Iraqi security forces. In fact, the Iraqi Interior Ministry, which supervises police forces, is dysfunctional and heavily infiltrated by Shiite militias. The Iraq Police Service (street cops) is unable to protect Iraq citizens. Criminal gangs operate with impunity, cooperate with insurgents for profit, and engage in smuggling of oil and antiquities. The Iraqi National Police, a patchwork organization of commando-style, counter-insurgency units, harbors sectarian death squads. The Border Police is unable to stop infiltration of terrorists, arms and contraband across Iraq’s porous borders. Iraqi police often are intimidated by or collude with insurgents, militias and criminals. Iraqi police units normally are at half of their authorized strength due to attrition, chronic absenteeism and the corrupt practice of including “ghosts” on the rolls. Only five of Iraq’s eighteen provinces have the necessary complement of PTTs to conduct assessments and provide in service training.

State of Play

I. Transform the Interior Ministry and Increase Its Authority

Under the previous minister, Bayan Jabr, the Interior Ministry was politicized by Shiite extremists. Jabr, a leader of the Badr Organization and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, the largest Shiite political party, allowed or enabled the Badr Brigade to assume key posts in the Ministry and subvert its operations. Badr Brigade militiamen infiltrated Iraqi police units. With insufficient advisors to conduct oversight, the U.S. Civilian Police Assistance Transition Team (CPATT) was unable to prevent the ministry's takeover, which became apparent when the February 22, 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra sparked large-scale sectarian killings. In March 2006, Lt. General John Abizad acknowledged to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Iraq police units were engaged in sectarian violence. By then, the current Iraqi government had taken office. Bayan Jabr had become Finance Minister, where he controls the Interior Ministry's budget and police salaries.

The new Interior Minister, Jawod al-Bolani, a Shiite engineer, appears well intentioned, but he has no police experience, political affiliation, or independent base of support. He has called for ministerial reform and for purging sectarian militia and criminals from the police. The Ministry is organizationally dysfunctional and Shiite militias continue to influence every aspect of its operations. There are also severe shortfalls in planning and program management, personnel, logistics, communications, budgeting, procurement, maintenance and accountability. The U.S. has provided a 100-member Ministry Transition Team (MTT) of American advisors with a 60/40 division between military and contract police personnel. The MTT works in various ministerial departments to improve methods of operation and has made some progress. For example, the critical Internal Affairs Division, which is led by a young, aggressive Iraqi brigadier, used a U.S. provided fingerprint system to identify police with criminal records and recommend their removal. However, U.S. advisors operate through translators and are often unaware of what transpires around them.

There is no plan that goes beyond platitudes for ministerial reform, nor is there agreement on the character and mission of the police. Justice Department police trainers sought to create a community oriented, law enforcement service, while U.S. military authorities tried to create a counter insurgency force. U.S. authorities do not know the number of actually serving Iraqi police officers or police stations, the composition and membership of the various police forces, the whereabouts and use of U.S. supplied weapons and equipment and the ultimate disposal of operating funds. There is anecdotal evidence of Iraqis participating in U.S. provided training programs to obtain a weapon, uniform and ammunition to sell on the black market. In addition, the Interior Ministry and provincial police officials have hired significant numbers of police outside the CPATT program. Most of those have not been trained.

Recommendation

There is no alternative to the slow and painful work of organizational transformation in the Interior Ministry. This requires persistent efforts by American advisors starting with the most senior Iraqi officials and moving down. It involves creating a strategic plan and working out standard administrative procedures, codes of conduct and operational measures that are accepted and used by the Iraqis. The practice of Americans drafting plans for Iraqis to sign and then ignore must end. Frequent political interventions by U.S. political authorities will be required to keep the process moving forward.

The Interior Ministry must re-exert influence over the provinces (outside the Kurdistan Region) by reversing the decentralization of control of the police that occurred during the Coalition Provisional Authority. Central to this effort is strengthening the Major Crimes Unit and Task Force to control criminal enterprises that operate throughout the country. A means must also be found to pay police salaries directly to police officers in the absence of an effective banking system. Currently, provincial police chiefs receive funds directly from the Finance Ministry for operations and salaries, but Baghdad has no ability to verify the accuracy of provincial budgets or account for expenditures. Direct pay would reduce corruption, limit the power of provincial police officials and help police officers identify with the national government. It would also reduce chronic absenteeism caused by the need for police to travel home each month to bring money to their families.

II. Move All Counter-insurgency and Border Forces to the Defense Ministry

In March 2004, President Bush signed a presidential directive transferring responsibility for the Iraq police assistance program from State to the Department of Defense and the Multi-National Security Transition Command in Iraq. To confront the growing insurgency, the U.S. military created “heavy police units” composed of former Iraqi soldiers. The original Public Order Battalion, Mechanized Police Unit, and Emergency Response Unit were composed of Sunnis. Under Interior Minister Bayan Jabr, Shiite officials created new, special police commando units composed of fighters from Shiite militia organizations. Their un-vetted personnel were given military weapons and counter-insurgency training. In early 2006, MINSTC-I combined these units into a new organization, the “Iraqi National Police (INP).” By summer 2006, it became clear that many of these INP units were engaged in sectarian violence and death squad activities.

On October 5, 2006, U.S. military forces removed the entire 8th Brigade of the 2nd National Police Division from duty and arrested its officers after the Brigade was implicated in the raid on a food factory in Baghdad and the kidnapping of 26 Sunni workers of which seven were executed. This was among the first public manifestations of a CPATT program to remove all the National Police brigades from service for limited vetting and reorientation. Members of these units received three weeks of “police transformational training” to improve their police skills and respect for human rights and the rule of law. This was the first police training that these forces received. National Police units were issued new uniforms with digital patterns that would be difficult to duplicate. Previously Iraqi officials countered allegations of police involvement in

sectarian killings by claiming that the perpetrators were wearing counterfeit uniforms. Subsequently, gunmen wearing new police uniforms have engaged in sectarian violence.

Recommendation

Vetting and retraining are important, but these essentially military, counter insurgency forces would be better housed in the Iraqi Defense Ministry. Under the President's plan for controlling critical neighborhoods in Baghdad, all but one of the National Police brigades have joined the Iraqi Army in "conducting patrols, setting up checkpoints and going door-to-door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents." To facilitate force integration, the INP should be transferred to the Ministry of Defense where the police commandos can become part of the New Iraqi Army. This would bring the INP under close U.S. supervision and enable these units to better perform their counter insurgency mission. Those members of the National Police that are former soldiers are likely to welcome the transfer to the Iraqi Army. Eventually, the Iraqis should disband these units and disperse their personnel throughout their forces.

The Border Police should be transferred to the Iraqi Defense Ministry as well. This would consolidate responsibility for protecting the border in a single ministry and improve cooperation with US military forces that have the same mission.

III. Focus the Police on Protecting Citizens and Fighting Crime

Under Saddam, the 60,000 member Iraqi police force (street cops) was at the bottom of a multilayered security bureaucracy. Poorly trained and equipped, badly led, and under paid, the police were notorious for brutality and corruption. After the US intervention, looters targeted the police, destroying police stations, vehicles and equipment. To control the breakdown in public order, the Iraqi police were recalled to service, but de-Baathification removed most of the police leadership. In May 2003, a US Justice Department assessment mission recommended that the Iraqi police receive extensive reorganization, retraining, new equipment and the rebuilding of police infrastructure. Implementation of the recommendations was delayed. A US-led police recruit-training program did not begin until November 2003; less than 300 police advisors arrived. When the State Department-led police program proved ineffective, President Bush assigned responsibility for standing up the Iraq Police Service to the Defense Department in March 2004.

Despite completion of the U.S. train and equip program, the Iraq Police Service (IPS) is ineffectual in confronting the general lawlessness, street crime and organized criminal activity that is endemic in Iraq. The IPS is limited in its functions to traffic control, station house activities, and neighborhood patrol. It has neither the training or legal authority to conduct criminal investigations, nor the firepower to confront organized crime. Under the Iraqi judicial system, criminal investigations are conducted by magistrates, but they are ill trained and too few in number to adequately perform this function.

Recommendation

The Iraq Police Service should be refocused toward controlling crime and protecting Iraqi civilians. It should receive the legal authority, training and equipment to perform this function. In practice this will involve giving the IPS greater responsibility to conduct criminal investigations and expanding its cooperation with the judicial system. This will not be easy. It will require persistent American advisors and political pressure to help the Iraqis assume new responsibilities and work out new ways of interacting.

IV. Move and Shrink the Facilities Protection Service

Under the Coalition Provisional Authority, the Facilities Protection Service (FPS) was formed in 2003 to provide guards for public buildings and essential infrastructure. Each of the 26 ministries and eight independent directorates, such as the Central Bank, was allowed to recruit its own guard force. There are 150,000 FPS officers and another 8,700 personal security guards for Iraqi leaders. FPS officers were issued police style uniforms, badges and weapons, but they did not receive police training nor were they given police authority. The ministerial guard forces became the private armies and a source of patronage jobs and funding. Radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr controls the Health, Education and Transportation ministries. The FPS provides money and jobs for the Mahdi Army. Interior Minister Bolani has publicly blamed the FPS for sectarian violence. Members of the FPS have been implicated in criminal activity.

Recommendation

On December 27, Prime Minister al Maliki signed a directive consolidating FPS under control of the Interior Ministry, which will be responsible for registering personnel, standardizing uniforms and equipment, providing training and downsizing the force. This effort has yet to begin, but it will exceed the capability of the Interior Ministry unless U.S. money and muscle is applied. Most observers believe the number of FPS personnel should be reduced to around 45,000. If the INP and Border Police are transferred to Defense Ministry, the Interior Ministry could take over the management of the FPS as compensation.

V. Put the U.S. Justice Department In Charge

With completion of the U.S. military-led, force generation stage of the Iraq police assistance program, it is appropriate to reassess where responsibility for this program should be assigned. The U.S. military's takeover of responsibility for training indigenous police in Iraq was unprecedented. Beginning with *Operation Just Cause* in Panama, responsibility for police training in post-conflict interventions was always assigned to the Department of Justice with policy guidance from the Department of State. The Justice Department's international police training program has the expertise and experience and should be given this program. This will be a major task, since more than 30,000 new police will be required annually to maintain current force levels.

Justice already is responsible for upgrading Iraqi courts, assisting the Iraqi prison system, and training an Iraqi marshals service to protect the judiciary. According to the Defense Department's March 2007 report to Congress, the prison system generally meets international standards and functions effectively, while corruption in the judiciary is below other parts of the judicial system. Giving the Department of Justice the lead for police assistance would consolidate U.S. efforts under the leadership of a single department and help create the rule of law in Iraq.

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