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THE OVERSIGHT AND
INVESTIGATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE**

**STATEMENT OF
COLONEL ROBERT J. COATES
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
BEFORE THE
OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
– IRAQI POLICE STATUS REPORT –
ON
24 MAY 2007**

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COLONEL ROBERT J. COATES

Colonel Coates was commissioned in the Marine Corps in 1977 upon graduation from the University of South Carolina.

As a company grade officer, he served in the operational forces with Company F 2d Battalion, 1st Marines (1977-80), Company A 1st Reconnaissance Battalion (1980-81), Company B 1st Battalion, 9th Marines (11th MEU(SOC)) (1988-1990), and the 1st Marines Regimental Enhanced Training Section (RETS) (1987-1988). Assignments included: Rifle Platoon Commander, Weapons Platoon Commander, Rifle Company Executive Officer, Reconnaissance Platoon Commander, Officer in Charge of RETS, and Rifle Company Commander (1988-1990).

As a field grade officer, he served as Training Officer for the 1st Marine Division, Operations Officer for the 15th MEU(SOC) for deployment to the CENTCOM AOR (1995-1996) and Executive Officer/ Maritime Special Purpose Force Commander for a subsequent deployment to the CENTCOM AOR (1997), as Deputy AC/S G-7 I MEF (1997-1998), Commanding Officer, 1st Force Reconnaissance Company (1998-2000) and Officer in Charge of the Special Operations Training Group, I MEF (2000-2003). From 2003-2006 Colonel Coates was selected to activate and as the first Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Special Operations Command Detachment One (MCSOCOM Det 1). In 2004, he deployed to the IRAQI THEATER of OPERATIONS (ITO) for combat operations in OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM II (OIF II). Upon deactivation of MCSOCOM Det One in 2006, Col Coates was ordered to I MEF (FWD) for deployment to Al Anbar, Iraq and participation in OIF 05-07 as the AC/S G-10 (Iraqi Security Forces). Upon return from Iraq in 2007, Col Coates was assigned and is currently serving as the AC/S for Training/Experimentation Group

In the supporting establishment, he served as the Officer in Charge of the Amphibious Reconnaissance School at Landing Force Training Command, Coronado, CA (1982-85), as an infantry battalion advisor for combat and special operations in El Salvador (1986-87), and with other U.S. Government Agencies involved in Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence/Special Operations (1991-1994).

Colonel Coates is a graduate of the Amphibious Warfare School (1985-86) and the Marine Corps Command and Staff College (1990-1991). His personal decorations include: Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Purple Heart Medal, Meritorious Service Medal with three Gold Stars, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, and the Combat Action Ribbon with Gold Star.

Chairman Meehan, Congressman Akin, distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss Iraqi Police (IP) development in the Al Anbar Province

In February 2006, the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) created a separate staff section, the G-10, to oversee all Iraqi Security Force (ISF) development. This section worked closely with the Multi-National Support Transition Command Iraq (MNSTC-I) on all issues related to the ISF. Our G-10 was divided into three separate sections; Iraqi Army development, Iraqi Police development, and Border Protection Service development. The Iraqi Police section worked closely with the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team (CPATT) which was a component of MNSTC-I. CPATT helped to oversee development of the police and border forces throughout Iraq.

When I MEF arrived in Feb 2006, the police force in Al Anbar had approximately 2143 assigned policemen with an additional 1599 in training. However, a large number of these 2143 policemen were not actively working. Four out of ten police districts were operating with only fourteen Police Stations. Two of these districts, however, were operational in name only (Ramadi and Habbaniyah) and many of the stations were barely functioning. The Provincial headquarters was not functioning and was not in contact with any of its districts or MOI. The only truly functioning police force was within the city of Fallujah.

Iraqi Police

Unlike the United States, the Iraqi Police are a nationally controlled organization under the Ministry of the Interior. Each Province operates its own police force under the control of a Provincial Director of Police (PDoP). This PDoP worked directly for the

Governor but was bound by MOI policies and regulations. Within Al Anbar the province was further divided into ten separate police districts. Each district had an appointed police chief that managed the assigned stations within his district. Another difference is that the Iraqi Police force was structured similar to a military rank structure. It had both officer and enlisted ranks. Unlike US police forces where all police are sworn officers, the Iraqis were divided into Police Officers and Policemen (enlisted).

Recruiting

Recruiting for Iraqi Police was difficult at best during most of 2006. There was a very active and effective murder and intimidation campaign against the police forces in Al Anbar. This campaign involved threats and assassination of policemen and police officers, potential recruits as well as their families. This greatly hindered any effort to make this force more active and operational or any recruiting efforts to grow the police force. This helped foster an attitude by many of the Iraqis, including those in the police force, to adopt a “wait and see” attitude with respect to the Iraqi Police in Al Anbar. However, this was just was one factor.

Along with this was simply the danger involved in the job of a policeman. The force was very small and could barely support itself during normal operations, let alone if responding to policemen being attacked. The lack of proper equipment was also a factor. The lack of body armor and weapons are two prime examples. Another large effect was the Arab/tribal culture that was prevalent throughout the province. All activities within a tribe or family must be approved by the tribal leader or Sheik. Many of these leaders had adopted the “wait and see” attitude mentioned earlier and therefore many Iraqis were not prone to join. Even when Iraqis were willing to join, the recruiting process itself was

very dangerous. The process of gathering, screening, and then transporting large numbers of recruits required a large amount of coalition and Iraqi security. This created a large target that was often attacked. The basic requirements established by MOI for an Iraqi Policeman were fairly simple by US standards but difficult for many Iraqis. The largest disqualifier was basic literacy. Many Iraqis in Al Anbar could not read and write at a 4th grade level. Another large disqualifier was a lack of proper identification. The national identification card (Jensia card) was required for each applicant as proof of citizenship and proper age. However there had not been an operating Jensia office in Al Anbar since March 2003. This created a large number of fake or fraudulent Jensia cards at every recruiting drive.

Training

Graduation from an MOI approved police training academy is a requirement for all Police within Iraq. Upon graduation from an academy, MOI issues hiring orders that officially appoint them as policemen in the Iraqi Police force and assign them to their home province. This academy was 8 to 10 weeks long (10 weeks with weekends 8 weeks without).

Unlike most other provinces within Iraq, Al Anbar does not have its own Police Training Academy. This made the training for new police recruits very difficult for all police within Al Anbar. Most Iraqis from Al Anbar were not comfortable leaving their homes for a longer period of time. The logistics of safely moving large numbers of Iraqis to and from schools outside of Al Anbar each month was difficult at best. Two available police academies were used by Al Anbar to train all new Recruits:

The Jordanian International Police Training Center (JIPTC) located in Aman Jordan was a US sponsored academy that trained approximately 1800 recruits per eight week class. A new class began each month. This was the preferred course for Al Anbar due to the safer environment, shorter class length, better facilities, and better overall treatment of the students.

The Baghdad Police College (BPC) located in Baghdad was a US and Iraqi run program that taught approximately 2000 recruits per class. A new class began each month. This course was problematic for Al Anbar recruits for several reasons. The academy was originally designed to train only their police officers. Many of the instructors looked down upon the policemen recruits (enlisted) training at this facility and often treated them poorly. Secondly, the Al Anbar recruits were treated worse because they were not from Baghdad and were looked down upon especially because they were from Al Anbar. Also, the course was 10 weeks, vice the 8 week course in Jordan. The weekends that were provided with the longer course were not enjoyable for the Al Anbar recruits because they were not from Baghdad and were not able to go home or even out into town without risking their lives. They remained on the academy grounds instead, with very little to do.

Also, there is the Transitional Integration Program (TIP). This was a three week refresher program for former police that had served prior to March 2003. The emphasis was on rule of law and refreshing police basics. There was a separate course for officers and policemen.

The BPC also offered advanced courses for qualified policemen and police officers. Courses such as crime scene investigations, interrogations, supervisors' courses, and junior leadership courses are an example of some of the courses offered. Some of the

same issues with the basic recruit training at the BPC also affected these courses as well as logistical and security issues for transporting small numbers of Iraqi Police from Al Anbar to Baghdad.

Equipment and Logistical Support

From Feb 2006 to Feb 2007, all equipment issued to the Iraqi Police in Al Anbar came from Coalition Forces. Most of this was from CPATT/MNSTC-I with a small amount from directly from I MEF. During the first half of 2006, the lack of basic equipment hindered some of the operations for the Iraqi Police in Al Anbar and continued to impact operations throughout the year. One example was vehicles. The lack of police vehicles greatly limited their maneuverability and response. Even when vehicles were available, they lacked any armor protection. The Iraqi Police would patrol an area in a Chevy pickup truck while the Iraqi Army would patrol the same area in an armored HMMWV. Through the hard work and resourcefulness of individual Marines and units, I MEF provided armor plating for some of these vehicles. Efforts by I MEF to have all vehicles armored prior to issue was not supported by MNSTC-I. MNSTC-I was attempting to have the Iraqi MOI armor its own vehicles but the Iraqi bureaucracy was too slow to respond effectively. This is indicative of many of the equipment problems faced by the police. The equipment provided is based on normal civilian policing and not combat operations. Fuel was also an issue that grew as the police gained more vehicles. MOI did not have a plan to provide fuel support for the IP in Al Anbar. Even if a plan and appropriate funding were available, Al Anbar did not have secure facilities for holding and distributing this fuel. Additionally, the lack of it across the province created a large black market for fuel. Corruption within the police often resulted in the police

stealing and selling their own fuel, often from their own gas tank. The delays and problems with equipping the police were eventually overcome and large amounts of gear and equipment were delivered to the IP in Al Anbar during that last half of 2006.

Although large portions of this equipment that was given to the Iraqi Police is currently unaccounted for and is not at the police stations.

Political Support

Iraqi Ministry of the Interior (MOI)

The MOI was not involved with many of the events within Al Anbar Province. The prevailing attitude among many of the Iraqi's in Al Anbar was that the government in Baghdad did not care about them.

Local government/tribal support was an important part in the eventual growth and success of the police in Al Anbar. Through the support of local political leaders and tribal engagement by US forces, the number of monthly police recruits grew. Gaining the support of the local leaders in each area was extremely important to the effectiveness of the police in every area of the province.

Iraqi Police Pay

When I MEF first arrived, the Al Anbar police force has not been paid for about 3 to 4 months. Part of the problem was with the Provincial Government itself and the Provincial Treasury. Pay for the Iraqi Police in Al Anbar was supposed to be handled through the Provincial Treasury. The Provincial Police Chief and the Al Anbar Treasury were stealing large portions of this money. The Provincial Police Chief was arrested and the Baghdad treasury withheld all police funds from Al Anbar. They withheld these

funds which resulted in the Al Anbar police not being paid for months. It took heavy coalition involvement in order to get this process moving again. I MEF had to send representatives to MOI, MOF, and the Baghdad treasury in order to get IPs paid. These representatives had to receive the money and transport it to each police district. The Police Training Teams (PTTs) were directly involved in the pay oversight as well to ensure that each policeman was paid. It was common practice for the chief and his officers to take part or all of his pay. This direct involvement continued through I MEF's time in Iraq with monthly trips to Baghdad to pick up the pay in cash from the Baghdad treasury and deliver it to each district. The Baghdad treasury refused to distribute these funds through the Provincial treasury and insisted on I MEF and Coalition Forces involvement. They trusted I MEF to escort the money but did not trust the provincial treasury or the provincial police chief and his officers.

MOI requires that all active police must have hiring orders in order to be paid. The process for obtaining hiring orders is relatively simple but often bogged down by the slow bureaucracy within MOI. The slowness of this process often slowed the pay for these men as it sometimes took until two months after their graduation from the police academy to get the required orders.

The lack of pay for almost four months made recruiting very difficult. Once these problems were resolved, many Iraqis began to volunteer for the police force and many more existing IPs were willing to return to duty.

US/Coalition in overwatch with IA

In order to help stand up the police forces across Al Anbar, I MEF implemented the tactic of using US and Iraqi Army (IA) forces in an overwatch/supporting role for

Police that had begun to operate on their own. Coalition forces and IA would often provide the quick reaction force for the police in an emergency or operate nearby in order to provide adjacent support. I MEF learned that without providing this support, the fledgling police forces would often flounder and fail. This was seen most dramatically in the city of Haditha. In 2004, when Marine forces were moved from there to support operations in Fallujah the police forces crumbled. The police forces were relentlessly attacked by insurgent forces and could not stand on their own. Through a lot of hard work by multiple Marine battalions, most notably 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, did the police eventually return. It took until the end of 2006 before there was a semblance of an operating force.

Rule of Law/Judicial System

Courts

There were no existing criminal courts within Al Anbar. This created obvious problems for the police as there was no established Iraqi justice system for anyone who was arrested. The only recourse was the use of the Central Criminal Court of Iraq (CCCI) with the assistance of I MEF. CCCI's focus was on the prosecution of insurgents. This left out any prosecution for normal criminal activities. The lack of any criminal justice system greatly hampered all aspects of police operations.

Prisons

There were also no existing prisons within Al Anbar. This also created obvious problems for holding anyone arrested by the IP. Unless they were an insurgent, the IP's could not turn them over to the US for detention in a US Regional Detention Facility (RDF). The small jails within each police station were almost always overcrowded with

prisoners. The IPs were reluctant to let these often dangerous criminal free, but did not have a larger facility to which to transfer them or a judicial system to even hear their case.

Facilities/Police Stations

Murder and Intimidation was used very effectively by insurgents against the contractors across Al Anbar province. Threats and attacks against contractors or the suppliers of these contractors were very effective in halting or slowing many of the construction projects.

Additionally, during 2006, the Iraqi government required proof of land ownership by MOI for each property where a police station was constructed. Construction was greatly delayed at many sites due to this requirement which was all but impossible for most locations. Titles and deeds for most of the land, especially government owned land, did not exist for Al Anbar. This completely halted construction at almost all locations.

Police Transition Teams

Al Anbar province had US Army and US Marine Corps Police Transition Teams. Three different sized teams were established based on their assignment. A station level team consisted of 10 men, a district level team had 12 men, and the provincial PTT 15 men. This includes an eight man security team for each. Each team also had several International Police Liaison Officers (IPLOs) to assist with police specific training and development. The team leader was an officer or staff non-commissioned officer. These teams were very undersized for the scope of their mission.

The initial plan was to provide I MEF with a US Army MP Battalion to source the required number of PTTs. Forces were diverted to Baghdad to support operations there and only one MP Company was provided to I MEF for PTTs. In order to meet mission

requirements, I MEF created fifteen PTTs out of hide. This had obvious effects on other I MEF missions and support.

The initial Marine Corps teams were provided from within 1st Battalion, 14th Marines. They were created on short notice and did not receive any standardized PTT training prior to deployment. The teams that replaced them in early summer 2006 received some advisor team training, but very little training regarding the police transition mission. An additional six teams were created in theater from individual augments from deployed units and headquarters. These teams received four days of training at Camp Fallujah and then were paired with an existing, experienced PTT for a minimum ten day training period on the ground. Today, I MEF has a dedicated Advisor Training Group (ATG) to train and prepare all Transition Teams. There is currently a six week training program that provides specific training for all Police Transition Teams to include training at the Marine Corps Mojave Viper Exercise in 29 Palms. This exercise simulates working with and developing an Iraqi Police.

It was not until the end of I MEF's tenure that a PTT handbook was created to help the PTTs in the performance of their mission. Until this time, direction and basic concepts were provided through informal means. The intent of this book is to provide a ready, pocket sized reference for all members of the PTT.

Conclusion

Upon I MEF transfer of authority to II MEF on 9 Feb, 2007, Al Anbar had 10,251 police assigned with approximately 9,211 working. There was an additional 837 recruits in training. Additionally, all ten police districts are operational with forty active Police stations. Many of these stations and districts are now operating and directly contributing

to the counterinsurgency efforts in Al Anbar. The IP have been invaluable in many areas not only for the security they provide but also for the ground level intelligence on local activities.

The Provincial Headquarters is operational with phone and e-mail communications with all ten districts and the Ministry of the Interior in Baghdad.

All IPs are getting paid on time each month and additional monthly operations and maintenance funds were also procured.

Large amounts of equipment were delivered to the Iraqi Police, including 8243 AK-47s, 4680 pistols, 552 PKM Machineguns, 6052 ballistic vests with SAPI plates, over 14,000 uniforms, 905 police vehicles, and millions of rounds of ammunition.

The construction of an Al Anbar Police Academy has begun and is expected to be operational by this summer. This school will train recruits and eventually teach more advanced leadership and policing courses.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.