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### Reforming the Iraqi Interior Ministry, Police, and Facilities Protection Service

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In December 2006, Iraq's "Year of the Police" ended with the completion of several milestones. The Multi-National Security Transition Command's (MNSTC-I) program trained and equipped 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 28,360 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 troubling reality regarding 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 (its cadre of 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 is a patchwork organization of commando-style, counter-insurgency units that harbors sectarian death squads. The Border Police are unable to stop infiltration of terrorists, arms, and contraband across Iraq's porous borders.

This paper was prepared by USIP Senior Program Officer [Robert Perito](#). On January 31, 2007, Chairman Senator Patrick Leahy submitted the paper for record at a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on the [Iraq Study Group Report](#). The paper is based, in part, on the results of a U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) conference on "Reforming the Interior Ministry, Police and Facilities Protection Service in Iraq" held October 17-18, 2006. Participants in the conference included government officials, military officers, law enforcement executives, and academic experts.

The views expressed in this paper do not reflect those of USIP, which does not advocate specific policy positions.

#### **Interior Ministry Requires Reform**

Under the previous minister, Bayan Jabr, the Interior Ministry became 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 encouraged members of the Badr Brigade to assume key posts in the ministry and subvert its operations. Badr Brigade militiamen were organized into commando-style units, which were incorporated into the Iraq National Police. Without sufficient advisers in the ministry to

conduct effective oversight, the U.S. Civilian Police Advisory Training Team (CPATT) was unable to identify or prevent the ministry's takeover. Not until the February 22, 2006 bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, which sparked large-scale sectarian violence, did the sectarian takeover of the ministry become apparent. In March 2006, Lt. General John Abizaid 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 continues to control 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 U.S. has provided a 100-member Ministry Transition Team (MTT) of American advisers 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, has used a U.S.-provided fingerprint system to identify police with criminal records and recommend their removal. However, the brigadier has been the target of repeated assassination attempts.

There is no Iraqi or U.S. plan that goes beyond platitudes for ministerial reform, nor is there agreement on the character and mission of the police. Justice Department police trainers have sought to create a community-oriented, law enforcement service, while U.S. military authorities have tried to create a counter-insurgency force. U.S. authorities do not know the number of Iraqi police and 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 ample anecdotal evidence of Iraqi police officers participating in training in order to obtain a weapon, uniform and ammunition to sell on the black market. U.S. advisers operate through translators and are often unaware of what transpires around them.

Problems with oversight and influence are exacerbated by the decentralization of operational control of the police to the provinces, a move that occurred under the Coalition Provisional Authority. 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 how the money is utilized.

There is no alternative to the slow and painful work of organizational transformation in the Interior Ministry. This requires persistent efforts by American advisers, 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.

As the Interior Ministry begins to function effectively, it must re-exert influence over the provinces and take back authority that was lost through decentralization. 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 be found to pay police salaries directly to police officer and to transfer money to their families despite the lack of an effective banking system. This 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 with pay for their families.

### **Purging Death Squads from the Iraq National Police**

In March 2004, President Bush signed a presidential directive transferring responsibility for the Iraq police assistance program from the Department of 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, the Iraqis created new, Special Police Commando units composed of fighters loyal to Shiite militia organizations. Their un-vetted personnel were given military weapons and counter-insurgency training. In early 2006, all of these constabulary units were combined into 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. Ministry officials continue to counter allegations of police involvement in sectarian killings by claiming that the perpetrators were wearing counterfeit uniforms.

Vetting and retraining will help, but these essentially military, counter-insurgency forces would be better housed in the Iraqi Defense Ministry. Under President Bush's plan for taking control of critical neighborhoods in Baghdad, National Police brigades will join the Iraqi Army in "conducting patrols, setting up checkpoints and going door-to-door to gain the trust of Baghdad residents." To facilitate this operation, the INP should be transferred to the Ministry of Defense where the police commandos will 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 who are former soldiers are likely to welcome being transferred to the Iraqi Army. The Iraqis eventually 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.

### **Protecting Citizens and Fighting Crime**

Under Saddam, the 60,000 member Iraqi police force (the 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 U.S. 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 U.S. Justice Department assessment concluded that the Iraqi police required extensive reorganization, retraining, new equipment, and the rebuilding of police infrastructure. A US-led police recruit-training program was begun in November 2003 and responsibility for standing up the new Iraq Police Service was assigned to the Defense Department in 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. CPATT is unable to determine what percentage of U.S. trained police remain in the IPS or account for their weapons and equipment. The IPS is limited in its functions to traffic control, station house activities, and neighborhood patrol. It has neither the training nor the legal authority to conduct criminal investigations. Nor does it have 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.

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 other elements in the judicial system. This will not be easy. It will require the presence of American advisers, political pressure, and persistence before the Iraqis work out new ways of interacting.

### **Transforming 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. The same is true for ministries controlled by Kurdish politicians and other political parties that have militias. Interior Minister Bolani has publicly blamed the FPS for sectarian violence.

In August 2006, Prime Minister al Maliki announced that the Interior Ministry would assume responsibility for the FPS, identify and register personnel, standardize uniforms and equipment, provide training, and downsize 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.

### **The U.S. Justice Department Should be Placed In Charge**

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 assigned to the Department of Justice. With completion of the initial stage of the police assistance program, it is appropriate to reassign responsibility to Justice, which has the requisite programs and expertise. To take on this responsibility, Justice would need a direct appropriation from Congress and authority to direct the operation.

The U.S. Department of Justice 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 November 2006 report to Congress, the prison system generally meets international standards and functions effectively, while "corruption in the judiciary is less pronounced than in other part of the judicial system." Giving DoJ the lead for police assistance would consolidate U.S. efforts and help create the rule of law in Iraq.

### **Of Related Interest**

- [Ground Truth from Iraq: Politicians, Police, and Pacifications](#)  
Event, June 29, 2006 (Audio Available)
- [Bridging the Public Security Gap: The Role of the Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units \(CoESPU\) in Contemporary Peace Operations](#)  
USIPeace Briefing, June 2006
- [The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Public Security in Iraq](#)  
Special Report, April 2005
- [Post-Conflict Stabilization and Reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan](#)  
USIPeace Briefing, April 2005

- [Enhancing International Civilian Police in Peace Operations](#)  
Special Report, April 2002
- [American Civilian Police in UN Peace Operations: Lessons Learned and Ideas for the Future](#)  
Special Report, July 2001

This USIPeace Briefing was written by [Robert M. Perito](#), a senior program officer in the [Center for Post-Conflict Peace and Stability Operations](#). The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the Institute, which does not advocate specific policies.

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