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Enclosure 7 - MNF-W Assessment

Snapshot of Today

Multi-National Force West is experiencing positive effects across all Lines of Operation (Security, Transition, Governance, Economics, Rule of Law, and Communications) in concert with the "Clear, Hold, Build" strategy employed to date. The consistent message that every Marine, Soldier, Sailor and Airmen of MNF-W imparts while conducting COIN operations is the mantra "no better friend, no worse enemy." This attitude of respect for the Iraqi people, when compared to the effects of the al-Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) murder and intimidation campaign against the people, has led to the de-legitimization of AQI and its ideology in the minds of Anbaris.

Determined tribal engagement, from the squad level up to the Commanding General, has contributed to a populace that now openly confronts insurgents, especially AQI. Engagement has led to increased numbers of recruits for both the Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police Service (IPS), which in turn is generating confidence in the ability of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to provide security, particularly in the urban areas. Engagement with tribal leadership has also earned support for fledgling municipal and provincial governance bodies. This support, combined with mentoring provided by MNF-W in conjunction with the Provincial Reconstruction and Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT and EPRTs) has resulted in tangible initiatives that demonstrate the Iraqi civil leadership's ability to provide basic services to the population.

Together with ISF we continue clearing the enemy's rest and refit areas outside of our population centers. Further, we expect to continue these operations as the enemy flees from our pressure and is denied return and access to the population by permanent persistent presence and follow-on non-kinetic operations to allow economic development, governance, and the rule of law to take effect (clear, hold, build).

While Provincial and local Iraqi institutions are gaining the trust of Anbaris, the federal Government of Iraq (GoI) is still viewed as unsupportive and unresponsive to the needs of the people in Al Anbar, to include support of the ISF. The reality is, at the ministerial level, it is.

This assessment will focus on the six MNC-I key tasks of: 1) protecting the population; 2) facilitating reconciliation; 3) defeating AQI and extremists; 4) developing ISF capacity; 5) improving GOI capacity; and 6) protecting the force.

Protecting the Population

Military gains made possible by close coordination with tribal elements, have resulted in the **neutralization** of AQI within Anbari population centers and a significant degradation of AQI capabilities across the province. As MNF-W conducted combat operations to establish security in the clear phase, we learned that buy-in from the tribes, the social foundation of an Arab Iraq, would be necessary to ensure security gains could be sustained and expanded. Through a deliberate engagement program, MNF-W convinced the tribes to encourage their young men to enlist in the IA and IPS (includes the Iraqi Police (IP), Provincial Security Forces (PSF), and Iraqi Highway Patrol (IHP)). Critical to this success was (and continues to be) engagement with the central government to secure agreements between the Ministries of Defense (MoD) and Interior (MoI) to allow the "sons of Anbar" to serve in the ISF near their tribal and native areas. Average citizens, now feeling more secure, have increasingly been reporting suspected AQI activity. Popular support for AQI has been severely degraded within Al Anbar.

The MNF-W vision for protection of the population in the near term is to have the IP controlling the cities, PSF integrated into larger IP jurisdictions but generally outside the urban areas, and the IHP in control of economic corridors. IA forces will be positioned outside the population centers with MNF-W forces in an overwatch posture. To implement this vision, we have recently completed planning for near and intermediate-term force laydown changes to accompany transition of the cities to IP control. Additionally, and in conjunction with provincial leadership, we determined that the requirement for provincial IPS must increase from the current restriction of 21,000 to 30,000 men. A request to this end has been formally submitted by MNF-W.

Facilitating Reconciliation

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The fight for Anbar has never been sectarian; it has been a fight between AQI and local tribes for control over the Anbari Population. Al Anbar largely boasts a homogeneous Sunni population. Our main reconciliation challenge is convincing the Anbari populace to place trust in its central government. Manifesting this connectivity is at the heart of our mantra: Connect Baghdad to Ramadi and Ramadi to the people. Polling and atmospheric data throughout the province indicate Anbaris are more optimistic and have a generally positive outlook for the future. However, many Anbaris remain dissatisfied with essential governmental services. Visible and tangible support from the central government is critical to making delivery of basic services throughout the province a reality, and perhaps more importantly, to convincing Anbaris that the central government is not acting in a sectarian manner. MNF-W's efforts to build civic capacity are making strides towards addressing these concerns, but we cannot change these perceptions alone. Support from MNC-I and MNF-I, as well as USM-I, is required to convince the central government that its interests are best served if support of the Al Anbar province and its security forces is public, tangible, and relevant. A significant event and sign of reconciliation would be the announcement of a date for provincial elections for which the Anbari population is eager for democratic process, and see elections as an American promise. Without genuine opportunities for a democratic process in the form of provincial elections, or if there is a long term failure of present government to deliver on basic services, economic development, and political enfranchisement, we could see political and/or social unrest. Time is not on our side.

Engagement has been the key to reconciling internal actors vying for power in Al Anbar, namely the tribes. These efforts have boosted tribal confidence and trust in MNF-W, and have led the tribes to volunteer their sons for service in the ISF. This has provided much-needed employment opportunities and elevated security in formerly dangerous areas. More importantly, the incorporation of tribal sons into the ISF also restored a link between the tribes and the municipal and provincial governments previously absent. Today, MNF-W is converting these rudimentary security arrangements into functioning patronage relationships that reintegrate the tribes and the strengths of tribal leadership into participatory municipal and provincial governments.

Defeating AQI and Extremists

While "clear-hold-build" efforts and tribal movements have produced tactical successes, the **defeat** of AQI has not yet been realized. AQI still retains the ability to harass MNF and ISF operations and impact the lives of Anbaris outside the population centers. Expanding Coalition Force (CF) / ISF presence increasingly impedes insurgent freedom of movement and sanctuary in small towns and the open desert. To **defeat** AQI, continued tribal engagement, improvements in ISF capabilities, fostering of grassroots anti-AQI movements, widespread economic initiatives, and efforts to build capacity for the rule of law and linking it to the IPS are necessary.

Perhaps the most important factor to ensure long term success in Anbar is GoI willingness to bring the Sunni minority back into the mainstream of Iraqi society. Without significant changes in the perceptions, actions, and attitudes of the Shia majority government, long term success may prove elusive.

Developing ISF Capacity

One year ago, the ISF in Al Anbar consisted of two undermanned, Shia-dominated IA divisions, two brigades of border enforcement police, and a skeletal IPS. The contrast with our current situation is striking. Sustained tribal and civic engagement has resulted in the enlistment of thousands of Anbari Sunnis in what were previously two Shia dominated army divisions in order to fight the Sunnis of AQI - a powerful example of sectarian cooperation. These enlistments, combined with the efforts of embedded Transition Teams (TTs) and partnered CF units have significantly advanced the development of the IA in Al Anbar. Evidence of this was seen in the transfer of the 1st IA Division to Iraqi Ground Forces Command (IGFC) control during February of this year, and the 7th IA Division - which recently achieved Operational Readiness Assessment (ORA) 2 status - will be transferred to IGFC later this year.

Engagement efforts have also led to extremely successful police recruiting across the province, increasing our IPS numbers to the MoI allocated limit of 21,000 with a request to MOI to raise that limit to 30,000. Additionally, all Anbari police recruits are trained at the recently opened Habbaniyah Police Training Center, Anbar's first IPS Academy.

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Embedded TTs are an essential element for building ISF capacity. Recognizing their importance, MNF-W established a standard for Military TT (MTT) manning that exceeds the minimum requirement established by Commander, Central Command's Request For Forces (RFF). These teams are often further augmented by partnered coalition units. MNF-W also sources dozens of out-of-hide Police TTs (PTT) and provides security augments to the Port of Entry TTs (POETT). The importance of these robust and numerous TTs to ISF development cannot be overstated and must be sustained and maintained as we shift into more of an advisory role.

Though ISF development has been relatively rapid, major obstacles to independent ISF operations in Al Anbar remain. A lack of administrative and logistic support from central Iraqi authorities in Baghdad, whether MoI or MoD, is the number one challenge cited by each of the ISF services (and our TTs). As an example, the IPS and Department of Border Enforcement forces depend almost entirely on MNF-W for fuel, power, and infrastructure support. The IA has made strides through the use of contracted logistics support (outsourcing) but is still far from independent as it depends heavily on coalition forces as a safety net. The tactical level logistics capacity is developing and on track, but they need to plug into a better intermediate and national level logistics capability. The intermediate level (RSU/GSU) requires appropriate funding and personnel, with better defined interfaces between the national and tactical levels. The national level has for the most part been outsourced. Outsourcing their logistics is a viable strategy, as long as it is properly resourced and managed. Overall, there is a need for a national and intermediate logistics strategy, to include defined processes, resources, and appropriate leadership and integration. The logistics system shortcomings are exacerbated by a weak Iraqi industrial base.

Improving GOI Capacity

In order to re-establish the link between the provincial government and municipal governments, MNF-W has employed the concept of "helicopter governance." As security coalesced in municipalities that had advanced to the build phase, the Governor, Provincial Chairman, Provincial Chief of Police, and select Director Generals are transported to municipalities / districts to discuss challenges / problems faced by each of these important areas. These visits re-established dormant patronage systems between the provincial government and the municipalities which represent local tribal interests. They also allowed the provincial government to address local grievances by working with the municipal governments to identify practical and enduring solutions. An area of risk within the provincial government is the lack of an effective bureaucracy. The PRTs and EPRTs assigned to Al Anbar have been working diligently and effectively with civic leaders to develop bureaucratic capacity.

Another area of governmental progress is in the rule of law. In recent years, civil and administrative law institutions in Anbar operated at various levels of productivity, while criminal law institutions were absent. Currently, a re-emergence of the criminal law process, persons, and institutions is occurring. Investigative Judges are beginning to fill their function of hearing criminal cases and forwarding them to trial. Although cases have not yet been processed, Trial Judges for both terrorism and felony criminal courts have been named while locations for the courts are being prepared. To link the rule of law to the IPS, we are training police in advanced investigative skills. Civic capacity is being improved through partnered programs that fund court houses, police stations, judicial complexes and justice centers throughout the province.

With gains in security come economic opportunities. While just beginning to take hold, there are clear signs of growth in Anbar as indicated by a resurgence in micro businesses and micro farms. Markets, small businesses, and stores are opening across the province, and the implementation of vocational/agricultural training and microfinance programs to small businesses and farmers are a top priority.

MNF-W is also diligently working to repair critical infrastructure necessary to support a long-term, viable economy in Al Anbar. Projects are underway to revitalize major industries, mostly in the form of state owned enterprises (SOE), as well as to encourage large-scale agriculture. Programs are also in place to rebuild or improve vital infrastructure such as electrical generation and distribution, availability of fuel, rail and transportation infrastructure, and irrigation canals. The availability of electricity is a constant challenge throughout the province and represents a major limitation in the ability to develop economic capacity.

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These efforts toward enhanced government capacity, independent economic development, establishment of the rule of law and sustained delivery of essential services, are critical elements for transitioning from simply a secure environment to attaining true stabilization in the Anbar Province.

Protecting the Force

The best means of protecting the force is to drive the enemy out of Al Anbar. Together, with the ISF, we are doing just that. We are additionally taking steps to protect the force through other means. For example, MNF-W currently has two independent fielding plans to mitigate the use of MAK vehicles outside the wire. We are nearing completion of the fielding of 1,815 UAH vehicles, and have begun fielding the first of an anticipated 1,599 MRAP vehicles.

The discovery, collection, and disposal of hazardous materials (HazMat) are ongoing challenges as we continue to locate weapons caches and IED pre-cursors that contain such material. Compounding the issue is the fact that there currently are no easily accessible disposal methods available for many HazMat items, such as nitric acid. We are working closely with MNC-I on a variety of initiatives and are leading several of our own to improve HazMat management and reduce the availability of materials often used in home-made explosives (HME).

The prevention of blue on blue incidents is one of our top force protection priorities. Recently, we published MNF-W FragO 324-07 "Prevention of Blue on Blue Incidents in MNF-W Consolidated Near-Far Recognition and Visual Signals for Convoys". This order combines guidance from several references and details actions to be taken before and during convoy operations to establish recognition of friendly forces and to avoid blue on blue, EOF, and DA incidents.

Summary:

2007 has seen significant sea changes in the Al Anbar province. An increased level of security has been achieved, as incident levels are trending downward during a time of year when incident rates (DF, SAF, IED attacks, IED finds, IDF, etc) have historically increased. Current incident rates reflect levels not seen since May 2004. The ISF, while continuing to build capacity, are in the lead in many areas and currently initiate half of all offensive incidents against the enemy in the province. This is bad news for any insurgency which relies on operational initiative for advantage. Recruiting for the ISF is at an all-time high. Provincial and municipal governments are in place and functioning, with ties between them growing stronger each day. The provincial government is making progress in executing its budget and is providing tangible evidence of reconstruction and improved essential services throughout the province. The rule of law is in nascent stages, but plans for improvement are in the execution phase and progress is rapid. Most importantly, the Anbari populace has turned away from AQI as its protector and benefactor; this has subsequently driven AQI from the cities and rendered it largely ineffective.

The MNF-W strategy of "clear-hold-build" is working, and connecting Baghdad to Ramadi and Ramadi to the people is working well, though we are experiencing varying levels of success in different stages of this strategy throughout the province. To fully transition to the build phase and our end state of **Provincial Iraqi Control** requires time; provincial elections; tangible and visible economic and political support from the GoI; continued embedding of TTs with the ISF; and a functional criminal and terrorist court system. MNF-W can truly affect the latter two of these requirements. The remaining requirements will need a dedicated effort from the GOI. With that support, the MNC-I endstate of Iraqi self-reliance can be achieved in the Al Anbar province.

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