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BG David D. Phillips (USA)

MNSTCI, Director, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team
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Abstract

Phillips commanded 89th MP Bde in Iraq from '03 to '05 and had extensive operational experience with MPs from late 80s through 90s. The 720th MP Battalion's deployment in March '03 was strategically botched. US Pol-Mil operations in March-April '04 were incoherent. Eaton had no resourced, but Petraeus had money when he arrived in June '04. Since Phillips returned in February '07, there has been considerable progress with Iraqi Police, but sectarianism continues at the highest levels of the GoI. The only way forward is Reconciliation. Phillips has made a personal commitment to take care of the family of General Taha if anything happens to Taha. General P has asked Phillips to stay about 15 months.

FIRST RECORDING

Phillips commanded the 89th MP Brigade in northern Iraq from December 2003 into 2005. Worked with Petraeus in the north, and handled police academies for MNSTCI, again with Petraeus. In February 2007, Phillips was got a call from Ft. Leavenworth. While saying his goodbyes, Petraeus said he was taking Phillips with him, along with a couple of other guys. Gen Lynch called Phillips at the Pentagon to congratulate him. Phillips knew nothing about it. He went down to GOMO, and as he met ? and Siemons coming out the door. They gave him an odd stare, and he asked if they had something to tell him. They said he was not supposed to know yet.

Phillips was both honored and shocked. Petraeus called and asked how soon Phillips could get to Iraq. Phillips answered "how soon do you need me?" Petraeus said he would be in Baghdad in two weeks. Phillips made it in three. He felt honored, daunted, and shocked. He was the first and only active component Military Police BG to serve in theater, and there are only three in the entire Army.

Iraq, '03 to '05

Phillips first tour was from Dec '03 to Jan '05. His brigade had the MP mission all over Iraq, centered on Baghdad. This included the detainee mission, Camp Cropper, HV Det 1. He also worked with BG Dave Quantoc, then with 16th MP Brigade. It is important to realize that OIF II was never planned. There was no pre-deployment training for all the OIF II ILO MP units. For OIF, Phillips stripped his 89th brigade headquarters to fill up the battalions. In the fall, Phillips got orders to take the brigade. He then had to put together a pickup team. His brigade S3 was a junior major. This came after the 800th MP debacle with Abu Ghraib.

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Previous Deployments

Previously, Phillips deployed to Panama for Operation Just Cause. He actually was there the year before, in March of '88 for an operation, and then for OJC from Dec '89 to Feb '90. He took part in a little known operation known as EARNEST WILL in Oman and Jordan; took part in the reflagging of Kuwaiti tankers; and deployed to the Balkans for SFOR 4 and SFOR 6.

All these operations demonstrated the need for Military Police to deal with the civilian population. In OJC, the fighting was over within 72 hours, and immediately there were civilian issues that only the MPs and CA knew how to deal with. The 82nd redeployed after a couple of week. The MPs had to spend months retraining the police.

Under Airland Battle doctrine, MPs were supposed to handle the rear area and the civilian population. In October 2003, it was obvious this was exactly what our problem was.

Bosnia was a false lesson. There was no threat to US forces there. There was no insurgency.

Iraq, '03-'05

For Iraq in 2003, the 720th MP Battalion was making a last minute deployment from Ft. Hood. With the start of the campaign, they closed the air space and the 720th's planes could not get to Kuwait. They had to turn around. Italy denied them entry. They went to Germany and spend four days waiting to get out. Meanwhile, their equipment was all en route, none of it ready to pick up anyway. When people called for the MPs to move north and start taking care of prisoners, there were no MPs on the ground to move north; it was just a skeleton of a brigade headquarters.

Phillips came to Iraq in December '03. He went to Camp Cropper on 7 Jan '04, and it was disgusting. The Army Reserve unit there was disheveled and undisciplined. At Camp Ashraf, troops were socializing with the MeK, completely out of control. One reason Maj Gen Taguba's report was somewhat positive was that his (b)(3), (b)(6) immediately put a boot in people's ass to clean up. Phillips had never seen such a mess. Troops were taking pictures of prisoners. There was never any preparation for prisoners due to a conviction that there would not be any, that there would be no long-term US effort in Iraq. An NG Armored Cavalry Troop out of Waco, Texas did great in handling Saddam, because they had a great first sergeant. We later moved Saddam to the VBC Lost Lake compound, built in January '04. We still thought the effort was short-term, that we would not have a full-year rotation, and that we would be the last.

The situation in Dec and Jan 04 did not seem that pressurized. I could walk in Karadh in January '04. Then, the CID command on 28 Jan 04, called me and Quantoc over to a special meeting in which we were shown the Abu Ghraib photos, not yet released. Fast forward to early April '04: Sadr's Karadh peninsula paper published caricatures of Bremer. Bremer got perturbed. Phillips sent the 69th MP battalion (a couple of companies) to shut down the paper. The Fallujah massacre of the contractors came on 31

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March. On 3-4 April, the pictures from Abu Ghraib were released. On 4 April, Bremer ordered the paper be shut down for insulting him. There was a seam between 1AD/1CD RIP TOA. 1AD had a quasi-passive environment. JAM raised its head. It was the perfect storm. In Phillips estimation, 1CD came in looking for trouble because they were disappointed having missed the invasion and they were kinetically oriented.

As Sadr City blew up, police deserted their stations in droves. Phillips kept in close touch with all the Iraqi leaders by cell phone. They did not abandon their stations, but they had no forces to restore order. He dealt with Brigadier Makai, BG Eaton, and a Kurd police chief, Jussein ali Kamal, and the patrol police chief. Police abandoned their posts. Iraqi security leaders sent cell phone reports in. One key leader was Maj Gen Jamal, a senior police official. Bremer order Jamal's firing after a TV clipping showed up from March or April of 2003 showing Jamal rallying Iraqi troops to fight the Americans. Phillips tried to argue, but was overruled. He immediately hired Jamal as an advisor using CERP funds. Jamal is now in Dubai.

Eaton was trying, but he had no resources. When P returned in June '04 to MNSTCI, he had no resources, but the first difference he made was that he brought money. He came out to the Baghdad Police maintenance facility. He was stunned to find out they weren't MNSTCI, they were police from the MP unit. That is where I made the first connection with him.

43:07 In the summer of '04, 1CD was trying to close down and collapse the FOBs, including the Baghdad Police Academy, FOB Shield. The mission was pulling back, getting away. P saw this collapsing out of the communities, closing the COPs and the JSSs. The problem was there was no functioning system. The MOI was dysfunctional, and it was responsible for all internal security. The Iraqi police were not functional. The Iraqis did not have a capability to replace our pullback, so we were creating a vacuum.

Iraq, '07

The al Askariyan Brigade was stood up in spring of 2007, to bring security to Samarra. UNESCO was to do an assessment and rebuild the Golden Dome. Dempsey asked Lt Gen Thalmat, said MNSTCI would support the brigade, but it had to be a balanced, non-sectarian brigade. Thalmat agreed, and did it. But in the summer of '07, the OCINC under Dr. Bassima raised its head. Thalmat had a balanced list. OCINC had a completely Shia list, vs his balanced list. That was the smoking gun of the OCINC. GEN P gave me the mission to go to the OCINC, make them take their list back. It was a contentious meeting with (b)(6) in May '07. A few days later, Thalmat was fired, or "promoted" out of his position into 'Special Advisor for Iraqi Security Issues' with pay, but no authority. So there is a sectarian agenda, without a doubt. Just about everything OCINC does is to counter the Awakening movement and the CLCs and keep them from being police or getting into government service. There has not been a single positive thing OCINC has done with regard to CLCs. Their's is a zero-sum anti-Sunni mentality.

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They set up the IFCNR to vet the CLCs. Their vetting has not led to hirings, just temporary contracts. "It's a cancer in this country."

52:00. This does not pass a test of logic. (b)(6) a female, is espousing radical, anti-female Shiism. We trained 1,000 women at the Baghdad Police Academy in 2005. They are no longer police officers. In November, the MOI ordered all female officers to turn in their weapons. Radical Shiism, Adnan al Asadi, is a politician first, public servant second, and he runs things according to the Dawa party.

Look at Basra. This is disenfranchising both Sunnis and females. In Basra, last week, as we went through the town, I saw a billboard with a female on a billboard for a cellphone advertisement. He faced was blacked out. It looked like pictures of Iran after the revolution. We saw violence against women in Fallujah in '03 and '04 just as we see in Basra, though the type of extremism was different.

My mission is to generate police forces, professionalize them, and help the MOI build police capacity. I work closely with the national police. There are charges of sectarianism, but there seem to be more reports than there are actual incidents.

I work closely with many senior leaders. Deputy Minister Aiden has been to my house. I've been to his house. He is a secular muslim, a Turcomen. We're close. He is effective, and he is a peacemaker.

I also deal with a Shia, Achmed Taha, in charge of Iraqi Internal Affairs. He is a Shia, but he is non-sectarian. He solved the murder of General Qais, Provisional Director of Police of Babel, in Hillah. He led the investigation. He has provided me with everything, all the evidence and investigations. He trusts us very much. He came to me after the Case murder. All his leaders were killed off, that's how he was promoted. PMM fired Qais. Gen P weighed in, said you can't fire Qais, he is the most effective PDOP you have. They kept him. Three days later, Qais was assassinated. After he took up the investigation of Qais' assassination, Taha came to me and asked, if he is killed, would I get his family out of Iraq and protect them. I promised him I would, I know how to do that. There is a process, and I know it. His family is in hiding, kids can't go to school.

How did P deal with Qais' assassination?

1:05:00. P wanted to know about the investigation. Taha kept me up to date on the investigation, and I typed SIPR notes to P on the investigation. P knew why it happened. Qais arrested bad guys, he arrested JAM bad guys. It comes back to the sectarian cancer. P will go to bat for the good ones. P knew Qais very well, and we (P and Phillips) had dinner with Qais about three months ago following a graduation at the Babel Police Academy.

I've seen P get very upset with the Crisis Action Committee, pounding the table over the IFCNR, but he has shown no emotion in front of me on things like Qais, just extreme interest in the investigation.

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The Crisis Action Committee meets every Monday at Adnan Palace, with the MoD, the MoI, Rubaie, P, RO, and all key Iraqi leaders, all talking about Fardh al Qanoon, but P has not attended that in about a month. There is a rep there from the OCINC office. It is an interesting meeting, worth sitting in on. Adnan Palace is where the MoI/MoF is.

1:08 Right now there are 230,000 Iraqi police, close to 39,000 border police. The Corps assesses them with their police transition teams. (PTTs), and provides a Corps OR rate. We assess the training facilities. I brought back this Iraqi police official, and he is on our dime, and he goes out with various officials to do an IG compliance survey of the Academies for training, facilities, etc. I do personal assessments. How many I see at their posts.

The police are out there. They're not perfect, they may be corrupt, but there out there. And they're getting shot. Some may run, some may be bad, but some significant part of the majority are out there doing the job. And we have never had any trouble recruiting. It's a government job, which means there pay, there's martyr's pay if they die, there is a pension, and being a police officer and a soldier in this country with hazardous duty pay, is pretty good pay. The HD pay triples their pay.

What do you know, what do not know, and what is most important going forward?

Reconciliation and enfranchising Sunnis, embracing the CLCs is the most important part. And it goes back to how the British solved northern Ireland, and they let out some pretty bad people. The Shia have to do what Nelson Mandela did, said "I forgive you," and embraced them, it would end the conflict. But he is not, it is continuing sectarianism. This is exactly what I hear from senior Iraqi leaders, from Aiden, from Taha, Hussein al Kamal.

The Awakening was the Sunnis throwing down the olive branch, the CLCs was bringing security to their neighborhoods, and the Shia are extremely suspicious of it. I guess I would be suspicious if I was suppressed that many years.

What person or event will always stay with you?

General Ahmed Taha, when he asked, if he was killed, if I would take care of his family, and I committed to it. And then he went right back to doing the job that he was supposed to do. He had faith in me, and he is a Shia.

SECOND RECORDING

I had a second point. Earlier this week, GEN P called me into his office, and said Dave, we're at a critical junction, you know your job, and no one else can do it. I need you to stay. I need you to stay about 15 months, take it to the summer. I tried to make light of it, and said "Sir, I guess it's better than you asking me to leave." Now, I was surprised, but the fact that GEN P, the guy in charge of this whole thing, took the time to call in a junior BG and say that, tells you something. Did I have the option of saying no? Probably not,

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but that is irrelevant. I called my wife. She was not happy, but she understood. There are only three MP generals.

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