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CJTF-1.4a Red Cell

A Red Cell Special Memorandum

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Impact of Tribal Influence on Former Regime Loyalist Activities

~~(S//REL TO USA and MCFI)~~ Coalition engagement activities with tribal shaykhs in Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq can potentially effect FRL ability to recruit, enjoy safe-havens, free passage, intelligence, and funding. Although tribal influence varies from person to person, group to group, and between urban and rural areas, tribal shaykhs and leaders of clans are well placed to help interdict FRL operations in key areas of conflict. Tribal engagement at the local and national levels could motivate shaykhs to disrupt FRL. Full-spectrum activities that include providing jobs, contracts, rebuilding priorities, membership in key government institutions and the military, along with penalties for non-compliance would be a worrisome development for the FRL. Many tribal shaykhs are willing to come forward, and therefore be held accountable for their areas, but currently do not have a familiar forum in which to deal with the Coalition.

(U) Relevance of Sunni Tribes in Iraq

~~(S//REL)~~ Iraq's Sunni-dominated tribes are powerful because of their massive size, both in population and geographic distribution that translates into power and influence. Tribal shaykhs are concerned with ensuring their authority, maintaining honor and increasing the prosperity of their fellow tribesmen. Shaykhs have varying degrees of control over their clans, depending on a number of dynamics; urban, rural, religious, political, secular, and literacy level. However, each control significant numbers of the Iraqi populace and can exert influence by making decisions on key issues with consensus from other tribal leaders.

- Tribal decision-making emphasizes consensus. However, a shaykh can act decisively as long as his actions are considered judicious. They are known authority figures capable of rallying their constituents
- The tribes can play an important role in stabilizing areas of Sunni-dominated Iraq or at least curtail some FRL activities
- Cooperation between shaykhs and the Coalition is dependent on respect for the shaykh's position and continuous engagement

(U) Potential for Cooperation

~~(S//REL)~~ Tribal shaykhs are dismayed at the lack of tribal representation on the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). The Coalition could maintain a positive relationship if

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tribal leaders believe they are being represented and respected, and do not perceive themselves as being marginalized. Most shaykhs will not recognize the IGC for a number of reasons:

- It is not representative of tribes or the population - especially Sunnis
- It divided Iraq along religious faultlines; Iraq is complex, many tribes have both Sunni and Shia sects. Saddam brutalized Sunni and Shia alike. Some feel all Sunnis are being punished for Saddam's brutality
- It is compiled of people who did not "share the burden" of Saddam
- They do not trust it as an established Iraqi institution

(U) Iraqi Legacy of Tribal Engagement

~~(S//REL)~~ Saddam Husayn carefully manipulated the tribal system to serve his ends. Saddam constructed an elaborate patronage and coercion system to ensure compliance and loyalty. Tactics ranged from ceding property, funds, limited autonomy, employment, and positions in the government and military, to jailing or replacing recalcitrant tribal leaders or members of their families, expropriating land or other holdings, or promoting intra- or inter-tribal rivals. To manage oversight of the tribes, Saddam established a Bureau of Tribal Affairs, placing a trusted aide and bodyguard in-charge, while posting his son-in-law as the deputy.

(U) Potential Model That Would Threaten the FRL

~~(S//REL)~~ Thus far, there is no central forum for tribal shaykhs to engage a national authority to air grievances, gain resources, settle differences, or have open dialogue. Tribal relationships appear to have been given a lower priority because they are too complex and difficult for westerners to understand. Some Sunni shaykhs have displayed the willingness to cooperate with units in the field and with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), however no national level office is available for them to engage. A concerted and centralized effort, coupled with local cooperation with Coalition military and other agencies, could be effective. A Coalition engagement strategy that captured the following could impact the FRL:

- The establishment of an organizational structure that would deal directly with tribal shaykhs could influence tribal control of areas and deny support to the FRL. Such an organization could influence tribes by influencing the issuance of contracts, determining rebuilding priorities, creating jobs, and participation in new Iraqi security organizations, such as the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps.
- An office manned by regional experts, well-resourced and connected to both CPA and CJTF-4 at a high entry level, could make significant inroads into the tribal community. When a government is formed, this function could shift over to Iraqi control.
- This office could also be part of a process that recommends kinetic/non-kinetic actions as punishment for non-compliance.

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- The establishment of political advisors with staff at the division level could coordinate with the Baghdad office to ensure a synchronized plan on tribal engagement is executed.
- The office will also be useful in maintaining records and location data on each sheikh and his tribe.

(U) Effects of Tribal Engagement on FRL Operations

~~(S//REL)~~ Many Iraqis regard the US military as humane for not conducting indiscriminate killings and destruction of property, but feel US troops did not do enough to protect them after the war and are now treating civilians harshly; raids and arrests, seizing cash and remaining aloof from their concerns. They also feel the Coalition did not do enough to protect them after the war to prevent looting. The majority of Iraqis are probably neutral (not intimidated by either side) and are simply watching to see what happens next.

~~(S//REL)~~ Engagement with the sunni tribes will not prevent FRL activities, but may lessen them in some areas or make it more difficult for the FRL to operate. If Tribal shaykhs are engaged at the local and national level with a centralized office near the seat of power in Baghdad controlling and synchronizing all efforts, the FRL can be affected in a number of ways:

- Could possibly create distrust among tribes as they may not be aware of who is working with the Coalition, preventing unification against the Coalition.
- Tribes may vie for resources from the Coalition by creating an area more peaceful than a rival's.
- Make it more difficult for FRL to recruit. Shaykhs may have some success in encouraging tribesmen not to participate in anti-Coalition attacks.
- Increase risk of carrying out operations from "neutral" areas. Currently, the FRL enjoys freedom to operate without the expectation of being identified to Coalition forces by the populace.
- Limit the FRL's freedom of movement. Some tribal shaykhs may be able to control certain areas. Their cooperation will make it very difficult for FRL members to move undetected. With limited freedom of movement the FRL will also experience greater difficulties moving funds.
- Place accountability of an area on an Iraqi face. If a tribal shaykh is willing to accept responsibility and reward for ensuring peace in an area, he must also share the burden of accountability. If the shaykh does not diminish FRL operations in his area or is suspected of conducting attacks to gain payment, he loses services for his tribe and his area may be subject to intrusive Coalition operations.

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