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## BG Robin P. Swan

MNSTCI Coalition Army Advisory Training Team

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### *Abstract*

Swann commanded in Bosnia. He commanded the FIF training mission in Tazar, Hungary in 2003. The enemy is time, the Iraqis' capacity to generate force, and a complex, nontraditional collection of opposing forces. Equipping for COIN and for conventional operations is complementary. MNSTCI Command and Control is evolving. The Iraqis are very early in this fight, and success will take a lot of time. Transcription priority: medium. I think the notes are complete.

### *Background*

BG Swan arrived on 8 June 2007 and came from TRADOC. Graduated from the Military Academy, has an MMA from the School for Advanced Military Studies, and was a National Security fellow at Harvard. He commanded TF 1.4a in IFOR and SFOR. In 2003, he commanded TF 1.4a at Tazar, Hungary for the Iraqi expatriots, the Free Iraqi Fighters. His task force expected to train thousands of Iraqis from all over. In fact, European governments would not help the project, and did not allow many willing Iraqis from their countries to join us. Ultimately, we trained 56 from the US. These were invaluable, and General Petraeus used them to great effect. The Europeans just were not more forthcoming in support. DOD ended the mission in April of 2003 and the task force redeployed.

I asked if BG Swann knew anything about the FIFF, the group formed with Chalabi in early April '03 in southern Iraq. He did not know anything about them. Chalabi apparently tried to horn in on the FIF, and they wouldn't let him.

Petraeus asked Swan to take this position, and he came from TRADOC. His preparation for this assignment, he did readings and discussed the mission with predecessors: Terry Wolfe, BG Dan Bolger, and Jim Switters. When he arrived, he did 30 days of personal assessment. The task is to train, equip, and support.

### *Situation*

The Enemy situation has three components:

1) Time. The question is whether we have enough time to grow the force and meet the internal and external security requirements vis-à-vis coalition resources. The mission is to generate and replenish force. The main effort is to create an Iraqi Army. A key to this is Unit Set Fielding, where we train and equip soldiers in one place. Currently, it is 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, 14<sup>th</sup> IA Division.

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- 2) The 2nd enemy is the Iraqis capacity to generate, to form, and sustain these forces. This Iraqi Ground Force command is now going on its fourth year of existence. Think of the American Army in 1779. As the author of the Army campaign plan for Cody and Schoomaker, consider the problems we had in forming brigades over the last several years synchronizing manning, basing, equipping, and getting the leaders we needed. This challenges is compounded by being at war, taking significant casualties and having to generate capacity at the same time.
- 3) We face an untraditional enemy.

The Terrain also has three components:

- 1) The first issue is the Iraqi's fiscal capacity. The budget is growing about \$2 billion a year, but the problem is in their ability to commit the resources, identify requirements, place resources against the requirements, and then move through the contracts and resourcing.
- 2) The metaphysical planning terrain. Swan traveled to DC with the Iraqi Minister of Defense. They have an internal defense problem, but they have to prepare for external defense concerns as well. They have to plan to defend in many different domains (land, sea, air), so what kind of forces do you need [to develop, train, and sustain] to bring all of that together. [I asked about the dilemma of forming for a current COIN fight while developing future conventional capabilities.] This is not a dilemma. You organize for the fight today and plan for the fight tomorrow. It is not either/or. How it evolves is that piece of the planning terrain with the region. It depends on building long-term relationships and evolving the posture for the future.
- 3) We have, in a Clausewitzian sense, two centers of gravity. First is the Combat Training Center at Besmaya. We also have decisive points, a la Jomini. These are where we sustain quality individual and collective training. The second center of gravity is the Logistics base. We have the depot at Taiji as a hub of the National Depot System of base support units and national supporting the local. We have the log bases geographically located within divisions.

Like Napoleon said, "ask for me anything but time." My main effort is on program force generation. The implementation of unit set fielding is very significant. We are on our 3rd brigade, and we'll do four more in next several months.

***Is there a dilemma between equipping the IA for a COIN fight versus a future need for purely conventional defense capabilities?***

I don't think it is a dilemma. They're the same problem. You organize for the fight you have today. You also plan for the fight you may have tomorrow. That is not either or, they are inextricably linked. The Iraqi force that fights the COIN today will evolve into the force that fights tomorrow. What comes in to play is Iraq's relationships throughout the region to take the force they have so that it is postured for the challenges they might face tomorrow. That is the relationship of the present force to the future force.

***Mission and Execution***

The three major pieces are to assist Iraqi forces to generate forces, replenish forces, and sustain forces so that they can defeat terrorism, provide a stable environment for their

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representative government, individual freedom, free market, rule of law, can continue and over time will contribute to Iraq's internal and external security.

We are not working to overlay western, US solutions to the Iraqis. What we have to understand is that the Iraqis have had military traditions, some successes, some failures. But they have a tradition and had established practices before 2003. Just as we constantly evolve processes and procedures, so do the Iraqis. Everything we do has to be from the start in conjunction with the Iraqis, and not a force fed solution.

***How do you support Iraqi Army logistics?***

I don't, the Iraqis do. They're getting better every day, and that is through some tough efforts on the part of the Iraqis as well as on our advisors, and frankly from the support the CF gives them. Their ability to acquire parts, train mechanics, train cooks, train all the specialists required to run an Army is getting better every day. And it is important to not that several years ago, there was a conscious decision made several years ago to create Iraqi combat capability first, boots on the ground, because the coalition would have the enablers necessary to sustain that force. So the pointy end of the spear was created first, and the logistics tail only began generation capabilities next year. We're only in the 2nd year of generating logistics capability. From my perspective, they're doing well. From 1 Dec, they took over their own life support, for fuel, water, food, everything. The PM made that decision to get rid of contractors because there was a lot of corruption associated with it. We had great angst, but they accomplished the task. Their standard will increase daily.

***How does MNSTCI handle command and control?***

I was in the middle of organizing the Directorate of Defense Affairs (DDA), which did not exist until 1 Jan of this year, to bring all of the functionalities of MOD generation, replenishment, sustainment under the command of one person that is responsible to CG MNSTCI to help Iraqis develop. We understood there would not be JMD and RFF support until this summer. The advisory teams, the training teams, and the staff continue to do their jobs. It is normal to have friction during the reorganization. I think we'll have the right focus in effect this summer once the JMD begins to get filled out. Internally to CMATT, I decreased the CMATT JMD slots and the RFF, but I think we reorganized more functionally, with three directorates under me: Force Generation, Logistics, and Operations and Training. Our advisory teams are functionally organized. Two points. One: reorganization eased the CG's span of control, through the DDA, it made one subordinate organization for MoD.

***Do CF and the ISF have unity of effort?***

We can not do anything that has not been socialized with and accepted by the Iraqis.

Iraqis currently rely on FMS for acquisition. We've faced material release and transportation issues. Their ability to spend is weak, and FMS is slow. It is made slower by Iraqis crossing every t is crossed and I is dotted to make sure they are within their budget and doing it right. Those are critical issue.

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***Explain the NATO Training Mission.***

LTG Dubik is dual hatted as the CG NATO Tng Mission. It is a core group of NATO nations that are here on a very defined charter for Iraqi force development, most notably leader development, of Iraqi mid-grade and senior non-commissioned and commissioned officers. Over past 8 months, we've gained a much better relationship with NATO Training Mission - Iraq. Within their charter, they also have something with Directorate of Internal Affairs, but you'd have to ask them.

What is the relationship of MNSTCI to the MiTTs, generation of a force at Besmaya, and transfer of that force to Corps?

Once a unit comes out of force generation, the USF (Unit Set Fielding) goal, is for units to come out fully equipped, manned, led, and trained, where it is capable of beginning its fully building in partnership with. The goal is to get the unit aligned with its MiTT team while the unit is still in force generation to begin the relationships early. The MiTTs work with brigade commanders and staffs on policies and procedures. Units coming out of USF are not assigned to Corps. They are assigned to the Iraqi Ground Forces command, or whatever IA division under IGF they are supposed to go to. They fall under that Iraqi chain of command in cooperation with the Corps. And certainly any operational considerations that CG MNCI makes he does so in close cooperation with the Iraqi Joint Forces HQ Command and the Baghdad Operations Center.

***Who owns the MiTTs?***

They are under the MNC and are under the operational control of the MN divisions or MNF West commander for those IA units whose areas of operation correspond with the IA divisions.

***Who do you work with most?***

There are three groups of people that I primarily interact with.

- 1) There is not a single action by the MoD that does not affect IGF or our ability to support them, so my major contacts are with the Tactical Training Command commander, General Bashar, from the training and replenishment aspect. We have advisory teams. I do not trample their terrain. But I try to influence what BG McManus, JHQAT, and Simon Kershaw in MoDAT do for the right policies, procedures, and capabilities to be developed at higher HQ that supports the Iraqi Army in particular.
- 2) The Corps itself, my relationship with BG Yarbough, IAG CG. He is my 2nd critical relationship. He receives data from MiTTs, from IGFC. We work together on my issues, and personal relationships. We meet bi-weekly for the Iraqi Security Force Fusion Cell for the MND/ISF cell leaders to discuss challenges and solutions.
- 3) Third group is internal MNSTCI, Dubik, and everyone in the DDA (McManus, Allardice, Kershaw, etc). It is for all our maintaining SA for assisting the Iraqis and not duplicate effort. Those are my three major groupings that I influence, talk to, or that influence me.

***How do you assess risk today?***

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I'm a student of history. I was concept developer at TRADOC, and I know there is no crystal ball for looking at the future. The idea of looking at the future is to try to apply the best military judgment to what [you think] the operational environment is going to be, to be able to meet the challenges of that environment. The US Army does it, the Joint Forces do it, or there would not be a J9, which does exactly what I just described. And the time frames are awfully similar. The DOD requires us to write concepts, to experiment, to learn, to revise the concept, to experiment some more. Or, we get rid of the concept, this idea that we thought was a good idea we realize wasn't, we realize how we need to change leader development, soldier training, and what kind of equipment we need. That is after 230 years of history getting to that point. In 2008, the Iraqis are in the fourth year of their history. They lack our analytical skills and doctrinal basis. They are doing it in the midst of fighting a war. The question becomes, have they put any thought into the future, and yes they have, interestingly enough. The MoD is on public record, last week and the week before, that the Iraqis will be able to assume internal security for their country between the 1st quarter of 2009 and 2012, and they will need help with external defense through 2018-2020. They think they know what they need, enhanced survivability, mobility, education and training, enhanced bilateral and unilateral developments to meet the challenges they see tomorrow. Their shared, long borders with Iran, Turkey, Syria, . . . that is Iraq's strategic context, they do not necessarily need to be an offensive threat. The complexity of the operating environment is not going to stop. We have not seen the totality of the complexity, or the end of adaptive enemies and complex environments. Iraq merely brought all that closer in time for the US military. And we have had to make some tremendous adaptations to the security environment.

The goal is not to get it exactly right, just not to get it totally wrong.

***How do you assess Iraqi forces?***

That is the mission of the Iraqi Assistance Group, which conducts an Operational Readiness Assessment. Within MNSTCI, we do a training assessment, how they acquire things, people, train, distribute, sustain, everything they need. That is what our transition assessment. But, unit status report level, that is done my MNC.

***What else is important about this situation?***

- 1) Fighting COIN is tough.
- 2) Developing partner capacity is tough. How do you assist a sovereign nation to meet the challenges of its environment? As you think through American military's organization and training, to the degree we are now helping Iraqis do that for MoI and MoD, that is an interesting question. Now, Iraq is bigger than Foreign Internal Defense, a traditional SOF mission, so what do you do? Create MNSTCI, an ad hoc organization, which was brought together by genius and hard work. There is no organization in the US to do what we do. Should there be such an organization? It's a tough question.

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