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(b)(6)

10 January 2008

Location of Interview: MNSTCI J5, Phoenix Base, International Zone, Baghdad

by (b)(3), (b)(6)

MNFI Historian

Interviewer's Comments: (b)(6) gave me a thorough brief on MNSTCI's mission, organization, and staff structure. He discussed challenges surrounding GOI, the MOI, Iraqi police, the Iraqi Army, and foreign military sales. He also discussed his time in Basra in '04 and (b)(3), (b)(6) actions, which won (b)(3), (b)(6) the Victoria Cross.

(b)(6) is a Royal Marine.

The key to MNSTCI's mission is to Assist and Enable the ISF. There is a difference between assisting and enabling. We manage funds, and try to enable the force by building its self-support capabilities. The recent improvements in the security environment have made it possible for us to focus more on improving the ISF's training and maturity. There is the risk of this whole effort producing dependence in the Iraqis, so we are trying to move deliberately from Leading, through Partnering, and toward Overwatch.

The focus the last few years was on pushing boots on the ground. This has been at the expense of ministerial capacity and combat enablers. One example is the Iraqis' inability to spend their own money, and this links to Petraeus's frustration with the linkage of the provincial and central government's budget, and their disfunctions. They're missing the fiscal element.

Another aspect of the challenge is that GOI is torn between building immediate COIN capacity and building a steady-state military designed for external defense. By western standards, the Iraqis do not understand force generation. Regardless, they will increasingly make their own sovereign decisions. (b)(6) experience suggests the Sunni-Shia culture may not permit the functioning bureaucracy western governments rely on to smooth out decision making.

MNSTCI Organization: The CG, LTG Dubik, also heads up the NATO Training Mission. We launched a bottom-up re-organization that took effect 1 Jan 08. It provides for more focused advice, more keyed to relationships, better support, and functionality. MNSTCI has three major Transition Teams and three minor ones.

A) Defense Affairs Transition Team, under an SES two-star equivalent. This team overseas the following:

- the Ministry of Defense TT,
- the Joint Headquarters TT,
- the Coalition Army Assistance TT,

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- the Coalition Air Force TT,
 - and the MaSTT. MNCI's use of MiTTs complements this effort
- B) Defense Interior Affairs
- Coalition Police Assistance TT (CPATT)
- C) Functional Capability, which has six areas
- d) Intell TT
- e) Counterterror TT
- f) Security Assistance Office. This is a US two-star equivalent, and it is the key to the future. It is small right now, but as security develops, all the TTs will evolve, in theory shrinking and turning over more and more to the Iraqis, and finally closing down. This one will grow, however, becoming essentially the OMC (Office of Military Cooperation) between US and allies and the host nation (Iraq)
- The next reorganization is scheduled for mid-'09. The functional capability changes over time.

MNSTCI has a traditional Joint Staff. J1 handles MNSTCI personnel issues, no Iraqi issues. J2 is very small. J3 handles MNSTCI, Phoenix Base, Force Protection, RFIs, and coordination. It does not do much with Iraqis or the training mission. It is just taking care of us. The J4 does much more than J3 because it handles Iraqi material issues. J5 translates the JCP into the OPORD. We have a six-month rolling order. We sit in at MNFI, but MNCI gets more of MNFI's attention on orders. J5 also works on assessment of ministerial capability. The DCG is Brig Torri Spense, currently expected to be promoted to Maj Gen. The head of the NATO Training Mission is an Italian two-star. They handle Officer Education and have a training college at Rustamya. This mission garners greater multilateral support because it enables a number of NATO countries to contribute to the Iraq mission while avoiding association with the US, its 2003 invasion, and its subsequent policies.

MNSTCI Organization and Mission. Personnel are assigned around Iraq. CPATT is under Defense Interior Affairs. They are based on FOB Shield, and operate like the Department of Homeland Security. There are players in it now who were there then under the old regime (Saddam), and their views of the mission have hardened. It has disparate elements. It has a two-star on top of an organization that does not lend itself to military organization. The MOI has no authority over the operating centers on the ground.

The key to MOI dynamics is to understand that they are there for regime protection, not public security. It is predominantly Shia in nature. Reconciliation to the MOI is the next key. Another is reintegration of former Iraqi Army, former Iraqi police, etc. Recently, Odierno had the example of the MNCI endorsing 200 names for IP. The Baghdad Operations Center commander only agreed to 20 of the 200. The goal of the MOI organization is 430,000 police by the end of Dec '08. It has a hiring process. Everyone coming in is vetted. There are 190K CLCs. Some 120K of those want to join the ISF, but the MOI is being very rigorous and methodical in its vetting. Money comes from the Iraqi Security Force Funds.

The MNSTCI J5 web site includes the Future Iraqi Army Chart

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Coalition Army Assistance Training Team (CAATT). In '04, the IA had 33K. In '08, the goal is 240K. It lacks ISR, intel, fires. One of CAATT's great successes is the Unit Set Fielding Concept. It is a nascent capability brought together, and is hugely beneficial. Units go all together to Besmaya for five weeks. They are issued their equipment and they sign for it. They conduct familiarization and training, learn maintenance and repair, and do small unit collective training. We introduce accountability. People sign for their equipment, and have to maintain accountability. We are socializing this concept with the Iraqi Joint Headquarters. It is and has been a challenge to decentralize distribution. Right now we have the 14th Brigade from Basra going through it.

As a sign that the Iraqis should go at their own pace, we had thought it best to turn Iraqi troop life support systems (pay, dining facilities) over to the Iraqis over time, one thing at a time, giving them time to adjust. The Iraqis declined, saying they should take over all of it on 1 December. We were skeptical. They insisted. On 1 December, they took over and we stepped back. They had some problems, but they dealt with them and are getting it all on track in their own way.

Other personnel I should talk to at MNSTCI include (b)(3), (b)(6) Brigadier Swann at CAATT, Brig Alladyce at DDA & CFATT, MG Jones at MoI and CPATT, (b)(3), (b)(6) at MOFT, Rear Ad Winters regarding the Navy (b)(6) on Intell TT, and Mag Gen Smith on the Security Assistance Office. The biggest issue is building a COIN force vs. conventional military capable of confronting external threats.

I asked (b)(6) to expand on Foreign Military Sales.

The Iraqis may ask for a fires capability. They will put together a request, like for four battalions of 155 artillery. They submit this in a Letter of Request. It comes through MNSTCI and MOD, and then goes to the US. Manufacturers put together a Letter of Acceptance and costs the package. The LOA comes back to the Iraqis. The Iraqis may or may not sign the LOA. The Iraqis have no liability until they sign the LOA, and they have some room to get out of the LOA after it is signed. The Iraqis lack confidence in FMS, and they often delay signing the LOA. Right now, we have 30 LOAs waiting signatures at the MOD. Dubik had three packages (waiting signature?)

The GOI tends to sit on the LOAs a very long time and use it for other competitive bidding, such as with the Chinese and Serbs recently. The difference is between buying a product (X number of anything), and buying a capability (X number of items along with associated training, parts, maintenance, repairs, etc, which turns out to be a long-term contract--more expensive, but it underwrites long-term capability.)

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After the interview, as I reflected on Iraqi suspicion of buying the "capability" vs. buying only the equipment, I thought about Iran's experience with its F-14s. If the US security relationship changes, USG might impose sanctions on the client state. Suddenly, the former client can no longer buy parts for its very expensive equipment. It is stuck with a huge investment that wastes away unless it remains within the US security umbrella. On the other hand, if this security umbrella is underwriting a global pax Americana--even if it is criticized as "globalization" or American "hegemony"--it is stability and it does foster peaceful trade and commerce within an orderly system. It is difficult to identify countries outside the American umbrella that enjoy as much security, prosperity, and stability as those within the umbrella.

SEPARATE TOPIC:

(b)(6) was in Basra briefly from June to October 2004. He was a company commander with 40 Commando. Their mission was to be the brigade reserve, handling security sphere. There were troops in Al Amarah and Maysan, a very small force. The Royal Marines were in reserve because they were a light force, not heavily armored. 40 Commando was there from June '04 to Jan '05, during Telic 3. The theme for their operations was "softly, softly." That is less easy here. It did reflect the more limited resources of the PLC, which is a term used for the government, or Publicly Limited Company. (b)(6) was not sure what to expect when he headed to Basra. He took it on with a relatively open mind. UK forces were beginning to get a sense that CF presence was antagonizing the insurgency. Coalition bases were getting hit hard with IDF. In Maysan and Al Amarah, the mission was supposed to be CIMIC (Civil-Military Operations Center), but they were getting hit so hard that they could not get out of the CIMIC. (b)(3), (b)(6) won the Victoria Cross for his actions. It apparently was the first (or second?) awarded since the Second World War, and one of the very few not to have been awarded posthumously. He was a Warrior driver. He went into harms way in Al Amarah repeatedly, under fire, to withdraw troops. He kept taking hits, was wounded, his crew was wounded, and he still had the presence of mind to maneuver through numerous obstacles to get the troops back to safety. He made multiple trips. And he survived. He was from Jamaica, with the Prince William RR.

Progress was being made. Was it a result of our presence, or despite our presence? (b)(6) son was a rifleman in Basra in '04. He came back in '07 and said it had changed completely--for the worse--in terms of violence.

The Shia south is frustrated that the Shia GOI seems incapable of helping them. It is not a military issue. If USG is in it for the long-haul, how much are the political, economic, and diplomatic LOOs . . .

I did not finish my notes. It will be necessary to listen to the recording to capture whatever the last points were.