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KADEK / PKK Terrain and Regional Dynamics Along the Iraq – Turkey Border

The mountainous terrain near the Iraqi-Turkey border is a No Man's Land inhabited and used as a transit point by Kurdish villagers, PKK militants, migrants, refugees, and smugglers. Avarice coupled with corruption or lack of authority creates porous borders and an environment ripe for terrorist, drug, and weapons trafficking and exploitation of the Iraqi civilians in the region. Those problems and a lack of dedicated resources and training for the Iraqi Border Police and local infrastructure foster the potential for long-term instability in the region that will eventually affect other areas of Iraq.

Below are recorded observations from a terrain walk in the region between 18-24 November 2003 and general assessments from elements that operated in the area for at least the past six months including the XVIII Corps LRS C, Turkish Special Forces, and Iraqi Border Police.

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ KADEK / PKK Activities and Possible Objectives in Northern Iraq

A. Background on KADEK / PKK Presence in Northern Iraq

(U) The PKK first came to Northern Iraq in force during Kurdish refugee movements from Turkey to Iraq between 1988-1991 and, over time, established a base of operations in the mountainous terrain. Turkey requested and received Iraqi Regime approval to conduct operations against the PKK in Iraq in 1998 and, at the time, allied themselves with the KDP since the KDP Peshmerga had knowledge of the terrain and PKK locations. KDP cooperation with the Turks prompted the PKK to attack Kurdish villages in KDP-controlled areas, and the KDP eventually reached a compromise with the PKK: the KDP would continue ostensible cooperation with the Turkish military but would provide PKK military elements with advance warning of Turkish presence and intelligence. After Operation Iraqi Freedom, Turkish forces were no longer authorized to conduct their annual campaigns against PKK in Northern Iraq and the PKK continues to use Iraq and routes through Iraq to collect weapons and personnel for continuing their insurgency in Southeast Turkey. Since the PKK ended its unilateral ceasefire on 1 September 2003, the conflict in between the Turkish military and PKK in Turkey has been gradually escalating with the PKK maintaining a support base in Northern Iraq.

B. Assessed PKK Locations and Movement

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The PKK has 4,000-5,000 militants in Northern Iraq at any one given time, most of whom relocated their families to the region as well. These militants occupy a "No Man's Land" between the Turkish Border and where the new Iraqi Border Police (IBP) initiated its operations. Within that zone, the PKK maintains freedom of movement for personnel, equipment, and supplies, operates "customs" checkpoints to obtain revenue, and controls or influences villages in the region. The PKK continues its hegemony of the area for two primary reasons: coalition forces are not prepared to engage them militarily and cannot otherwise curtail their activities, and the KDP and PKK in the area are reluctant to engage one and other.

2) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ From what we observed, PKK personnel, in addition to manning outposts along select ridgelines, is infiltrating additional villages in ones and twos. Many of the villagers

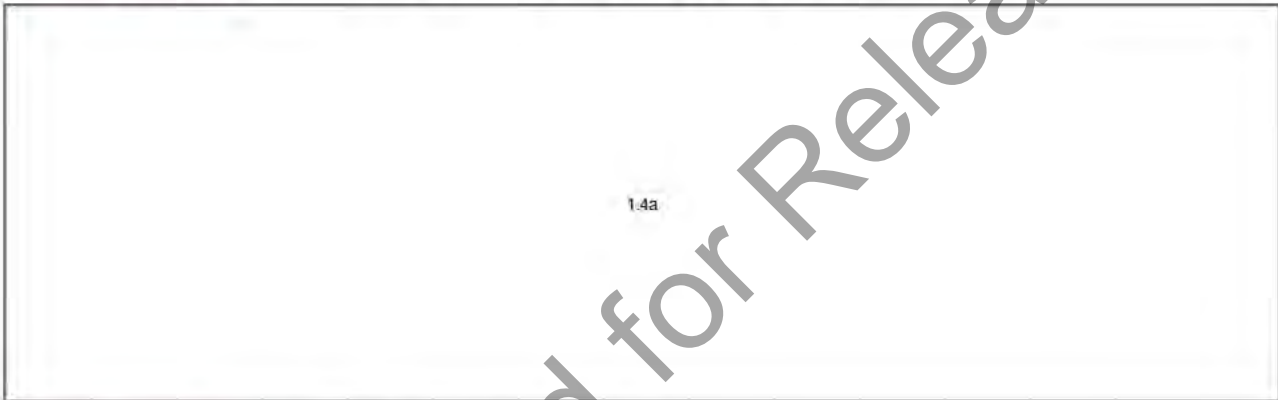
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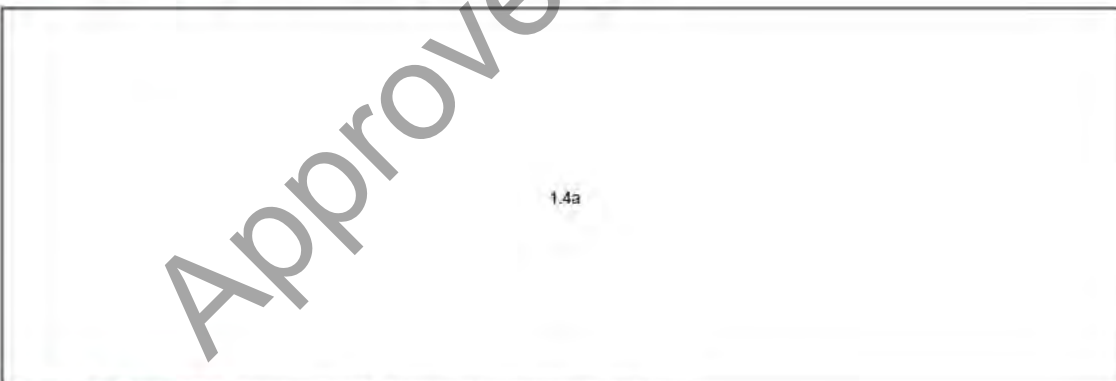
are intimidated by PKK personnel and, according to LRSC team leaders, often refuse to discuss the topic or find means of avoiding it. PKK allegedly harasses the villagers and forces them to give up food and other supplies (occasionally money). PKK also recruits in the smaller villages – they divide the men and women and give them separate recruiting pitches at local mosques and places of gathering. Recent contacts and intelligence indicate PKK is encroaching on the territory where the IBP operates and is maintaining a presence farther down in the valleys to the tune of 2-3km more than when LRSC first arrived in April-May 2003.

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Listed below are known and possible PKK locations, occupied, villages, and movement routes based on LRSC observations in the area since May 2003, reporting from the Turkish Special Forces, and information from the Iraqi Border Police and Peshmerga who live in the region:

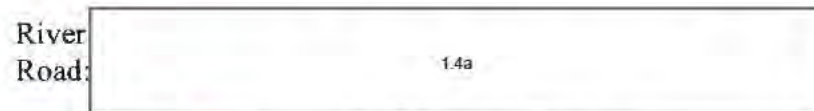
~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ PKK Assessed Current Limit of Advance (LOA) in AO North:



~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Assessed PKK occupied ridgelines:



~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Some PKK lines of communication:



~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Assessed PKK Crossing Points:

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1.4a

3) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) Possible PKK controlled villages, camps, and headquarters:

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C. Overview of PKK Capabilities and Indicators

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The PKK typically move and operate in groups of 6-10 and are hardened to the mountainous terrain they inhabit. LRSC, Turkish Special Forces, and IBP reported that most PKK personnel travel out of and through the mountain valleys on foot, and they are capable of and have the stamina to travel long distances through the mountains without vehicles. During the winter, the PKK usually leaves small contingents to guard its mountain outposts, caches, and checkpoints while the bulk of the fighters return to the valleys. In addition, the terrain PKK inhabits is littered with caves, abandoned or destroyed villages from Saddam Hussein's Anfal campaign, and narrow, restrictive valleys that the PKK uses to shelter people and equipment. We noted that the PKK and local elements loyal to it fire warning shots when US forces and IBP are entering or departing a suspect smuggling or movement route, illustrating the penetration of PKK in the region.

2) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) Although it is not easy to differentiate between Peshmerga and PKK personnel, there are some distinct, hallmark signs of a PKK uniform. PKK typically wear OD green or brown uniforms with a 15-20 foot long blue or bluish waist sash that may be covered with an LCE-like web belt. KDP Peshmerga normally have their waist sash in a interlocking design in the center to show a tribal affiliation whereas PKK simply wrap the sash around their waist several times and tuck the ends in the back. Many PKK members wear a fishing-style vest and Mekap-style shoes and hiking boots. Unlike the Peshmerga, PKK will blouse or taper their



(PKK Personnel with web belts)



(PKK Personnel with vests/boots)

pan legs, often stuffing the end of the pant into their socks. Whereas most Peshmerga are clean-shaven and wear headscarves, many PKK have beards and wear nothing on their heads. The PKK militia is also approximately 20% female, and PKK women, some of whom have leadership positions, wear the same uniform as PKK men. One of the key indicators IBP use to identify PKK is dialect – most local Kurd villagers use a different dialect of Kurdish than the PKK, which uses the Kurdish dialect from Turkey.

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3) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) PKK in Northern Iraq are equipped with AK-47s, PKCs, BKM's, RPGs, M-16A1s, AR-15s, 60-120mm mortars, Dshks, grenades, AT / AP mines, MANPADS (SA-7 primarily), SVD sniper rifles, and other small arms. They normally carry as many as a dozen grenades strapped to their waist sash/web belt and have several small arms magazines stuffed inside of the sash. Although the PKK move primarily on foot, they will use horses, mules, Hino trucks, and pickup trucks for movement in less restrictive terrain. Their primary means of communication between outposts are Yaseau, RACAL, and Motorola radios, but recent intelligence indicates the PKK, its leaders in particular, are using satellite phones as well. We currently do not know the type or types of satellite phones, however.

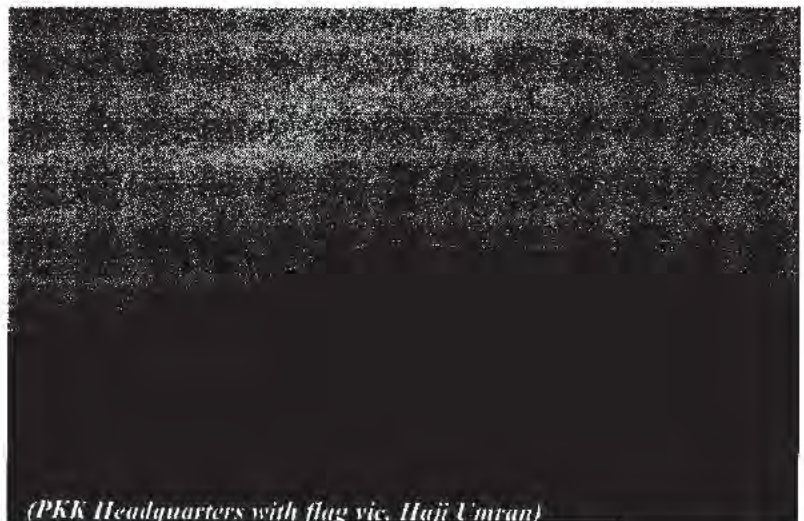
4) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) According to Turkish Special Forces, it is easier to locate PKK camps in the summer than the winter when most return to the higher elevations. Some PKK camps will have game courts (volleyball, etc.) that are easy to see from the air. During the winter, PKK will also camp in white nylon tents and cover their equipment and huts with plastic. The PKK is well aware of aerial reconnaissance, however, and will use the terrain to mask their winter and summer camps. The PKK normally cover their tents and cave entrances with trees and brush to provide concealment. Turkish SF and US ground forces agree that thermal imaging may be the best means of finding isolated PKK camps and caves since the PKK uses fires during the winter months. Recent reporting indicates several large unexplained explosions in PKK occupied areas. Turkish Special Forces and some local villagers believe the PKK is enlarging small caves in their areas in order to move from known cave complexes.



(PKK Encampment in Winter)

D. PKK, Smuggling, and Recent Encounters with IBP / US Patrols

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The PKK participates in smuggling operations throughout the region. Not only do they travel to and from Turkey and Iran with comparative ease, they also occupy enough areas near smuggling routes on the Iraqi border to control entry in those areas. Depending on location, the PKK charge between 20-100 USD for non-PKK smugglers to enter the border, and take a certain percentage of goods smugglers bring across as a "customs tax." Additionally, several villagers reportedly were forced to conduct resupply for PKK encampments. These villagers indicated the PKK now has several villagers in each village they can trust to give supply list and money to for this purpose.



(PKK Headquarters with flag vic. Haji Umran)

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Since the PKK does control these areas, they can also transfer their own personnel, weapons and materials across borders along those routes despite the efforts of the Turkish Gendarmerie along the Turkish border, Iranian border guards, and the newly formed IBP. This capability threatens a safe and secure environment in Iraq for a number of reasons, one of which is that foreign terrorists and facilitators may be allowed through PKK smuggling routes into and out of Iraq for the right price.

a) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) There are PKK outposts on either side of Hajji Umran, which is a major movement area for the PKK. One outpost is located at the gateway to the Qandil mountain range at [1.4a] and the other is located on the opposite ridgeline vicinity [1.4a]. The second OP is located just above the KDP / IBP castle. IBP personnel at that location reported that at least three vehicles from Iran arrived at the PKK outpost the previous day. It is likely that [1.4b] provides some material and financial support to PKK, particularly in light of prospective hostilities between PKK and the US. From that second vantage point, PKK has overwatch capability for the entire valley, including the two IBP outposts.

b) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The customs police at Haji Umran made a vague comment about PKK and Ansar al Islam (AI) personnel working together, though he could provide little information as to the nature of the relationship. Their goals and ideology are inherently different, and it is unlikely the two are actually working together towards a common purpose. What we do assess, however, is that AI personnel traveling from Iran to Iraq pay PKK outposts and guards for safe passage into the country, as would be true for any human smugglers operating out of Iran.

2) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The IBP is currently does not have the proper authorization or equipment to engage the PKK smuggling control points, and some of these weaknesses were highlighted during an ambush near Batufa on 8 November 2003 in which the IBP sustained 13-14 wounded and 1 KIA. Since that time, [1.4b, 1.4c] reported that the PKK leadership ordered its elements to fortify its defensive positions and avoid contact with US forces.

a) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) A joint IBP / US patrol recently stopped a truck containing PKK personnel armed with AK-47s and grenades heading into Iraq from Iran at a key intersection near [1.4a]. The patrol set up a TCP early in the evening at that intersection and almost immediately stopped a truckload of 21 personnel, who, with some pressure on their female leader, admitted PKK membership. The patrol seized approximately 8 weapons, but did not notice grenades and other materials the personnel until after they were released. The LRS team leader assessed that the LRSC contingent was outgunned and the IBP element was unprepared and suspected that there was a PKK QRF less than 1,000 meters away. As a result, he determined the best course of action was to tell PKK personnel to turn around to avoid provoking an incident that could possibly involve the death of US and IBP soldiers. This incident highlights how confident the PKK is about its capability to move through Northern Iraq. These types of encounters will become more common as the IBP / US exerts pressure or attempts to restrict the movement of PKK in the region.

b) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) On 21 November 2003, another joint US / IBP patrol was traveling through the Metina-Zap region in the Belinda valley seeking PKK smuggling routes. The patrol

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encountered a probable PKK scout carrying an SVD sniper rifle vicinity [redacted] 1.4a. The man, who identified himself as [redacted] (b)(6) had a beard and brown headscarf and clearly understood at least some English. When questioned about his occupation, the individual rolled his eyes at the suggestion of being a Peshmerga and immediately said "PKK." After initially denying the presence of PKK in the area, [redacted] (b)(6) offered to take the joint patrol to the nearest intersection (approximately 25 meters away) to speak with PKK personnel. The IBP translator remarked that [redacted] (b)(6) hinted there were at least 30 armed PKK personnel vicinity that location. The patrol leader (LRSC team leader) declined the offer and said that he would simply turn around at the intersection. [redacted] (b)(6) protested against this by saying the patrol would surely be shot, so the team leader decided to turn around. At that time, the patrol observed another individual armed with an AK-47 moving towards the patrol from just beyond the intersection and heard shots fired as they departed the area. Encounters such as these between the US / IBP and PKK elements are becoming more frequent and highlight the ubiquitous and increasingly hostile PKK presence in Northern Iraq.

E. Local Perceptions of PKK

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) Although initially popular in the region as a Kurdish nationalist movement, the PKK lost much of its support in Northern Iraq when it began attacking Iraqi Kurd civilians. Moreover, the smugglers see the PKK as another obstacle to their business. When asked how much he was taxed by the PKK for smuggling, a smuggler named [redacted] (b)(6) explained that he was with two other people who actually owned the merchandise (sheep in this case) and the PKK took two or three sheep as its "customs tax." When questioned about his honest opinion of PKK, [redacted] (b)(6) replied that he would be very happy if the PKK was gone because they harass the villagers in the area and make traveling for smugglers difficult and expensive. He claimed that most of the villagers would also be glad to see the PKK leave the region so they could continue in a normal life. His report is consistent with other complaints the LRSC / IBP received from villagers about the PKK.

2) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) In speaking with the local villagers and IBP in Sidakan, Barzan and other areas, LRSC determined that the fear and expectations of PKK in the region are almost of mythic proportion. Some of the likely myths include (but are not limited to) the following:

- PKK hide inside of cows and conduct surveillance from there
- PKK pose as shepherds to conduct surveillance on villagers (note: this is probably not too far from the truth as we observed several shepherds observing us, and the KDP personnel in the vicinity agree and are also being observed in this manner)
- PKK kill sheep, skin them, and wear the skins to blend into herds
- PKK can jump from bush to bush without being seen
- PKK can make fire without smoke

Most of the villagers do agree that PKK "taxes" villages, smugglers, and shepherds by setting up checkpoints and taking 1-2 sheep, stealing livestock and materials at night, intimidating the villagers and forcing them to pay "taxes" in goods and livestock, and the previously discussed recruiting in the more remote villages.

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F. Assessment

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ We assess that the PKK is now wary of US forces since it entertains little hope the US will try to resolve the issue through diplomacy, but will not attack US forces unless the US forces attack first, detain PKK fighters, or they are accompanied by Turkish forces. According to a LRS source, PKK claims that the incident was actually carried out by Turkish SF dressed as PKK. While this is not true, it does suggest that PKK did not intend to provoke the incident and almost certainly did not know US soldiers were with what they discerned to be a KDP convoy (since most are unfamiliar with IPB). Regardless, the PKK is a hostile element in a potentially volatile region and its smuggling and insurgent activities are interim and long-term destabilizing factors in Northern Iraq.

2) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Regional Terrain Observations and Issues

A. Observations in Haji Umran

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~

Haji Umran is an authorized border and customs crossing point between Iran and Iraq vicinity 1.4a

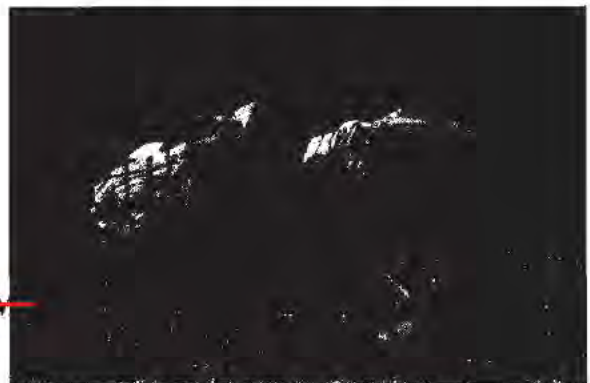
It is flanked by mountain ranges that are crisscrossed with trails used for smuggling. Smugglers charged separately by the Iranian border guards, PKK, warlords, KDP personnel working for customs, and KDP Asaj along these routes heading into Iraq. The Iranians allegedly charge 40

dinar for passage, the PKK charges 40 dinar, and the local warlord and KDP charge between 20-60 dinar for smuggling personnel and materials. Smugglers and illegal travelers, terrorists, and the like literally have multiple routes at their disposal with which to cross around the customs point at Haji Umran as long as they are willing and able to pay the appropriate fees along the way.

a) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The smuggling taking place along the trails is conducted primarily on foot or with donkeys, horses, and mules, as the terrain is



(Smuggling trails near customs point at Haji Umran)



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too restrictive in most places for vehicular traffic. The terrain is very challenging, and any participants in smuggling or other movement through the region are probably toughened to the terrain. There is a capability for vehicular traffic to pass near the tops of both ridgelines and on one side of the customs point.

b) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The Iranians recently started shooting some of the smugglers and their horses as they attempted to cross from one side or another. Reasons for this are unclear at present.

2) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Between the blatant smuggling operations less than 1000 meters away from the customs point, corrupt and unprofessional customs police, and porous, ill-controlled entry points, Haji Umran is little more than a crossing point and payment area for smugglers, terrorists, and anyone else that wanted to enter Iraq. In a previous operation, LRSC personnel in conjunction with the IBP detained over 500 people entering Iraq from Iran without the proper paperwork in a three-day period. In the absence of a professional customs police or adult supervision capable of regulating entry into Iraq, human, weapons, and commercial smuggling at Haji Umran will continue uninhibited. *In addition, we assess that Haji Umran is almost certainly a gateway for Islamic terrorists to enter Iraq from Iran --- here and at other locations, the terrorists cross into Iraq with impunity.*



(Customs Point at Haji Umran; note holes in fence)

B. Observations vicinity Sidakan

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The roads out to the Haji Umran and northwest of Diyanah are not great by any standards and would be extremely difficult to traverse in the winter. The road out to

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Sidakan, however, was by far the worst we traversed in the course of our visit. Potholes coupled with narrow roads and steep inclines made the trip hazardous and slow. Even with the best of vehicles, getting to the IBP OPs enroute would be challenging, and the poor road conditions inhibit the ability of US and IBP forces to move between points efficiently. The road conditions, which will only get worse with winter, also prohibit the use of timely ground QRF's from OP to OP, make movement of troops difficult, etc. In addition, if the US does decide to engage PKK lethally, the roads will have to be improved to facilitate military operations, particularly movement of personnel and supplies.



(Looking out from Sidakan Castle)

C. Observations vicinity Barzan

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The town of Barzan is the ancestral home of the KDP ruling Barzani clan, and the military base is located above the town on the crest of a hill. LRSC and IBP personnel assess that much of the PKK movement activity occurs in or around the Barzan area and is sanctioned by KDP checkpoints and militia.

a) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) There are two key crossing points on the river near Barzan. The crossing point located vicinity 1.4a is vehicle and foot capable and is located near the village of Khurman. There is a crossing point, which is little more than a ford, located vicinity 1.4a near the villages of Kaklah and Kherazok. This ford also crosses the Iraq – Turkey border and is a suspect movement route for PKK personnel.

b) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) Farther west there are two additional crossings in KDP controlled territory at 1.4a. While the area is controlled by the KDP and the checkpoints at the crossings are KDP, we suspect that PKK personnel moving through the area use these crossing points with KDP permission.

c) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) There are three PKK-controlled villages to the northwest of Barzan: Khani Batika 1.4a, Edelbi 1.4a, and Hupa 1.4a. Of these, Hupa is the primary transit point for PKK personnel, and locals remark that all of the Turkish

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goods can be purchased in that town. To the northeast of Barzan are the twin villages of Zatze (located in Iraq) and Ratze (located in Turkey), which straddle the border vicinity

1.4a

This is also reportedly a major infiltration area for PKK personnel moving in and out of Northern Iraq.

D. Observations in the Kani Masi Region

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Metina-Zap Region. Charlie Company of the IBP and the second platoon of the LRSC control this region. We first explored the Belinda valley, which is located between the two PKK-controlled ridgelines discussed at the opening portion of this report.

a) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The IBP and US conducted joint patrols along a road between a KDP checkpoint at the entrance to the valley and 1.4a Along the route we observed many destroyed villages and many civilians trafficking the road for fishing and hunting. After the patrol crossed near a recently damaged bridge, the civilians we encountered became slightly more hostile and wary of US forces. In subsequent area patrols near the main highway, we encountered smugglers and villagers who also carried weapons, and, on one patrol at night, hear probable warning shots fired alerting elements in the area to the patrol's presence. Every civilian vehicle or lone civilian carried a weapon they claimed was for wild animals, but IBP from the area confirmed there are no wild animals indigenous to the area. We assess that the smugglers and villagers carried the weapons for protection from criminal and PKK elements in the region.

2) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Gara Region. We first met with Turkish Special Forces who identified possible PKK-controlled villages and areas in the Gara Region. What we discovered, however, was that most of the villages they assessed as occupied by the KDP on the northern side of the Gara ridgeline were abandoned, and those that weren't hadn't had much contact with the PKK in the past four months. Moreover, none of the villagers or civilians we encountered on the roads carried weapons, suggesting that they felt comparatively safe. We assess the PKK, therefore, is probably on the southern side of the Gara ridge. Coordinates for villages and suspected movement routes are located in the opening portion of this report.

E. Presence of the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO)

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ While traveling in the Diyanah and Sidakan areas, we observed several IIRO mosques and offices in the villages near the roads. IIRO is a tier 1 or 2 counter-terrorism NGO, and it is possible that these offices and mosques provide safe haven and support infrastructure for AI and other Kurdish Islamic Extremist movements in the region. According to LRSC, these extremist could be traversing the same routes used and manned by the PKK, and PKK fees for allowing extremists to use routes they control is not prohibitive. One of the interpreters from the area believed that IIRO came to the area in 1992 and started building lots of mosques. Sometime in 1994, the KDP allegedly asked IIRO to stop building mosques and to build more hospitals and schools if IIRO truly wanted to conduct charitable activities. At that point, IIRO stopped building mosques. Mosque building is actually typical of IIRO, which uses the mosques to proselytize Wahhabi Islam, recruit youth, and provide charity in return for conversion to Wahhabist principles. Although it is likely IIRO no longer commands a presence in the region,

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we recommend investigating the IIRO mosques to determine the nature of the current activities there.

3) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The KDP: Part of the Problem Rather than the Solution

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The KDP is the dominant political terrain feature of the region of Northern Iraq the PKK inhabits. Not only is the bulk of the area's money and capital controlled by the KDP, but the electricity, water, and government / law enforcement to a certain extent are also within the KDP's "jurisdiction" despite the fact the KDP is not a recognized, legitimate governing body. Rather than using this power for good of Iraq, the KDP chooses to continue its revenue-earning traditions of smuggling, bribery, and intimidation to further its own interests to the detriment of the Iraqi civilians and the establishment of a safe and secure environment in Northern Iraq.

A. Probable KDP / PKK Cooperation

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Probably the most notable problem with the KDP in the area is its tolerance of and possible cooperation with the PKK terrorist organization regardless of Coalition and Iraqi Governing Council directives. As previously discussed the KDP cooperated with the Turkish military post 1998 to locate PKK outposts and personnel. In response, the PKK attacked KDP-controlled villages, Peshmerga, and civilians. In order to stop the attacks, the KDP agreed to give the PKK warning and intelligence of Turkish forces in the area, thus creating an unofficial alliance between the two organizations. That relationship continues in a different form today. Both LRSC and IBP reporting strongly indicate that there is currently a tacit understanding between the KDP and PKK to permit operations in regions they control for political and business purposes. For example:

a) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ KDP Peshmerga know the location of PKK checkpoints and the regions PKK occupies, but refuse to take coalition forces or the IBP to those areas. While visiting different border areas with joint US / IBP patrols, we frequently observed KDP Peshmerga and Asaj checkpoints located within 1000 meters of the nearest PKK checkpoint, headquarters, or PKK-controlled villages. Both US forces and the IBP assess that these checkpoints are used to exact fees for revenue from civilians and smugglers traveling through the region. The smugglers we spoke with corroborated our assessment and claimed they were tired of getting charged by both the PKK and the KDP when they conducted cross-border travel.

b) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ When we questioned a local tribal leader about the whereabouts of PKK, he told us to call President Barzani to get the correct information.

c) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ After passing through a KDP checkpoint, we asked one of the former Peshmerga for the location of the nearest PKK area, and he remarked that he, some KDP Peshmerga, and the PKK had just finished playing volleyball together a short distance down the road.

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B. Failure to Recognize Coalition / Iraqi Border Police Authority and Reluctance of the Latter to Assert It

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) As we visited different IBP castles and points of entry, we observed many KDP flags and Kurdistan flags flying at KDP checkpoints and various building in spite of President Barzani's assurances that these flags would be removed. Moreover, the personnel we spoke with at US / IBP TCPs, smugglers, and civilians made comments suggesting that the KDP was the ultimate authority in the area and seemed unaware of or in disbelief that the coalition forces and Iraqi Border Police had authority over KDP officials. After seizing a vehicle that was clearly stolen from one of the UN compounds, we discovered that the "owner" was aide to General Babakir Zebari, head of the KDP Peshmerga. The IBP personnel who were with us were shocked and amazed that we dared seize a vehicle from the KDP leadership, and we had to emphasize to them that the IBP authority rests with the Iraqi Government, which is not subordinate to the KDP. The joint patrols did not have problems with vehicles they seized from non-KDP civilians; these civilians readily admitted that they knew they had purchased stolen vehicles.

a) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) As the IBP patrol was inspecting the vehicle registration, they questioned the owner about where he obtained the paperwork. The owner replied that he got it from the government in Dahuk (NFI) and that Kurdistan is still an autonomous state. After the patrol seized the KDP vehicle, General Babakir's nephew visited the IBP compound at Qatash to get the vehicle back. In the course of his visit, he threatened IBP / US personnel by saying "you don't know who you are dealing with" and hinting that the KDP is the real authority in the area. When he was read the proclamation, he became irate and claimed that the KDP had no advance knowledge of IBP intent to seize vehicles and, had the KDP known about this intent, the vehicles in question would have been "burned before they would be turned over." We are, therefore, concerned that, once US forces depart, the IBP will not be in a position to exert its rightful authority if the KDP is not marginalized somehow.

b) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) Vehicle seizure also highlighted another problem – license plates. The KDP "government" in Dahuk or some other agency is issuing unauthorized license plates and vehicle registration for the stolen vehicles the KDP is either "appropriating" or selling to unsuspecting civilians. The KDP or an entity that works for it is also issuing unauthorized seizure cards outlining that, if the vehicle is not claimed in a six-month period, the owner may keep the vehicle. These cards and the license plate issue illustrate how the KDP is still exerting authority in the area to further its own purposes sans input or permission from the Iraqi governing authority or coalition forces.

c) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) We identified two main types of vehicles that were stolen after April 9th or after the UN departed the country: URAL trucks that previously belonged to the Iraqi military and Nissan Patrols appropriated from both the Iraqi Government and UN. Owners paid approximately 1400 USD for the URAL trucks, and around 4500 USD for the Nissans. As we traveled through KDP area we observed at least 10-15 URALS at the KDP military headquarters in Barzan, dozens of URALS traversing the roads, and about the same number of Nissans traveling. When we asked Zebari's aide about where he obtained his Nissan, he remarked that there are over 500 of these vehicles in a KDP compound at Sicrin near Dahuk.

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d) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ US forces previously requested that the KDP provide some vehicles for the IBP to use. In response, the KDP provided four unserviceable vehicles knowing full well they had plenty of stolen Iraqi Government and UN vehicles at their disposal.

e) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ A joint IBP / US patrol discovered an Iraqi military URAL in a KDP Asaj parking lot in Diyanah. They approached the owner and asked about the vehicle's origin. In response, the owner said he would bring the paperwork the next day and remarked that the vehicle could not be moved because it was missing a battery and alternator. When the patrol returned later in the day to claim the vehicle, it and its owner had disappeared.

f) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Comments from the IBP and KDP personnel combined with the blatant smuggling and corruption ongoing at Haji Umran (see previous section) led us to believe that, had we notified the KDP in advance of our intent to seize the vehicles or requested their assistance in the matter, the KDP and the new vehicle "owners" would have smuggled them out of the country and sold them, sold them to ignorant civilians who didn't know any better, or destroyed the vehicles and sold them for scrap before they would be turned over to the IBP and Iraqi government for use.

C. KDP Active Participation in Smuggling and the Consequences

1) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Smugglers at Haji Umran are charged separately by, PKK, warlords, KDP, and / or KDP Asaj along smuggling routes heading into Iraq. The KDP elements charge between 20-60 dinar for smuggling personnel and materials. Smugglers and illegal travelers, terrorists, and the like literally have multiple routes at their disposal with which to cross around the customs point at Hajji Umran as long as they are willing and able to pay the appropriate fees along the way.



a) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Farther west there are two additional crossings in KDP controlled territory at 1.4a and 1.4a. While the area is controlled by the KDP and the checkpoints at the crossings are KDP, we suspect that PKK personnel moving through the area use these crossing points with KDP permission.

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b) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) The customs center in Haji Umran, which is manned with KDP personnel, is poorly managed, and the guards put on a special show of inspecting a vehicle for the US forces that came to observe their procedures. The driver of the vehicle appeared to be irate, and our interpreter discerned he was complaining about having his vehicle inspected for the first time in nine years of transporting materials to Iraq. From what we observed, the KDP customs police do very little to restrict the passage of vehicles and personnel through the customs point, do not inspect vehicles and personnel using the customs point to cross, and are not authorized to challenge passage of vehicles and personnel around the customs point – they claimed that the KDP Asaj is responsible for all crossings that do not occur through the customs station. Although the customs police claim they do not charge a customs fee, they could offer no explanation why smugglers were moving around, rather than through, the customs point. We observed (see below picture) the Asaj releasing horse / pack-mule train from the Asaj station and



(19 November 2003 photo of horse train after release from KDP Asaj Checkpoint)

watched as the horses moved towards smuggling routes 500m from the customs point bordering PKK-controlled territory.

D. KDP Refusal to Provide Economic or Material Assistance

1) (~~S//REL MCFI~~) In our discussions with the acting mayor of Sidakan, we asked him about using his local budget to contract for road repair, and he responded that he had no money in his budget. He requested funds from US forces to repair the roads. We recommended asking for KDP support (specifically from President Barzani's personal treasury) to fund improvements for the roads...a suggestion that was met with extreme discomfort on all sides. It seems to be common knowledge that the Barzani clan is taking some of the funds allocated for the IBP, Peshmerga, and projects in the region, so not all of the money donated to the province is being

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used for its intended purpose. An audit of KDP spending in the three KAZ provinces may be in order. Intelligence and comments from the KDP Secretary of Defense suggest that Barzani himself has over two billion USD in personal assets, much of which was obtained from the Iraqi Regime, smuggling operations, and scalping UN and US financial assistance.

2) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Despite requests for additional ammunition and weapons for the IBP, the KDP maintains it does not have the weapons to spare. However, LRSC and IBP personnel identified several KDP ammunition storage depots in their areas, the contents of which were taken from the Iraqi Military on or about 9 April 2003.



New (KDP Ammunition Storage Depot)

4) ~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Conclusions

A. Possible Engagement of PKK

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ Should coalition forces decide to address the PKK in Northern Iraq lethally, they will require at least a Division (-) element with specific capabilities as well as an extensive Information Operations campaign. The PKK are very familiar with and used to the terrain, have hundreds and perhaps thousands of caches, survivability positions, and outposts, and their use of the terrain for hiding will make it very hard for the coalition to seek out and destroy the PKK. Villagers and former Peshmerga, however, do have knowledge of the PKK locations and patterns and would probably be willing to assist coalition forces with any operations as long as they were assured their families would be safe from reprisal attacks. Elimination of the PKK, however, is only the first step in securing the border region: the IBP must be adequately trained, equipped, and manned in order to assume responsibility for the border regions by the time any conflict with the PKK would end.

B. Status and Capabilities of the Iraqi Border Police

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The Iraqi Border Police, although improving daily under the supervision of US forces, are not yet ready to operate on their own without coalition oversight. They lack continuous training and a professional leadership corps, and they are vulnerable to corruption and dissolution by the KDP and customary practices of bribery, smuggling, and placing local loyalties above duty. In addition, the IBP lacks adequate vehicles, personnel, and equipment to conduct its mission, not to mention that harsh road conditions make travel between IBP areas difficult and hazardous, particularly during winter. If these problems continue, the IBP will be equally incapable of effectively manning and patrolling the border after the PKK is removed from the region.

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C. General Observations

~~(S//REL MCFI)~~ The region between the Iraq and Turkey borders is a land fraught with harsh, restrictive, terrain, militants from recognized terrorist group using the area as a base of operations, corrupt politicians and leaders, and human, weapons, and commercial smuggling. With improvements in local social and economic infrastructure, transition of the PKK out of the region, and the professionalism of the IBP, this area will gradually stabilize, though historical practices we deem as corrupt will likely continue. In the absence of a concerted effort to make the necessary changes, however, the practices in the area will continue to have a destabilizing influence locally and on the rest of Iraq.

5) (U) Sources and Authors

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~~SECRET // REL MCFI~~

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