

Military Police Efforts in PTT Operations

By Major Jon Myers

In my most recent assignment as a military police battalion operations and training officer (S-3) with the Multinational Division–North (MND-N), I was routinely involved in visualizing and strategizing the teaching, coaching, and mentoring of more than 82,000 Iraqi police in four northern provinces of Iraq (Diyala, Salah ad-Dinh, Kirkuk, and Ninewa). These efforts were conducted in direct support of a division headquarters and four brigade combat teams (BCTs). I also worked with the Iraqi Police Service (IPS) from 2003 to 2005, so I have witnessed the efforts of Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq and Multinational Corps–Iraq agencies and units in improving the IPS over time. Based on my experiences, which were confined to the operational environments (OEs) of MND-N and North Babil Province (before the Multinational Division–Baghdad expansion), I have identified three key issues regarding the ability of police transition teams (PTTs) to shape the development of the IPS as a rule-of-law (ROL) organization. These issues, which are not all-inclusive and do not reflect conditions in Baghdad, are as follows:

- The U.S. Department of State (DOS) contribution in the form of quality international police advisors (IPAs) who have managerial skills and experience needs considerable improvement.
- The tendency to cast responsibility for IPS development almost exclusively on military police units leads to confusion and coordination issues.
- Commanders at all levels must set realistic IPS goals that are within the capabilities and cultural norms of the IPS.

Key Players

The DOS in Iraq is charged with supplementing the efforts of the Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq in the training, equipping, and operational mentoring of Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI) units (including the IPS, border police, and national police) and other MoI law enforcement enablers (such as canine, explosive ordnance disposal, and traffic police personnel). However, it is the IPS that will ultimately establish the nation’s ROL after Ministry of Defense military units complete the “clear and hold” portions of the many ongoing security operations in the country.

Initially, DOS-contracted IPAs were managed under two different contracts. DynCorp International handled IPAs who were tasked with the operational mentoring of the IPS in stations, districts, and provincial headquarters (active IPS forces); and Military Professional Resources, Incorporated (MPRI), handled IPA trainers who were responsible for the establishment, operation, and mentoring of Iraqi police instructors within various provincial and MoI-sponsored, initial-entry and specialized police training academies. The Multinational Corps–Iraq contribution consisted of military police companies, battalions, and brigades that executed the PTT mission in various capacities throughout the different OEs in Iraq. A typical MND-N PTT was comprised of a twelve- to fourteen-member military police squad, supplemented by one or two IPAs and one or two local national interpreters. The MND-N PTT was usually tasked to operate at two to six Iraqi police stations. Team members also conducted some district headquarters level mentoring, depending on the OE and PTT forces available.

In each MND-N BCT, there were two to four military police companies that were arrayed according to the BCT commander’s mission priorities. The relationships between the companies and the landowning battalions varied; but in most cases, the company commander and platoon leaders were the coalition force elements responsible for the PTT mission, which included setting goals, recruiting, training, and providing operational mentoring for the IPS within the BCT OE. In MND-N, the military police battalion worked directly for the division headquarters, coordinating various PTT efforts across the four provinces and directly interfacing with the Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq, Multinational Corps–Iraq and, in some cases, the MoI.

Improvement of the DOS IPA Contribution

In a perfect world, it seems that DOS-supplied IPAs would be an excellent tool that the commander could use to effect the proper development of the IPS in terms of manning, equipping, training, and providing operational mentoring for the Iraqi ROL. However, the first problem I observed during the 30-plus months that I spent in Iraq was the quality of the IPAs that were deployed to Iraq. More than half of the IPAs that I have worked with, supervised, or otherwise encountered were

great Americans; but they had no business trying to teach, coach, or mentor a foreign police force. Many of these IPAs hailed from small towns or police forces; and although they were capable of competently executing technical law enforcement tasks, they were not suited to operate in a varied and harsh OE such as Iraq—nor did they possess the midlevel law enforcement managerial experience that is critical to mentoring a foreign police force. Some IPAs were still trying to teach basic patrol level tasks (such as applying hand restraints or conducting nonfelony, vehicular traffic stops) to the IPS at the station, when what the IPS really needed—especially during and after the coalition force surge—was instruction and guidance in the areas of community-oriented policing programs, criminal pattern analysis, and patrol planning and distribution. These are skills that are necessary for the lone IPA in a military police squad (or equivalent PTT formation) to truly help transform the IPS into a credible law enforcement organization.

Military Police as the Primary IPS Development Organization

Until the 1 January 2009 implementation of the Status of Forces Agreement, U.S. Army military police units in Iraq served as an outstanding force provider for most PTTs. Because the ability of military police Soldiers to teach, coach, and mentor Iraqi police is unparalleled by any other Army unit, working with host nation police forces is a collective task of all combat support military police units. However, I observed a tendency for battalion and BCT commanders to rely too heavily on military police units to tackle the complex and diverse issues of IPS development.

The development of the IPS as one of three critical ROL organizations was often not synchronized with that of the other two—the justice [judiciary] and corrections systems. In countries that seek democratic ideals and principles (such as Iraq), the need for ROL is nearly universal; therefore, police are typically involved in almost all government projects. However, the efforts of military police units in Iraq were seldom coordinated with those of the Multinational Security Transition Command–Iraq or DOS in dealing with the Iraqi judiciary, provincial reconstruction teams, border police, national police, and most other MoI responsibilities outside the specific IPS umbrella.

The typical military police PTT did an outstanding job of training, coaching, and mentoring at the local IPS station level and—with the addition of a platoon leader or company commander—the district level. At the provincial level, BCTs used their own officers or assigned military police units to build PTTs that, in theory, were robust enough to teach, coach, and mentor senior IPS officers and general officers in the areas of police operations, personnel administration, logistics, maintenance, community outreach, and a host of other required police administrative and managerial tasks. In some cases, the scope of influence

of provincial PTTs on the provincial headquarters directly impacted more than 25,000 Iraqi police. Neither company grade military police officers nor field grade officers of other branches had the expertise and experience required to handle such a challenge. Therefore, attempts to organize provincial PTTs around these officers proved ineffective. This resulted in a continuous need for engagements from key division and BCT leaders and military police battalion commanders to effect the desired changes within a given IPS provincial headquarters.

As divisions, BCTs, and military police units rotated in and out of Iraq, PTT dynamics became even more complicated. There were no long-term, guiding principles or goals to elevate the IPS to the level of competence desired by the coalition force. This problem was partially rectified from 2007 to 2008, as Multinational Force–Iraq expectations of IPS development became more pointed. However, many years were wasted by applying Band-Aids as a temporary solution instead of maintaining a dynamic campaign plan with achievable and measurable goals.

Realistic Goals for the IPS

Commanders at all levels had a tendency to issue extremely unrealistic IPS operational tasks and goals for military police and other PTT organizations. In addition to the usual number of IPS policemen to be trained, BCT and division commanders set forth a relatively simple, easily measured, operational requirement to recruit and train thousands of additional IPS policemen from 2007 to 2008. In the MND-N alone, the coalition force (military police, PTTs, and BCTs) trained more than 10,000 Iraqi policemen per year. In a nation with a trained police force of 250,000, this may not seem like many; but it was a powerful effort compared to the number of graduates from American police academies.

Planning for the IPS to accomplish specific tasks and goals was one of the most significant challenges. Part of the problem was that American philosophies of problem solving and task accomplishment do not translate well into the society and organizational customs of the IPS. Regular, daily police operations require thorough criminal network analysis, trend analysis, the analysis of neighborhood and community population statistics, and investigative capabilities that are well beyond the capabilities of any Iraqi police organization that I have observed. However, battalion and BCT commanders expected PTTs to ensure that the IPS prevented kidnappings and emplacements of improvised explosive devices in certain areas. This was an unrealistic expectation—until basic skill sets could be taught and ingrained into the IPS. While eager, intelligent IPS officers can be trained to master technical subjects, the issue of ingraining basic Western policing philosophies into the IPS (which is the typical U.S. commander's expectation) presents a greater challenge. Cultural tendencies of the IPS will continue to

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preclude the attainment of that goal for some time. The emulation of recruiting, training, and operating methods of the police forces in other “successful” countries in the region (such as Jordan) represents a more sound, realistic approach to leading the IPS to an acceptable proficiency level.

Conclusion

Because the PTT approach in Iraq has changed since 1 January 2009, many of the specific points of this article may be dated. However, the U.S. Army will inevitably be involved in the rebuilding of some other nation’s police force in the future; consequently, previous lessons learned should be applied in the wargaming of future postconflict scenarios. At a minimum, the Military Police Corps should review the successes and failures of its seven years’ experience in Iraq and use the information obtained to build the proper relationships within the DOS and U.S. Department of Justice. Then, during

the next multiagency effort, PTTs might have a more profound and lasting effect, with fewer coordination and continuity issues.

Recommendations

I recommend that—

- DOS police advisors be more thoroughly trained and experienced in midlevel police managerial tasks.
- Military police (and other PTT organizations) build on long-range goals that carry over through unit rotations and that the needs of host nation police be placed above constantly changing unit priorities.
- Military police educate landowning commanders about regional police capabilities so that the commanders form realistic expectations of indigenous police forces.

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At the time this article was written, Major Myers was an Intermediate-Level Education and School of Advanced Military Studies student at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He based this article on his overall experience with the IPS in various leadership positions in U.S. Army military police units in 2003 (battalion plans officer [AS3], 503d Military Police Battalion [Airborne] Mosul, Iraq), 2004–2005 (company commander, 118th Military Police Company [Airborne], North Babil Province, Iraq), and 2007–2008 (battalion S-3, 728th Military Police Battalion, MND-N and provincial PTT, Mosul).