

Countering Terrorist, Insurgent, and Criminal Organizations: Iraqi Security Forces Joint Coordination Centers— A Unique Public Safety System

By Major Gordon J. Knowles

The threat of international terrorism and religious extremism continues to permeate the globe and destabilize nations. Training and equipping indigenous police and military forces to engage these threats is an essential component in stabilizing emerging democracies abroad. This article examines the role of the U.S. Army in creating a unique and integrated public safety concept to sustain an environment of secure elections, suppress terrorism, neutralize insurgencies, and control organized crime.

An Integrated Public Safety Concept

A Joint Coordination Center (JCC) is an emergency management center and public safety system designed to integrate all elements of the Iraqi security forces (ISF). The elements within the ISF include the Iraqi army, the Iraqi police services (IPS), and the Department of Border Enforcement (DBE). JCCs coordinate security operations and emergency responses by—

- Providing communication links to all public safety services such as police, fire, and ambulance.
- Establishing an emergency “911-style” call center to receive requests for assistance from the general public.
- Conducting operational planning to counter or respond to terrorist, insurgent, or criminal activities.
- Creating a joint intelligence cell (JIC) to collect, analyze, and disseminate information and intelligence provided by the local community.

A JCC includes an operations center, an emergency call center, a planning room, and a JIC. JCCs are operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week by representatives of the ISF, as well as other public safety organizations (such as fire and ambulance services). The intent of the Provincial Joint Coordination Centers (PJCC) is to link all elements of the Iraqi army, Iraqi police, and DBE into an efficient and integrated effort to suppress terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activity.¹

Strategic Operations and Management

Most JCCs are colocated with provincial police station headquarters, and JCC directors are usually senior members of the IPS. The JCC concept is considered essential in stabilizing Iraq by integrating the security operations of the Iraqi army and the IPS to suppress terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activity. DBE representation is essential in the JCC to prevent foreign terrorist or insurgent infiltrators; deter human trafficking for purposes of cheap labor or sexual exploitation; and hinder black market smuggling of livestock, gasoline, cigarettes, and weapons. A thriving black market is considered to be counterproductive in stabilizing Iraq’s fragile economy.² Also, border enforcement is a key element in stemming the flow of illegal weapons and explosives, a task that is essential to defeating the insurgency.³

A Three-Pronged Attack

The current instability in Iraq appears to be fueled by the following three main elements:

- *Former regime elements.* These are mostly former members of Saddam Hussein’s Baathist Party who are trying to regain their lost political or military power.⁴
- *Foreign fighter infiltrators.* These consist of international terrorists from Jordan, Syria, and Iran operating in Iraq.⁵ It is believed that these terrorist groups are using Iraq as a training center to develop sophisticated improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and coordinate large-scale terrorist attacks to be used on a global scale. The IEDs are homemade bombs made

from a variety of explosives ranging from simple gunpowder to artillery shells pilfered from former Iraqi army bases.⁶ These devices are frequently detonated via wireless communications devices such as cell phones or car alarm remote controls.

- *Organized crime elements.* These groups commit a wide range of criminal activities ranging from kidnapping for ransom to organized theft and bank robberies. The current lack of an effective police force in Iraq has made conditions ripe for criminal activity.⁷ Building and sustaining a reliable police force has been deemed essential in stabilizing the country.

Collection, Analysis, and Dissemination of Police Intelligence

One successful tool used to gather intelligence and information on terrorists, insurgents, and criminals has been the JCC telephone tip line. Using a wide range of broadcast, televised, and printed media, the JCCs urge Iraqis to report suspicious information to the tip line. The tip line initiative stresses that the safety and security of Iraq starts with the people in the community.

Information and/or intelligence reported to the tip line is analyzed by the JIC. Iraqi intelligence analysts then channel the information toward the proper Iraqi army, IPS, or DBE liaison officer to coordinate the appropriate investigation, cordon and search, seizure, or capture. A wide range of useful information is gathered by this passive criminal intelligence collection method. Iraqi citizens have reported suspected weapons and explosive caches, the whereabouts of high-profile terrorists and insurgents, the locations of IEDs, and the targets of vehicle-borne IEDs. Each Iraqi province has its own dedicated JCC tip line number. When dialed, this dedicated line lets Iraqis report suspicious activity by speaking directly with an Iraqi police officer. Also, there is a national tip line number that can be dialed from anywhere in the country. Some regional JCCs have also established successful “Internet tip Web sites” that collect information about a wide variety of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal activities. The tip line concept has made the JCC the centerpiece in promoting public safety by giving Iraqi citizens the opportunity to contribute to the security of Iraq.

Provincial Joint Coordination Centers and Iraqi Police Chiefs Conferences

One focus of the coalition is to create an atmosphere that promotes interagency cooperation among the ISF elements throughout Iraq.⁸ An especially useful concept is the quarterly PJCC and Iraqi police

chiefs conferences. The main focus of the conferences is to share information about terrorist, insurgent, and criminal trends and to unify efforts to suppress anti-Iraqi and anticoalition forces. These conferences cover a wide range of military, police, and criminal intelligence information, as well as election security plans.⁹ PJCC directors and Iraqi police chiefs discuss terrorist, insurgent, and criminal trends in Iraq. One significant trend discussed by the Iraqi police chiefs is an increase in kidnappings in northern Iraq. The Iraqi police chiefs contend that these kidnappings are linked primarily to organized crime elements. It appears that the kidnappings are committed to extort money from family members. Local news stories report that ten to twenty people are kidnapped daily in Iraq, with ransoms of \$20,000 to \$30,000 being negotiated for a safe release.¹⁰ The conferences also noted that IEDs are still the weapon of choice for terrorists and insurgents to attack the Iraqi army, Iraqi police, and coalition personnel.¹¹ Unfortunately, an average of seventy Iraqi police officers are killed monthly in Iraq.¹² This has made being an Iraqi police officer one of the most dangerous jobs in the country.

Iraq’s New 911 System— The Advanced First Responder Network

An additional issue related to Iraq’s national public safety is the installation of and training for the Advanced First Responder Network (AFRN) telecommunications system. Similar to the 911 police emergency telephone system in the United States, the AFRN will enable the JCCs to quickly determine the location of an incident and coordinate for the appropriate Iraqi army or IPS response to the terrorist, insurgent, or criminal groups involved. The AFRN will link all elements of the ISF, as well as fire and ambulance services, into one state-of-the-art telecommunications network. This network will provide a level of encryption that will permit the ISF to maintain secure communications when responding to terrorist bombings or insurgent attacks.

As Iraq moves through the process of liberation, stabilization, and democratization, the security situation, threat conditions, and public safety needs will change and the strength of the JCCs will continue to evolve and adapt to these changes. Whether serving as a command and control center for a national election or as an emergency operations center countering ongoing terrorist attacks, the JCCs give the ISF a unique advantage by creating unity of effort; sharing intelligence; and coordinating responses that undermine, neutralize, and defeat a wide range of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal threats.

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