

Building an Iraqi National Guard

by

Lieutenant Colonel Jerad Harper
United States Army



United States Army War College
Class of 2015

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188

The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. **PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.**

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2015		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Building an Iraqi National Guard				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Jerad Harper United States Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Tarn Warren Department of Military Strategy, Planning and Operations				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 10592					
14. ABSTRACT The formation of an Iraqi National Guard offers significant opportunity for improving Iraq's short and long-term security capabilities and presents a potential reconciliation tool for improving relations with Iraq's Sunni minority. Three case studies -- the use of tribal levies in Oman, the Saudi Arabian National Guard, and the U.S. Army National Guard -- provide important examples to inform the development of an effective and professional force. Building the Iraqi National Guard into a competent and professional force will require 1) the commitment of U.S. or western advisors over a long period, 2) a sustained commitment of resources, and 3) significant efforts to synchronize operations between the future Iraqi National Guard and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. Finally, while this is a positive measure, it must be accompanied by other reconciliation efforts to address the needs of the Sunni minority. Absent these measures, attempts to create an Iraqi National Guard force could be arming participants in a future Iraqi Civil War.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS U.S. Foreign Policy, Security Assistance, Partner Capacity-building; Counter-insurgency; ISIL					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 49	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Lieutenant Colonel Jerad Harper
United States Army

Colonel Tarn Warren
Department of Military Strategy, Planning and Operations
Project Adviser

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

Abstract

Title: Building an Iraqi National Guard

Report Date: 01 April 2015

Page Count: 49

Word Count: 10592

Key Terms: U.S. Foreign Policy, Security Assistance, Partner Capacity-building; Counter-insurgency; ISIL

Classification: Unclassified

The formation of an Iraqi National Guard offers significant opportunity for improving Iraq's short and long-term security capabilities and presents a potential reconciliation tool for improving relations with Iraq's Sunni minority. Three case studies -- the use of tribal levies in Oman, the Saudi Arabian National Guard, and the U.S. Army National Guard -- provide important examples to inform the development of an effective and professional force. Building the Iraqi National Guard into a competent and professional force will require 1) the commitment of U.S. or western advisors over a long period, 2) a sustained commitment of resources, and 3) significant efforts to synchronize operations between the future Iraqi National Guard and the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. Finally, while this is a positive measure, it must be accompanied by other reconciliation efforts to address the needs of the Sunni minority. Absent these measures, attempts to create an Iraqi National Guard force could be arming participants in a future Iraqi Civil War.

Building an Iraqi National Guard

Training [host nation] security forces is a slow and painstaking process. It does not lend itself to a “quick fix.”

—U.S. Army COIN Manual¹

A Defeated Military Seeks to Rebuild Itself

On Dec 18, 2011 the last U.S. advisory troops pulled out of Iraq, ending an eight-year military presence that had started with invasion, subsequently developed into a long-running counter-insurgency and eventually transitioned into an advisory and assistance mission to support the fledgling Iraqi government.² Yet just two and a half years later, U.S. and world attention was forced back on Iraq’s problems in June 2014 when the Iraqi military disintegrated against an invasion by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) that seized control of almost a third of Iraq in a number of days – an occupation which remains in place at the time of the writing of this study. On 10 September 2014, President Barak Obama officially committed the United States to a strategy with an objective to “degrade, and ultimately destroy ISIL” in a public address to the nation.³ In his speech, President Obama mentioned the formation of an Iraqi National Guard as one of the elements in our strategy to restore Iraqi territorial integrity. Iraq’s new Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, has similarly highlighted the formation of an Iraqi National Guard as a priority element for his government’s efforts to retake Iraq and restore long term stability.⁴ This study will examine the prospect for building an Iraqi National Guard as envisioned by current Iraqi leadership.

As of the writing of this study, the Iraqi Parliament remains in deliberation regarding the authorizing legislation (the Iraqi National Guard Law) for the creation of this force. This paper will only briefly touch on the political struggle to pass the law.

Instead, the paper will examine the implications for Iraq and for U.S. policy to support Iraq should an Iraqi National Guard be established, either in the present or the future.

This study shall look at the prospects for an Iraqi National Guard as an element of Iraq's security structure reform. It responds to a request by the Office of Security Cooperation – Iraq (OSC-I) to examine the “prospects of a provincial ‘national guard’ subordinate to governors; capable of timely, professional local crisis response; yet, allied to the national military.”⁵ The study will begin by briefly laying out the path leading to the collapse of Iraq's military forces against the ISIL invasion and then provide a detailed overview of Iraq's current play for an Iraqi National Guard. Subsequently, this study will look at three case studies of other countries with potential lessons learned for the development of this capability: Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United States. Finally, this paper shall provide an analysis of the current Iraqi National Guard plan, examining implications from these case studies and laying out recommendations for the formation and development of an Iraqi National Guard.

The creation of an Iraqi National Guard offers significant opportunity for improving Iraq's security capabilities. It also presents the opportunity for reconciliation with Iraq's Sunni minority. Moreover, it would provide a critical capability as a “hold force” supporting the Iraqi effort to regain its Sunni provinces and subsequently to prevent Sunni extremists re-infiltrating Iraq. However, unless several factors are addressed in the long run, the creation of an Iraqi National Guard could eventually present a significant threat to the stability of Iraq. Such a force will require the commitment of U.S. or western advisors over a long period. It will require a committed extension of resources. It will require significant efforts to make this an integrated part

of the Ministry of Defense. And it must be accompanied by other reconciliation efforts to address the needs of the Sunni minority. If these can be accomplished, then an Iraqi National Guard could be an important part of a future Iraqi Security Force structure. Absent these measures, however, attempts to create an Iraqi National Guard force could be arming participants in a future Iraqi civil war.

The Road to Iraq's Military Collapse

At the time of its departure in 2011, the U.S. still maintained serious concerns about the stability of the Iraqi government. The U.S. had intended to keep a residual training and advisory presence in Iraq. However, in order to remain in power after failing to win a majority in the 2010 parliamentary election, Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki was forced to make a deal to gain the support of more radical anti-American Shia elements led by Muqtada al-Sadr. Maliki's new political allies prevented him from signing the planned Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between Iraq and the United States.⁶ Without a SOFA and with a U.S. administration focused on departure, there was little political will to remain and the bulk of U.S. military forces departed.

The U.S. did leave a small training and advisory capability in Iraq – OSC-I. However, this too soon began to downsize – even as neighboring Syria descended into a devastating and continuing civil war and Sunni extremists increased in power in both Syria and Iraq. By 2013, the U.S. began to shrink the number of military personnel and civilian contractors providing training for the Iraqi government and the footprint of training bases in Iraq shrunk dramatically. Correspondingly, the Iraqi government began to lose control of its most volatile province – Anbar – as local Sunni dissatisfaction with the political repression of the Shia-dominated central government increased.

When the U.S. forces departed Iraq in 2011, Iraqi and U.S. leaders anticipated that the Sunni extremist organization originally known as Al Qaeda in Iraq and subsequently as the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI) would remain a significant and continuing threat, but one that was manageable by Iraqi counter-terrorism forces.⁷ At the time, no one anticipated neighboring Syria's impending collapse into a deadlocked civil war. Moving across the border into Syria, ISI became ISIL (adding "and the Levant" to their name) and grew powerful in this new environment, simultaneously throwing off its ties to the Al Qaeda senior leadership and battling both the Assad regime and rival groups to become the largest, most lethal, and best funded of all insurgent organizations in Syria. Making matters worse, while ISIL grew strong and eventually gained control of an essentially autonomous region in Eastern Syria, the Maliki government in Iraq turned increasingly sectarian and again alienated the loyalties of Iraq's Sunni population.

A resurgent ISIL seized control of the key Anbar province cities of Ramadi and Fallujah in 2013, facilitated significantly because the local population was largely complicit with or agnostic to these developments. While the Iraqi military was able to surround these cities, they never went in – in retrospect a crucial sign of the weakness that had developed in the Iraqi military. In June 2014, a large ISIL force invaded northwest Iraq, quickly seizing Mosul (Iraq's second largest city), virtually all Sunni areas in western and northern Iraq, and pressing hard against the Kurdish region in northern Iraq. Faced with a disaffected local Sunni opposition and rampaging ISIL forces crossing over the border from Syria, the Iraqi military in northwest Iraq – three entire infantry divisions and one national police division – completely disintegrated.⁸ ISIL forces seized banks and Iraqi-owned U.S. equipment and proclaimed the

establishment of an “Islamic State” stretching from Raqqa in eastern Syria all the way to the outskirts of Baghdad. As of the writing of this study, ISIL continues to hold a significant amount of Iraqi territory and a U.S.-backed air campaign begun in response has so far only been able to slow the ISIL advance.

The Currently Developing Plan for an Iraqi National Guard

The law to establish an Iraqi National Guard (ING) is presently in draft form and being reviewed by the Iraqi Council of Representatives.⁹ Though the details of this law will likely be subject to revision as the concept continues to take form, the base plan of the Iraqi government is fairly solid and lends itself to analysis. Iraq’s planned National Guard force will be a hybrid of other national guard structures, (the law specifically names the U.S. Army National Guard, the “People’s Army” of the former regime in Iraq, and Iran’s Basij as sources of inspiration, among others) allowing the freedom to draw from the learning of other previous examples.¹⁰

The intent for the Iraqi National Guard concept is to build an Iraqi provincial security and civil defense capability capable of being federalized and deployed outside the province to operate in a joint manner with other Iraqi Security Forces to meet national emergencies. The governor would be authorized to deploy the ING in the province for the following situations:

- To restore peace and order or maintain security in riot situations, general disorders, breaches of the peace, insurrection or rebellion. [Use of the ING in these circumstances could not continue beyond] three or six months without the approval of the federal government or the Council of Representatives.
- To support police in maintaining law, order and security when this exceeds their capabilities.
- To support civil defense force in cases of disaster relief or humanitarian assistance.¹¹

Additionally, the provincial governor can use the ING to “assist in controlling the border in the border provinces,” though it is unclear from this language if this border patrol mission would similarly be limited by the same three to six month national level review requirement as the primary tasks.¹² The Iraqi federal government will be empowered to determine if capabilities of the combined provincial police and ING forces require assistance in responding to natural disasters or security threats. In such a case, ING from other provinces and/or other national level security forces can be deployed to that province. All provincial and national security forces would fall under “federal military leadership” which would work in coordination with the provincial security council to address the situation.¹³ Finally, in cases of national emergencies, the federal government will be empowered to deploy ING members or units outside the province where they would “become part of the federal chain of command and receive orders from the federal military command to which they relate.”¹⁴

The draft ING Law calls for the establishment of a High Bureau of the National Guard (HBNG). This organization will be a ministry-level structure equivalent to the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior for resourcing and budgeting, though also responsible for coordinating closely with these ministries.¹⁵ The HBNG would be a national structure responsible for administration and standards, training, equipping, inspections and logistics. Within the structure would be a national level ING commander who would direct regional level commands (see figure 1).¹⁶

Iraqi National Guard Task Organization

Draft Concept as of 15 Jan 2015

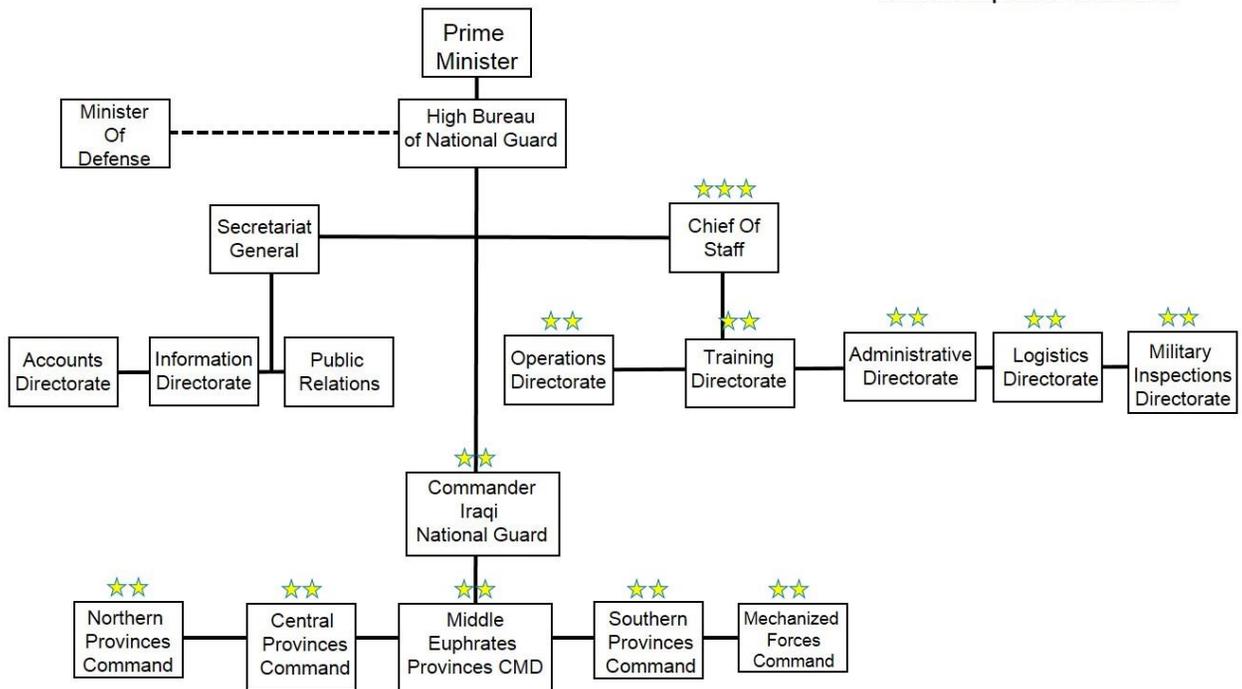


Figure 1. Planned ING National and Regional Structure as of January 2015¹⁷

Underneath the regional-level commands would be the “meat” of the ING – a brigade-level force for each province. At present and likely well into the future, the ING is envisioned purely as an army force and there are no plans for an air component such as that of the U.S. Air National Guard. Each brigade will consist of a headquarters element, combat service support elements, and a number of light infantry battalions, varying according to the size, population, and strategic nature of the province. These forces would be under the day to day operational control of the provincial governor until federalized for national emergencies (and presumably for training as well). The ING battalions would be light infantry with trucks at first and subsequently upgraded with wheeled or tracked armored personnel carriers, depending on the location and mission.¹⁸

The ING will be composed of both uniformed and civilian personnel. The HBNG would be led by a civilian secretary general, with a uniformed (lieutenant general) chief of staff.¹⁹ National-level (and presumably regional level as well, though this is not addressed) staff would be manned by full time personnel. Provincial-level ING elements would be composed of a mix of “professional” (presumably active) and “reserve” forces, with brigade and battalion level commanders, staff and an unspecified number of additional personnel as full time forces, with the remainder of the forces composed of reserve personnel. Provincial brigade commanders would be “professional officers,” initially likely regular army or ING officers. While the draft law states this commander would be selected by the provincial security council from a list of three officers provided by the HBNG, U.S. security assistance personnel assess it is likely this process may transition to one where provincial officials would directly select their own brigade commander, with HBNG approval. Subordinate officers, including battalion commanders, would be selected by provincial leadership. All officers are to be from the province or at least the surrounding region.²⁰

Reflecting the tense sectarian nature of Iraq, the ING Law calls for the ethno-sectarian makeup of the provincial ING brigades to mirror the composition of that province.²¹ Although the Iraqi government still has to work out the details, the most effective solution would be to create homogenous companies or battalions (discussed later in detail). The law transfers the contracts for the Sons of Iraq from the Ministry of Defense (MOD) to the ING. Additionally, the Iraqi government will target irregular forces currently opposing ISIL such as tribal forces and including the Shia militia presently serving as “Popular Mobilization Forces” for recruitment into the ING.²²

Current Iraqi plans envision equipping the ING primarily as a light infantry force with Soviet-style equipment from pre-existing stocks and from new purchases from Russia. Regular MOD forces will be equipped with American equipment.²³ Though there is some discussion of a “Mechanized Forces Command” for the ING, this concept has not been developed and will likely remain in this conceptual stage well into the future or potentially even disappear.²⁴

One major issue that remains to be worked out is how this force will be trained. It is likely that initial ING forces will receive only limited training as they are activated to apply a more coherent organizational structure over the irregular forces fighting ISIL alongside regular Iraqi forces. At present, even without the ING structure, a large number of Shia militia and a small number of Sunni militia are fighting alongside Iraqi Army and Counter-Terrorism Bureau forces against ISIL, paid by the MOD under the interim “Popular Militia Forces.” These could likely be quickly absorbed into the ING structure. The draft ING Law does specify that reserve ING members would be required to perform a month of “retraining” each year in addition to emergency activations that might be required.²⁵

Following formal authorization of the ING Law, the development of the ING structure will take a number of years. In the first year, Iraqi leaders plan to focus on the establishment of the HBNG and provincial brigades in the least secure provinces in western and northwest Iraq. Subsequently, provincial brigades would be formed in provinces in order of relative security from least secure to most secure.²⁶

The ING Plan is a well-thought-out plan offering a number of potential opportunities for the Iraqi Security Force structure while also addressing a critical

problem in Iraq's societal framework – a Sunni Arab population that does not have the ability to influence its regional security and which feels that the central government does not have its best interests in mind. In order to adequately evaluate the potential implications of such a structure and provide recommendations for its implementation, it is useful to look at case studies of similar tribal and national guard structures in the Middle East and United States to draw lessons that can be applied in its analysis.

Case Study One: Tribal Forces in Oman – Key to an Effective Counterinsurgency

The use of tribal forces in Oman during second half of the Dhofar War from 1964 to 1976 has significant parallels to the present crisis in Iraq and presents several opportunities. Tribal forces known as “firqats” (Arabic for “groups” or “units”) were formed from former insurgents and local tribes and used as a hold force by the Omani government and its British allies.²⁷ The use of these firqats, closely supported by British Special Air Service (SAS) elements, allowed the discredited Sultan's Armed Forces to regain lost territory and eventually restore control of the region. The firqats proved particularly useful in initial phases in holding terrain, reconnaissance, and as a reintegration institution for former insurgents. Eventually, as the opposition decreased, the close relationship between the firqats and their local tribal areas allowed the Sultan to distribute extensive development assistance to the region to address the underlying causes of the conflict and rebuild the local population's trust in the central government.

In 1964, the population of Oman's western border region of Dhofar was restive and had long suffered from political repression by Sultan Said al-Said, an “anti-modernist” who ruled the region as his personal fiefdom and treated the population essentially as slaves.²⁸ With Arab nationalism spreading throughout the region and the rise to power of an expansionist Marxist government in neighboring Yemen, the area

was ripe for exploitation. Over three years, opposition forces slowly grew and built on tremendous local Dhofari dissatisfaction with the government. In 1967, the conflict came to a head and expanded into armed conflict.²⁹ Benefitting from safe-havens across the border in Yemen, opposition forces and irregular supporters pushed back central government forces and, after three years, had gained control of the majority of the province outside the provincial capital of Salalah.³⁰

In 1970, the British government faced a challenge – the deteriorating situation in Dhofar risked the collapse of the Omani government and the potential loss of access to Omani oil resources. Occurring shortly after Britain's 1967 withdrawal from South Yemen (Aden) following a Marxist takeover, the collapse of the Omani government would signal the loss of one of Britain's last remaining close dependent states in the Middle East. Simultaneously, however, the British government also faced a significant and higher priority requirement which required the commitment of the bulk of its military forces – maintaining its hold on the tenuous situation in Northern Ireland. Events favored the UK.

A 1970 coup by Sultan Said's son Qaboos was quickly recognized (and possibly even supported) by the British government and provided a significant opportunity by replacing the former Sultan with his Sandhurst-educated and much more progressive son.³¹ Lacking the capability to commit significant military forces, the British government instead chose to use its special forces, supported by the Royal Air Force. British SAS teams inserted into the region and instituted the use of "firqats," small irregular units of local tribesmen with intimate knowledge of the terrain and local population.³²

The initial firqats were composed primarily of former rebels directly recruited from detention centers while later elements were recruited directly from the tribes of the province. These tribal forces proved a highly effective element in the “clear and hold” strategy used to slowly regain control of the province. Working in concert with the SAS and with the reorganized Sultanate Armed Forces (SAF), firqats were critical in pacifying and holding newly occupied territories, allowing the limited number of special and regular forces to concentrate on offensive operations.³³

Alongside the military efforts in Dhofar, the Omani government instituted a highly effective development component. The dynamic new Sultan focused extensive development resources to improve the capacity and day to day lives of the local population, and, over time, the rule of law was extended throughout the province. These efforts improved the legitimacy of the central government while simultaneously degrading opposition efforts to reduce that legitimacy and gain the allegiance of the local population for themselves.³⁴ Firqats played an important part of this development effort, both by providing security and in some cases serving as the conduit by which the central government distributed support to the Dhofari population.³⁵

By 1976, the combination of efforts by the British and Omani forces, eventually supported by additional conventional force contingents from Iran and Jordan, had successfully eliminated the bulk of the insurgency, with only a residual limited SAF and firqat presence required until the absolute end of hostilities in 1979.³⁶ Oman continued to use firqats as a tribal irregular force to secure Dhofar into the 1990s, though the central government gradually transitioned firqats from an active to a reserve component as a new Royal Omani Police force assumed responsibility for internal security. Today,

firqats remain an irregular reserve force maintained by the Sultan to “assure the loyalty of their members and as a way of injecting income into the rural economy” with firqat members coming together at Dhofar forts on paydays to socialize and collect their salaries.³⁷

The Dhofar campaign has long been held up as a model for counter-insurgency and the use of firqats offers several positive implications for the Iraqi National Guard. Most importantly, the Dhofar example shows how a force drawn from the local population can restore the ties between the central government and that population in a counter-insurgency to improve government legitimacy. The Dhofari population in Oman had lost their trust in the repressive central government just as the Sunni population in Iraq has lost in trust in the repressive Shia-dominated central government. Removing local support for the opposition essentially transitioned the fight in Dhofar from a local insurgency to that of an external invasion from South Yemen.

Similarly, if Iraq can gain the support of the local population in its occupied territories it will find its efforts to expel ISIL significantly easier. Additionally, locally recruited security forces have extensive knowledge of the local terrain and population giving an advantage for the counter-insurgency force. Finally, they are particularly suited as a hold force to pacify and retain control of territory once it is cleared. This allowed the limited SAS and SAF forces to maintain the offensive and will be similarly important in Iraq where elite counter-terrorism forces and competent, retrained Iraqi Army units will also be in short supply as they seek to regain almost one third of Iraq’s territory from ISIL.

However, the Dhofar war also shows the limitations of locally recruited tribal irregulars. Because of their lack of training, firqats were largely incapable of independent offensive action.³⁸ As the SAF were also in the process of being reorganized and retrained by British advisors, they were incapable of performing any training for the firqats. What little training was performed was given by already over-stretched British SAS. Furthermore, a significant factor in the success of firqats and the reformed SAF is that they were directly led by British special forces teams (for the firqats) and regular army advisory teams (for the SAF) during the initial stages of the conflict and the SAS remained actively involved in advising and directing their command and control throughout.³⁹

While the British initially integrated the firqats into heterogeneous units combining multiple tribes, this plan soon collapsed due to infighting within the individual units. Subsequently, the firqats were formed from homogenous tribal populations, which increased their resiliency. Finally, though the military effort provided critical security, much of the government's ultimate success in pacifying and regaining the allegiance of the Dhofari population came through the extensive development efforts which the Sultan poured into the region, particularly after his oil revenues dramatically expanded following the 1973 oil crisis.⁴⁰

Overall, the example of firqats in Oman shows that the use of locally-recruited security forces can dramatically improve the efforts of the central government in a counterinsurgency. Even if these forces are poorly trained, effective leadership can overcome these shortcomings. However, this effort also shows the need for extensive external advisory support. Ultimately the most important long term factor was the

extension of increased development, a factor in which the firqats were similarly involved. This study will next examine the Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG). This example also shows the need for extensive external advisory efforts. Examination of the SANG professionalization and modernization effort shows that if the central government intends to develop irregular forces into a professional military force, then those external advisory efforts will need to be long-running – in the SANG example they have been ongoing for three decades and continue today.

Case Study Two: Saudi Arabian National Guard – A Regional Standard to Emulate?

The Saudi Arabian National Guard (SANG) stands as a regional example of a highly professional and competent Arab national guard force. While it differs significantly from the planned Iraqi model in that it is a national regime protection force with the direct backing of the King of Saudi Arabia, the SANG grew out of a tribally based militia force and shows important lessons in its path to modernization and professionalization.

Saudi Arabia has two full time “armies.” The Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF) constitute the traditional regular army and are focused exclusively on external defense. Alongside the RSLF, however, stands the SANG, a force which fills a number of internal security roles, serves as a border screening force, as a capable combat force to back up the army, as an institution linking the tribes to the ruling house of Saud, and perhaps most importantly, as a regime protection force that provides a potential counterbalance to the regular army. The SANG falls under a separate Ministry of the National Guard rather than the Ministry of Defense.⁴¹ While the Ministry of the National Guard is responsible for providing training, equipping, and logistics, and has a separate permanent command structure, SANG forces fall under the operational control of the

armed forces when fighting external threats and under operational control of the Ministry of Interior when fighting internal threats.⁴² Defined Saudi Arabian National Guard missions include the following:

- Maintain security and stability within the Kingdom.
- Defeat any major armed terrorist or extremist attack.
- Defend vital facilities (religious sites, oil fields, etc).
- Provide security and a screening force for the kingdom's borders.
- Provide a combat-ready internal security force for operations throughout the Kingdom.
- Provide security for the king and senior members of the royal family.⁴³

The SANG is currently organized as both a full time force of approximately one hundred thousand personnel and a part-time tribal-based militia force of approximately twenty-eight thousand tribal levies or "Fouj."⁴⁴ The active force is organized into three sectors -- Northern (Riyadh), Western, and Eastern -- each with a mix of separate light mechanized, light infantry and special forces brigades.⁴⁵ Extremely well-equipped for the desert and urban environments, this mix of light infantry for urban and static security roles, independent light mechanized brigades with organic artillery and combat service and combat service support elements for mobile conventional roles, and special forces for counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism roles reflects the highly modernized force that has benefitting from three decades of focused U.S. advisory and equipping efforts.⁴⁶

In contrast to the active force, the Fouj served until recently as an on-call tribal militia of approximately company and platoon strengths organized by individual shaykhs and mustering once a month for pay or to perform short duration missions such as low-

value infrastructure security.⁴⁷ Presently, however, the SANG is in the process of transitioning the Fouj to a full-time force responsible for fixed site security, freeing regular SANG forces for more mobile missions.⁴⁸

Historically, tribal forces drawn largely from the Nejd region around Riyadh, known as the Ikhwan, provided the striking power for Saudi Arabia's founder, Abd al-Aziz al-Saud, to unify large portions of the Arabian Peninsula under his control and found the present day Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the 1920s and '30s.⁴⁹ However, Abd al-Aziz found the loosely organized, reactionary, and conservative Ikhwan difficult to control. They revolted against his leadership in 1930 until he formed the Army that would become the present day RSLF around a motorized core supported by airpower, which he used to crush the revolt. After establishing his dominance over the unruly tribes, however, the Saudi king then rebuilt the now much more pliable remnants of the Ikhwan into a tribal force which he used to balance against a potential coup by the Army and to retain his ties to the critical tribes around Rihadh, the base of his power.⁵⁰ The organization's rise to prominence began in 1962 when Abd al-Aziz's son Abdullah (who would eventually become king) was appointed to run the Ministry of the National Guard. The highly influential Abdullah would run the ministry for four decades and guide its eventual growth and modernization until becoming king in 2005.⁵¹

Flush with increased resources stemming from the higher oil prices following the 1973 Oil Crisis, Saudi Arabia enlisted the aid of the United States to begin a SANG modernization effort, which began in 1975 and continues to the present day. The U.S. established the Office of the Program Manager-Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPM-SANG) to run this Foreign Military Sales program. Vinnell Corporation received the first

contract to train, equip, advise and provide doctrine, force integration and logistics support for the SANG and has continued to manage the program.⁵²

Over more than three decades, OPM-SANG has provided an extensive advisory effort that, combined with Saudi Arabia's extensive oil wealth, built this force from a collection of loosely organized, poorly equipped, and untrained tribal levies into one of the most highly trained and professional forces in the Middle East.⁵³ Several key incidents spurred growing resource commitments to the SANG as Saudi Arabian leaders perceived an insecure regional and internal security environment.

In 1979, a force of several hundred Saudi religious extremists seized the shrine complex in Mecca, shocking the world and inciting instability throughout the Middle East. Completely unprepared for a complex urban battlefield, SANG, Army and Interior Ministry forces bore extensive casualties as they took weeks to regain the massive shrine complex. This incident exposed serious shortfalls in small unit tactics, urban combat, planning, and joint operations across all Saudi security services.⁵⁴ The impact of the seizure was felt throughout the region and dramatically increased instability in the Shia populations of Saudi Arabia's eastern provinces. When the Saudi government deployed the Fouj to contain the resulting Shia uprising, the Fouj demonstrated their unpreparedness for riot control and the opposition was crushed with extensive civilian casualties and a heavy-handedness that showed their lack of training.⁵⁵ With the OPM-SANG effort having just begun, these embarrassing performances increased the focus on modernization.

By 1991, SANG performance had increased and a U.S. advisory presence was embedded throughout the organization. Following a limited Iraqi incursion into Saudi

Arabia, SANG forces rapidly cleared the Iraqi Army from the town of Khafji and subsequently demonstrated the ability to operate effectively in support of Saudi Land Forces throughout the remainder of Operation DESERT STORM.⁵⁶ Subsequent to the campaign, concern with the Iraqi threat led to a major expansion in all Saudi security forces and the SANG evolved into its present conventional form built around highly mobile and heavily armored wheeled vehicles designed for the desert environment.⁵⁷

The final stage in SANG development has occurred following the increase in domestic terrorism in Saudi Arabia following September 11, 2001 and the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Faced with a significant terrorist threat, the SANG developed special forces capabilities to deal with a dramatically increased requirement for counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism operations. With its patron Abdullah coming to power as King from 2005 to January 2015, and with a clearly present internal security threat in Saudi Arabia, the SANG continues to expand and modernize its force to be able to meet its primary requirements of meeting conventional, insurgent, or terrorist threats. Recent modernization efforts have focused on a reconnaissance and attack aviation capability to meet this multitude of threats.⁵⁸

Today, the SANG has evolved from its early tribal levy beginnings to a much more professional force. Though early recruiting efforts drew exclusively from the tribes, any native Saudi Arabian has been able to serve as a SANG soldier or officer since 1962. Officers are drawn from across the country, with each region receiving allocations to King Khalid Military Academy, the SANG's separate military academy, according to population percentage. However, tribes still receive allocations and the King can apportion twenty percent of the allocations as well. While this ensures cross-

regional representation in the force, it also ensures that the tribes and king's supporters have significant representation in SANG leadership, ensuring the ultimate loyalty of the force.⁵⁹ As with the Army, the SANG benefits from extensive military training options in the U.S., receiving slightly more allocations than its Army counterparts.⁶⁰

Despite its increased professionalization and modernization, the SANG today still retains an extensive U.S. advisory presence down to the battalion level and across the force. Where U.S. military forces and contractors originally performed the majority of training and logistics support for the SANG, Saudis now perform a significant amount of their own training and manage their logistics effort. Nevertheless, the advisory effort continues to speed the integration of new equipment and doctrine and the U.S. provides support across the full range of defense management activities -- doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.

The SANG example shows a successful professionalization model in a Middle Eastern state comparable to Iraq. It also provides an example of a National Guard force that tied tribal loyalty to the state. However, the SANG example also shows that professionalization and modernization require a decades-long process. Developing the SANG into a competent force required the continued commitment of extensive resources from the Saudi government and a significant advisory effort from the United States – not only contractors but also active duty military – that continues today.

Additionally, the SANG development benefited from its close ties to the highest levels of the central government, including one proponent for the majority of its existence – Prince, later King, Abdullah. Conversely, the Iraqi National Guard will be

composed of many elements that are viewed as direct (Sunni Arab) or indirect (Iranian-backed Shia militia) threats to the central government and will likely face struggles to maintain long term and consistent support. Finally, the SANG also benefitted from the fact that it was overwhelmingly composed of members of one sectarian group -- Sunni Arabs -- and was not forced to deal with the ethnic and sectarian challenges that will likely occur in Iraq. Despite these differences, the SANG model offers an effective regional example of professionalization and modernization to inform Iraq's ING development efforts.

The next case study will focus on lessons that can be learned from the U.S. Army National Guard. While acknowledging that the level of professionalization in this force has developed over more than 300 years of existence, its organization closely parallels the objective force envisaged by the Iraqi National Guard. If this U.S. model has many aspects of a "gold standard" for the Iraqi objective National Guard, what lessons can we draw and apply to the initial stages of Iraqi National Guard development?

Case Study Three: The U.S. Army National Guard – a Fully Developed Model

The case of the U.S. Army National Guard (USANG) provides an example of a fully functioning force that was likely an important if not the primary model used in developing the objective Iraqi force. It consists of a provincially drawn, largely reserve force responding to both provincial needs and national needs with proven proficiency in integrating with national active duty forces for battlefield success.

The U.S. Army National Guard evolved from the state militia forces that predated the formation of the United States and traces its history to the formal establishment of the first militia regiments in Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636.⁶¹ Throughout the majority of the first century following the formation of the United States,

militia forces outnumbered regular forces in combat. As the U.S. military professionalized in the twentieth century, similar professionalization occurred in its Army National Guard, and today, after sustained commitment over more than a decade of combat operations, this force exists as the pre-eminent force of its kind in the world.

Though the USANG was not designed with the same regime protection intent as the Saudi Arabian National Guard, civil-military theorist Peter Feaver has observed “the framers clearly intended institutional checks to be the bulwark of civilian control of the armed forces; [one of] the purpose[s] of a separate militia (now the National Guard) was to be the last line of defense against the regular standing army, should it prove bent on a usurpation of control.”⁶² While the Iraqi central government will likely see the opposite dynamic – the Iraqi military and Counter-Terrorism Bureau as a counter to the ING becoming a regional force in opposition to the central government – the regional populations of Iraq might see the Iraqi National Guard in the same manner as some of the U.S. Founding Fathers saw the militia. Having a locally recruited military element which serves as part of the Iraqi Security Forces potentially offers the regional populations of Iraq – particularly the Sunni Arabs of western and north-west Iraq – a potential to participate in the “national compact” between the government and its citizens.

The USANG attributes resiliency of their units in combat and close bond with the American population to the fact they are recruited directly from same local area.⁶³ As with much of the planned ING force, the USANG is composed of citizen-soldiers who function in a part-time capacity until activated. Each state’s head USANG officer is

selected by the state, not by the National Guard Bureau (NGB) or a central government. A small permanent staff provides for maintenance and administration on a daily basis.

However, the majority of permanent staff personnel are paid directly from the National Guard Bureau, not from the state. Having regular and effective pay systems will be an important requirement for the ING as a reinforcing mechanism building the culture of loyalty to a central government rather than the province where ING members will work on a normal basis. Developing such systems to ensure the loyalty of provincial forces to the Iraqi central government will be a critical capability to develop. Ultimately, though the U.S. model offers a path to emulate, the Iraqi ING concept must be a two-way partnership that will require effort by both national AND provincial leaders to prove effective.

The state governor can activate the USANG for humanitarian and disaster relief or for civil disturbances. When under state control the USANG is able to support local law enforcement without the restraints of Posse Comitatus. These state capabilities are important and fundamental aspects of civil defense of the United States. They should prove equally important and positive for the future Iraqi governments, particularly as expertise in partnering with civil authorities develops over time. This civil defense mission is a capability requiring training and exercises; and for the Iraqis, developing effective coordination capability and relationships will likely prove difficult and require years of cooperation and mutual civilian and Guard respect to develop an effective system. This is one of many aspects where the USANG is extremely similar to the ING and state partnerships between USANG and ING forces would bolster this effort.

Unlike the planned ING, the NGB falls under the Department of Defense rather than existing as a separate department. Furthermore, the USANG's relationship with the active force is not always without political friction. With its armories present in every congressional district in the United States, it wields extensive political influence. Even though the USANG is part of the "Total Army," integrating the Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard, this political influence sometimes manifests itself in ways that are contrary to efficiency. Though the U.S. Army's efforts in Total Army Analysis determined in 2014 that its objective force would maintain all of the Army's attack helicopters in the active force to make this crucial capability more rapidly deployable, it found implementation of this policy difficult as political infighting between active Army and National Guard leadership superseded objective analysis.

Managing its relationship with the Ministry of Defense will likely be one of the most challenging long-term problems for the ING. The political friction above is present even though the USANG is part of the U.S. Department of Defense. In Iraq, working to build an effective partnership to support joint operations in national emergencies will require a close partnership and likely take decades of effort by both the Iraqi High Bureau of the National Guard and the Ministry of Defense to develop effective standard operating procedures and agreements for cooperative effort. This is another area that would likely benefit from close partnership and mentorship between the ING and USANG.

As with the planned Iraqi model, the U.S. NGB fills a train, equip and enduring administration role. When activated, the NGB provides initial and collective training for USANG units before handing them over to the active Army for training at the combat

training centers and subsequent operational deployment. During deployment, forces are directly assigned to the operational commander. Throughout its entire history, U.S. military forces at war have been a combination of active and reserve component forces working under one single command.

The proficiency of today's USANG force is the result of the significant commitment of resources over a prolonged period. This can be seen as a spectrum. The pre-World War II National Guard did not receive a significant commitment of resources and required extensive training and infusions of equipment over several years before being ready for deployment. It should be noted, however, that a similar dynamic was present in the poorly resourced active component during this period which also required a long preparation time and partially gained its readiness by drawing manpower from the Guard. Conversely, today's USANG force is much more combat ready than any time in its history. However, this requires a tremendous commitment of resources for training and equipment to maintain this level of readiness.

Once ISIL is eventually defeated, Iraq will face a similar dilemma in deciding what balance of readiness is acceptable and what price it is willing to pay to achieve this readiness. In performing these calculations, Iraq must address an intangible consideration. It is not only the level of capability, but also the level of professionalism commensurate with the level of resources provided? USANG professionalism has increased significantly in recent decades alongside corresponding increases in resources and continuing commitment in support of the overseas contingencies. An important element in this professionalism is USANG acceptance and acknowledgement of the vital role that they play in national security – not just in the security of their state.

If the Iraqi central government deliberately chooses to under-resource the ING or is simply unable to provide these resources through a lack of capacity, then it could face a long-term problem with an Iraqi National Guard that never develops as a professional force and runs the risk of becoming uncontrollable and a potential security threat to the state.

Implications, Analysis, and Recommendations for the Iraqi Government

This study has presented the plan for an Iraqi National Guard and three relevant case studies providing lessons learned for potential use in ING development. Each of the case studies has presented several lessons learned, including opportunities, challenges, and critical requirements. This section will expand on this analysis and suggest recommendations for ING implementation.

Recruiting – Simultaneously Target Existing Irregular Forces and the Sunni Population

The first opportunity presented by the ING concept is the ability to recruit from the local population and make them key players in the security of their province. This provides a critical factor in improving central government legitimacy by expanding ties between the local population and central government. On the operational and tactical levels it also provides “hold forces,” allowing regular military forces to concentrate on offensive action. In Iraq’s case, however, the tense ethno-sectarian relationships between its various populations will make establishing these local forces in many of the more mixed provinces a challenging process. The draft ING law calls for recruiting provincial security forces with proportions generally replicating the ethno-sectarian makeup of the province.⁶⁴ Having the Shia-dominated central government put this into practice will likely be challenging.

Iraqi efforts to retake Tikrit in early March 2015, involving coordinated attacks to retake the city by Iraqi Army and Shia militia forces, show that even in their present untrained and unorganized fashion, irregular forces are critical to Iraqi war effort.⁶⁵ When the ING Law is passed, the incorporation of existing Shia militia, Sunni tribesmen, and Sons of Iraq should be a high initial priority. Initially, the majority of these will likely be Shia militia, a move which will likely be easily supported by the central government, but important nonetheless. At present, the loyalty of these militia forces is first and foremost to their local power-brokers and in many cases to their Iranian backers.

However, over the long term, central government command and control, combined with payment, training, equipping, and other functions coming from the Government of Iraq rather than Iran or local power-brokers, brings the potential to slowly increase their loyalty to the central government. Moving forward, the ING in Sunni areas must be proportionally Sunni, not just the Shia-dominant force with only token Sunni presence that is presently represented in the irregular forces working alongside the Iraqi Army.⁶⁶ Sunni-dominated Tikrit for example, must be secured by Sunnis in the long run, not Shia.

Given the extensive Iranian influence in Iraq, a major initial question is whether Iran will support allowing Sunnis in the ING or whether this would be just a short-term ploy to further formalize the employment of Shia militia by the central government. Only time will tell. However, failure to recruit large numbers of Sunnis for the ING in provinces with Sunni majority or significant Sunni minority populations would almost certainly be a further instigation towards eventual civil war in Iraq. Targeting the recruitment of Sunnis into the ING must be an initial priority for the Iraqi government

alongside the incorporation of existing irregular forces. Incorporating the Sunnis in the Sons of Iraq (SOI) into the ING is an excellent early opportunity to reach out to a positive Sunni security presence that the Iraqi government has largely ignored or occasionally even repressed since the U.S. initially formed the SOI. Beyond this, the central government must be seen to be reaching out to the local populations as their own initiative, not just incorporating elements like the Sons of Iraq that were originally started as a U.S. initiative

ING recruitment for the foreseeable future should focus on homogenous unit structures – mixing the composition of ING units below battalion level is likely not a good idea. Even in the more mobile and heterogeneous American populations, the USANG today gains resilience from its locally recruited units. This dynamic will be compounded exponentially in Iraq. Whenever possible, units should also be recruited from the same locality – for example, not just Sunni Arabs from Salah ad Din province, but more preferably Sunnis from Tikrit and the surrounding areas within a particular battalion. While some would argue that homogenous recruiting such as this will lead to the further segmentation of Iraq, anything else is unlikely to work for the ING and would lead to extremely poor unit effectiveness.

How ING forces are recruited is also a long term issue for the Iraqi government to address. Heavy reliance on local leaders for vetting and recruiting is certainly understandable in the regional context. The SANG essentially followed the same model for its early existence and continues this to a degree today in the selection of officer candidates. However, this brings questions for the long term professionalization of the force. In Iraq, ING members recruited in this way will likely be heavily influenced by

local power brokers. Continuing to source the majority of recruits using this model in the long term raises concern regarding their loyalty to a greater Iraq. In the mid-term future, Iraq should pursue a recruiting model loosely emulating the present SANG mix of inputs from tribal elements and other regionally recognized institutions, and conduct more universal recruiting from across the province's cities and towns. Over time, recruiting can be shifted more and more to this universal recruiting, ultimately transitioning loyalties away from power-brokers and more toward the state.

Better to Avoid Kurdish Issues and the North for the Time Being

Though the major and most pressing initial challenge will be recruiting Sunnis, recruiting from the north will be an even trickier problem down the road. What should the ING do about the ethnic minorities such as Turkomens and Assyrian Christians in highly sensitive Kirkuk province? What should the ING do about incorporating the Peshmerga, the military forces of Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish provinces in the north? The ING structure could potentially be modified to incorporate the Peshmerga as ING units, formally bringing them into the Iraqi Security Forces in an acceptable manner to the Kurds. Addressing these issues provides potential and significant long term opportunities for reconciling Iraq's disparate ethnic groups.

However, in the short run, these represent unnecessary landmines that could prevent implementation of the ING concept. Iraqi leaders should seek to push these decisions far down the road in order to gain the support of Iraq's Kurdish lawmakers and the Kurdish Regional Government and allow the initial formation of the ING in the least confrontational manner possible. The Iraqi government should delay these difficult decisions, focusing first on establishing the ING. The focus should be on the Sunni population, given that they are the "fought-over" population in many of the ISIL-occupied

areas. For ING development, it would be better to achieve “good enough” at the start and worry about these longer term issues over subsequent decades through trial and compromise.

Selecting ING Leadership – Early Support for Provincial Decisions is Critical

The Iraqi government will presumably draw the initial national and regional ING leadership largely from members of the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior. Though there are no indications that the Iraqi government has actively considered this, there are few other sources of vetted and experienced leaders to staff senior positions within the ING. Regardless of the sources from which it draws the initial ING leadership, it is critical that the Iraqi central government ensure ethno-sectarian balance at the national level and that officers chosen for provincial or regional assignments actually be from that region. From the outlook of Iraq’s regions and provinces, this would provide a counterbalance to excesses in power by the central government and partially ease concerns of a return to a sectarian agenda such as that followed by the previous Maliki administration.

It will be critical for the initial legitimacy of the ING as a whole that the Iraqi government support most of the names provided for leadership positions by local leaders, particularly in Sunni provinces. The legacy of the Maliki administration of Iraq for Iraq’s Sunni population is that of sectarian bias and repression from the Shia-dominated central government. Success of the ING program will only occur when the central government can show that Sunni Arabs *do* have an opportunity for advancement. Otherwise the program is doomed to fail – either it won’t get off the ground or the Iraqi government will be facing an armed and disgruntled Sunni force. In the short term, this may bring in less qualified leaders as well as those potentially

compromised by affiliation with local power brokers. Over the long term, the central government can focus efforts on professionalizing the force and developing quality leaders looking out for the long-term interests of Iraq rather than the province or region. However, this is a challenge to be addressed over the long term – the most important aspect for the ING in the short term is to be perceived as a legitimate institution by provincial and regional populations and their leaders.

Balancing Active vs. Reserve Composition over the Long Term

Initial elements of the ING will likely be on continuous active duty until the present national emergency is resolved. Given this potentially lengthy time for the force on active duty, it remains to be seen what the final mix between active and reserve forces will be and how this mix could be adjusted over time. One beneficial aspect of keeping a large element of full-time ING elements for the foreseeable future and one of the overall strengths of the ING is that it provides job opportunities for young Iraqi males – a critical requirement in a state with a large unemployment. This also represents a form of outreach from the central government to the tribes and local power-brokers. A central element in the patronage system of Iraqi culture is the ability to take care of those in the patronage network through jobs, influence, etc.⁶⁷ Though these individuals would be paid by the central government, they owe their jobs to the local power-brokers; thus those power-brokers have an inherent interest in maintaining their loyalty to the central government in order to provide financial support to the power-brokers' patron network.

Conversely, forces under full time command and control of the provinces could develop greater loyalty to that provincial leadership, whereas forces only called up for emergencies or periodic training would likely have more of a “citizen-soldier” outlook

and would be more loyal to the central government, since their regular day-to-day activities would be focused on their full time jobs versus their ING jobs. Bearing these concepts in mind, Iraq should seek to maintain significant ING forces on active duty until the security and economic situations have stabilized and then slowly transition the ING battalions to majority reserve structures.

Building a Working ING-MOD Relationship

The exact details of the ING federalization procedures remain to be worked out. While the ING Law appears to state that forces will fall under the operational control of MOD operational commanders, it does not address the actual manner in which the command and control structure will function following federalization.⁶⁸ Will ING forces fall directly under the MOD upon federalization and be integrated with regular forces (like the USANG)? Or, will they remain a separate element that is only under the operational control of the MOD for command and control, with the High Bureau of the National Guard still responsible for all logistics (like the SANG)? Having ING forces integrate directly into the MOD upon federalization seems the most advisable option. If MOD leaders know that they will “own” federalized ING forces as a regular MOD component in crisis situations, they will be more likely to place greater emphasis on building systems to support the employment of ING forces and integrate the ING with other MOD elements.

Regardless of which path the Iraqi government takes, it will be critical to establish as many formal linkages between the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and ING as possible right from the start. Developing and refining interoperable MOD-ING systems will ensure institutional effectiveness and enhance the loyalty of the ING to the central government. This is a critical area where the assistance of advisors from the USANG

and SANG would be extremely useful. Their experience in working through these issues could prevent years of dysfunctionality in the Iraqi system.

Training

Establishing the ING allows the rapid assimilation of existing irregular forces into a more coherent organization that can provide command and control for the immediate requirement of containing ISIL and regaining Iraqi territory. At present, the Iraqi Army is still reorganizing from its mid-2014 defeat and is incapable of providing productive training for new ING for the foreseeable future. U.S. and coalition resources are limited and there is an immediate need for the “hold force” capability that the ING could provide. At some point, however, the existing ING forces from the start-up period will need to be retrained. Additionally, a long term plan of regularized initial and career professional military education will need to be developed.

The SANG model of completely separate institutions does not need to be followed here. Using the future restructured Iraqi Army as a training element for the ING and sending ING officers and enlisted personnel to Iraqi Army schools could be a critical reinforcing mechanism building trust and confidence between these organizations. Greater interaction between the Iraqi Army and ING brings the potential for long-term socialization of ING members as part of a greater Iraq, versus separate provinces. Saudi Arabia’s joint exercises where Army and SANG units practice working together in integrated command structures would be an optimal goal for the Iraqis and Iraq should eventually develop a range of annual Iraqi Army-Iraqi National Guard command post exercises and more elaborate full-scale exercises. Saudi Arabia’s experiences also show that the various elements of developing militaries can only lean on each other for training to a certain degree. Effective professionalization of the ING

can only be possible with a long term training and advisory program with full time professional western military advisors providing support.

Equipping and Sustaining the ING

Equipping the ING with Soviet style versus U.S. equipment is a short term necessity for Iraq due to a limited availability of materiel. Furthermore, in the long term, continuing to equip the ING with lower grade material makes them less of a threat to the central government. Besides this apparent positive effect, however, equipping two security forces in one nation with two entirely different sets of equipment presents significant long term challenges. For example, two sets of equipment presents significant challenges for interoperability for Iraqi joint logistics. Given major challenges performing logistics with just their present set of equipment within the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi government should attempt to integrate the two existing equipment sets as soon as possible to make the ING interoperable with MOD forces.

Though the neighboring SANG does have different equipment sets from the regular army and has made this work, this is a much more costly and challenging model to maintain and is driven by different dynamics. Given the SANG's role as a regime protection force, the Saudi government established deliberate barriers to interoperability. However, if the ING is going to receive training from the Iraqi Army as a means to build their interoperability (an excellent concept), then having different equipment sets makes this challenging. The SANG relies on Vinnell corporation contractors and U.S. advisors rather than developing a more integrated relationship with the Royal Saudi Land Forces. There is no need to develop such a deliberate inefficiency in Iraq. While acknowledging that training Iraqi MoD and ING forces will take a significant long-term commitment by the U.S. and/or other western militaries,

developing interoperability and mutual dependencies by seeking efficiencies such as shared equipment sets are critical steps for shortening the path to developing a more robust Iraqi security capacity.

While possessing aging and different sets of equipment may be a short-term necessity with long-term implications, other ING support requirements will need immediate attention. As the Iraqi government stands up new ING forces and irregular forces are transitioned into the ING, the government must ensure this new organization has a sustained and guaranteed flow of resources for pay right from the start. In the long run, the HBNG will also have to address issues such as training, advancement, and retirement. All of these challenges are institutional capacity issues impacting not just the ING, but all Iraqi security forces, and require long term partnering with western military advisors to develop these systems and the Iraqi ability to independently maintain them.

Supporting Development and Reconciliation Initiatives

The development of the ING offers a potential means for the Shia Arab-dominated Iraqi central government to improve its relationship with its Sunni Arab population. However, this single measure alone will not be sufficient to address the needs of the repressed Sunni population and ensure that the populations of currently occupied areas can be secured, held, and ultimately transitioned into loyal and supportive members of Iraqi society. However, legitimacy is a two-way street. The experience of the Dhofar war in Oman shows that gaining the long term support of the population requires sustained development assistance and the return of the rule of law.

For the ING Law to be effective in the long run, the central government should closely follow it with a concerted attempt to reconcile with the Sunni population. The

new government of Prime Minister Abadi must refrain from Prime Minister Maliki's policy of targeting Sunni politicians for arrest. His administration must reduce de-Baathification efforts so that more Sunnis have the opportunity to pursue work with the government. The new Iraqi budget apparently provides increased opportunities for the employment of lower level former regime officials.⁶⁹ While this is a positive first step, the central government should continue to expand efforts. If the central government cannot prove its loyalty to the Sunni population, the Sunnis recruited into the ING will likely prove a security threat in the long term as they take matters to redress the perception of continued repression and power imbalance.

Implications and Recommendations for the United States Government

The formation of an Iraqi National Guard offers a significant opportunity for improving Iraq's security capabilities. Additionally, it presents the opportunity for reconciliation with Iraq's Sunni minority. It provides locally recruited security elements as formal elements of the Iraqi Security Forces – elements which are absolutely critical as a hold force to retake Sunni provinces and subsequently to prevent Sunni extremists from re-infiltrating Iraq. All of these are important requirements in the U.S. strategy to defeat ISIL and our desire for regional stability.

However, short term U.S. commitment to encourage passing the ING Law and to support initial formation of the ING will not be sufficient in establishing a cohesive and competent ING that serves as an integrated part of the overall Iraqi security structure. As the SANG example shows, developing a professional and effective force requires the long-term commitment of U.S. forces as trainers and advisors. If the Iraqi government stands up an ING to fight alongside the Iraqi Army, the U.S. cannot simply train and advise the Iraqi Army – the U.S. or one of its western allies must also train and

advise the ING as well. While the SANG and USANG may be objective models that are more “gold-plated” than “good enough,” developing a “good enough” ING force is still an endeavor that will require a commitment likely running decades.

The U.S. Army National Guard is uniquely capable to provide critical elements for an ING advisory mission. Our National Guard shares many aspects of the objective ING force and its members have the expertise to help develop the ING towards that objective. Additionally, the USANG already maintains a number of state partnerships with foreign militaries. While the ING professionalization initiative would likely require more extensive partnering than is presently done with our National Guard’s other state partnerships, it is not outside the range of USANG capabilities.

Alongside efforts to train and advise a future ING is the requirement to ensure that this force is adequately sustained and equipped. Whether rolled into the present Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq, or, perhaps more effectively, by establishing a new Program Manager along the lines of OPM-SANG, the U.S. must ensure that ING forces receive uninterrupted support to enable their linkage with the central government. Finally, the U.S. should expend significant efforts to encourage the Iraqi central government to reach out in reconciliation to its Sunni populations. Without such an effort, it is unlikely that an effective clear and hold strategy for Iraq can be implemented by the Iraqi government and the U.S. strategy to defeat ISIS will be significantly hamstrung.

Conclusion

Building an Iraqi National Guard could be a critical enabler to U.S. and Iraqi success against ISIL. An ING would provide tactical and operational advantages in regaining and holding Iraq’s territory captured by ISIL, as well as assist central

government reconciliation with its Sunni population. However, should either the Iraqi government or U.S. make only a lukewarm or time-limited commitment to support the ING, then attempts to create an Iraqi National Guard force could very well end up simply arming the participants in a future Iraqi civil war. If the Iraqi government cannot maintain a sustained commitment to long-term support of the ING and commensurate reconciliation efforts or if the U.S. cannot maintain a sustained advisory and assistance effort, it would be better to not support the ING effort at all.

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