

Defending Iraq

By Entifadh K. Qanbar

The biggest danger to Iraqi citizens and the Iraqi government is terrorism. Thus, the main task of the Iraqi army is not to fight wars with foreign countries, but to fight terrorism. To defeat terrorism in Iraq, we need to establish a military force based on a doctrine that recognizes the nature of the enemy and what is required to defeat him. We need to be prepared for a long term war. Therefore, our necessary starting point is to understand the roots of terrorism in Iraq and the terrorists' methods and means and how to defeat them.

I. WHO IS THE ENEMY?

Terrorism is funded, strategically planned, and operationally directed by Baathist organizations in Iraq. They are elements of the former regime, especially the Military Bureau of the Baath Party, the Mukhabarat, the Amn al Khass, Fedayeen Saddam and so on.

It has become clear to us that Baathists through their campaign of terror in Sunni areas are attempting to hijack the representation of the Sunnis. It is a big mistake to equate Sunnis with Baathists. Baathists are not equal to Sunnis and Sunnis are not equal to Baathists. If we don't make that distinction, we will fall into the trap of exactly what the Baathists want.

Therefore, military campaigns to clean Sunni areas from Baathist and terrorist elements should be preceded by intensive political and social campaigns and communications to separate the Baathists from the Sunni population. This will help us identify and isolate terrorists, and it will avoid the imposition of a catastrophic collective punishment on the Sunnis.

We must work very hard and be very truthful with ourselves not to allow a repeat of another cycle of oppression, this time directed against Sunnis. Local commanders of the Iraqi army, security forces, and police must abide by the rules of law, and we must not confuse our desire to aggressively fight and kill terrorists with punishing an entire population of Sunnis. Baathist terrorists are counting on this issue to create an environment in which Sunnis feel they are oppressed, fueling prospects for civil war in Iraq.

Another important matter in defeating terrorism is to give every Iraqi a stake in the country. Baathists played the fear factor on the Sunnis, by spreading the idea that the Shia and the Kurds in federal Iraq will take control of oil in their own areas, while leaving the Sunnis in oil-poor areas without a share of this national wealth.

We were able to successfully add a clause to the draft constitution stipulating that oil wealth is to be equally shared by all Iraqis. **Article (109): *Oil and gas is the property of all the Iraqi people in all the regions and governorates.*** We are determined to work very hard to legislate equal ownership for all Iraqis, which will be an important way to give the Sunnis a stake in the future of Iraq.

We also have begun a policy of constant and relentless outreach to Sunnis who live specifically in areas where there is extreme tension. We had a success story in Tel Afar in which terrorists made a considerable effort to split the city into two warring sectarian factions, but they failed. Both factions were blaming each other and there was a great deal of confusion. We mediated a peace agreement between the two sides and made both sides sit together. It became clear to both sides and to us that a few elements of terrorists had created this confusion and dangerous friction. After the agreement was reached, both sides took the responsibility to publicly announce the agreement and abide by it and isolate the terrorists. This was followed by a fast plan to restore services and provide rations to the city. A military operation followed, which was greatly facilitated by the earlier negotiations and agreement. Consequently, we were able to minimize the collateral damage and civilian casualties.

It is also important to note that not all Baathists are working with terrorists or are terrorists. Some Baathists have accepted the new realities. But terrorism in Iraq, I repeat, is led by a Baathist organization of those who do not want to accept power sharing and who still believe that they can stop the democratic process and monopolize power over Iraq.

Islamists, including Zarqawi's people, and criminal elements of the Iraqi society, all function under the umbrella of the Baathist-terrorist organization. Syria also plays an important role, training insurgents and facilitating their entry into Iraq through direct coordination with the Baathist terror organizations, with Baathist operatives crossing between Syria and Iraq to direct terror operations, such as in Qaim, Mosul, and other places.

One high-ranking Baathist who was captured was wearing the new trendy, Baathist look, which is Wahhabi, with a short dishdasha and a long beard. He confessed that suicide bombers come to Iraq and they stay in safe-houses, waiting for a call with their orders to drive a suicide car. Evidence also shows suicide bombers hands tied to the steering wheels with chains and their feet tied to the accelerator pedal with duct tape. Evidence also shows a second car following to detonate the car if the suicide bomber should hesitate.

I want to say a special word about militias. We have to provide the proper political and security environment so that people no longer feel the need for the protection of militias. The Iraqi army must be open to all Iraqi citizens and we must not accept militias operating under the flag of the Iraqi army.

II. IRAQI INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence is a central element for success in this war. Iraqi intelligence must operate and answer fully to the Iraqi government. It should address the needs of intelligence penetration, information gathering, and report to and be under the direction of the Iraqi government.

This is part of addressing a bigger issue, which is restoring Iraq's full sovereignty. Sovereignty is not a rhetorical question, it is rather an issue that makes Iraqis more responsible and more effective in fighting terrorism.

That leads us to a central matter: the necessity of organizing the relationship between the US military and the Iraqi military and security forces so that conflicts of perspectives and priorities can be avoided.

III. ENHANCING THE CAPABILITIES OF THE IRAQI FORCES: WEAPONS/TRAINING, & SOFA

Fast response and quick maneuvering of Iraqi units is essential in fighting terrorism. A legal agreement between the US military and the state of Iraq, such as a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) will enhance the maneuverability and rapid response of Iraqi units, which is necessary to defeat terrorists, who have the capability by many accounts of prominent US commanders, to maneuver fast and adopt new tactics. The Iraqi military and security forces should have the capabilities to outmaneuver and outsmart the terrorists.

Conventional heavy weapons must not be the basic choice to fight terrorists. The war against terrorism is not a war of firepower. It is a war of intelligence, and it is a war of social and political engagement, before military action. Frankly, only Iraqis understand enough about their own very complex and intricate society to pursue this goal.

In fighting such brutal terrorists, we should seek to achieve the most advanced and highest level of training of Iraqi troops. This training should focus on fast maneuverability and advanced fighting skills. The Iraqi military includes excellent and brave officers, but they were deprived from learning advanced military technologies and exposure to the latest developments. We also need to learn modern concepts of command and control, as President Bush said yesterday.

It is critical that we get the best possible training for our officers and soldiers. And the best place for that training is the United States. Therefore, we should take advantage of this historic opportunity to expand our level of co-operation to maximize the number of Iraqi officers and soldiers being trained here.

Increasing the number of the current Iraqi military and security forces is not necessarily the answer to fighting terrorism. What we need now is to enhance the capabilities of the Iraqi military, its training and its weapons, so that Iraqis will be able to stand in the face

of terrorism on their own. As President Bush says, as the Iraqis stand up, the US will stand down.

A capable and successful military force also requires good abilities in other important fields: administration, finance, logistics, and management. We need intensive and urgent training of a new generation of Iraqi leadership in these matters. We need a successful MoD, which can integrate, plan, and control all military efforts throughout Iraq. A successful MoD will have a procurement system with sufficient oversight procedures to prevent the theft of the money of the Iraqi people. As you may know, there are reports of astonishing corruption in the previous Iraqi Government. That money should have been used to fight terrorism, protect soldier's lives, and enhance our military capabilities, instead of going to dishonest dis-honest individuals.

This matter is appalling and it is unacceptable, specifically when we know for a fact that those corrupt monies are invested and banked in a neighboring country to Iraq considered to be a close ally to the US. We cannot be sincere in our efforts to fight terrorism and turn our back to these actions without proper punishment and then restoration of these monies to the Iraqi people.

PROTECTION OF INFRASTRUCTURE

Since it became clear to us that one of the terrorists highest priority is to attack infrastructure which will reduce oil exports—which are 97% of Iraq's income—and paralyze large cities, specifically Baghdad, in terms of electrical power, water, and fuel. This terrorist plan was meant to deprive Iraq of necessary funds needed to fight terrorism and undermine the government by showing it is ineffectual. And, as a result, to undermine the political process. Therefore, protection of the infrastructure became only a few months ago, one of the top priorities to fight terrorism in Iraq. In that regard, intelligence became very critical in preventing attacks before they happen and surveillance, such as aerial surveillance, came to be very important to detect terrorist actions against the infrastructure and delay and thwart them by rapidly bringing Iraqi forces and friendly forces to the scene.

In June, we learned that terrorists were planning to fully cut off electrical power, fuel supply lines, and water to Baghdad during the hot summer. In spite of the fact that Iraq is producing the highest amount of electrical power since more than a decade—exceeding five millions megawatts—due to intensive terrorist actions, we failed to transmit electrical power to Baghdad. However, the terrorists also failed to cut off power to Baghdad 100 per cent.

The same thing happened to fuel lines to Baghdad, which led us to put restrictions on the number of cars driven in Baghdad to reduce the consumption of gasoline.

Since the liberation of Baghdad, over two years ago, we and our American friends have been engaged in a crucial struggle in the war on terrorism. On behalf of myself and all Iraqis, I am enormously grateful for the sacrifice of brave and generous Americans, who have given so much that my people will live in freedom.

In sum, Iraq is a critical part of the War on Terrorism and winning this war can only be achieved by full co-operation between the United States and Iraq.