

Running Head: MILITARY TRANSITION TEAM

Military Transition Team – 4th Iraqi Army Division

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Military Transition Team, OIF III, Tikrit, Iraq, 03/22/05 to 11/08/05

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Abstract

This paper is about the Military Transition Team (MiTT) for the 4th Iraqi Army Division and the steps we took to accomplish our mission. Our team was responsible for training, advising, and equipping the Iraqi division for the hand over of battle space in north central Iraq. The paper discusses how we assessed the division and what we did to get them started and how that paid off in the move of the division to Tikrit. Finally, some of the things that are going well for the MiTT mission today.

Military Transition Team - 4th Iraqi Army Division

A Military Transition Team (MiTT) is a team of Soldiers that advise and train the Iraqi Army in personnel administration, intelligence, operations, logistics, and communications. MiTTs develop a partnership with Iraqi units in size from battalion to division, and prepare the Iraqi unit for eventual hand over of battle space. Before a unit is ready for battle space, they must show the ability to be self-sustaining tactically, operationally, and logistically. During Operation Iraqi Freedom III, I was the senior enlisted advisor to the 4th Iraqi Army Division. Our 11-Soldier team was just one of many MiTTs the 42nd Infantry Division was responsible to form. In this paper, I will discuss the mission and operations of our MiTT and touch on some shortfalls and lessons learned.

Our team mission was to organize, train, and equip the 4th Iraqi Army Division. During operations, provide coaching, mentoring, teaching, and advice to Iraqi leaders at all levels of command. The end state was the development of an Iraqi Army capable of planning and conducting unilateral operations in order to maintain security within Iraq and defend its sovereignty. There were three distinct phases of this mission:

1) Phase one, is the forming of Iraqi brigades and divisions. The 42nd Infantry Division forms partnerships (MiTT) with Iraqi units from battalion to division. Iraqi brigade and division staffs become staffed, equipped, and trained. The brigades and division maintain administrative control but tactical control remains with the coalition.

2) Phase two, produces independent brigades and continuing development of division capability. The MiTTs validate brigade level capabilities in achieving independent counter-insurgency operations in assigned sectors. Iraqi brigades assume command and control over subordinate battalions.

3) Phase three, produces independent divisions and developing Army headquarters. By this time, divisions are capable of independent counter-insurgency operations in their assigned

sectors. Coalition forces postured to deliver supporting effects and quick reactionary forces in support of Iraqi units.

We met up with the 4th Iraqi Army in its headquarters at Tuz, in the Salah Ad Din Province of Iraq. We spent several days building rapport, credibility, and value to our Iraqi counterparts. Without these three key factors established early, the team would be useless as advisors. With rapport established, we began making assessments on the current personnel strength, logistics, and operational & training readiness. With these areas assessed, we began to make a tentative plan on how to build the division from the floor up. The division-manning situation when we arrived was off the target established by the Military Tables of Organization & Equipment (MTOE). The officers were largely over strength compared to that of the enlisted soldiers. The team's biggest task was to get what the division actually had on the ground to match the paperwork. Our G1 spent many hours over the next seven months setting up systems to track all the facets of personnel administration.

The equipment needs for the division headquarters was enormous. When we arrived in April 2005, they only had about 50 weapons and 5 trucks. This was one area that we had to develop a plan for quickly. Getting them equipment served two purposes. One, it helped us build credibility with our counterparts. Two, it was a perfect training tool for the Iraqi G4 to learn about the importance of property accountability. By the time our team left Iraq we had signed over thousands of pieces of equipment and property.

Another area that fell under logistics was contracting. Since this was a fledgling Army and military they relied on a lot of contracting. Contracting assisted the country in rebuilding the economy and let the military focus on training. We assisted and advised the G4 on food, vehicle, and service contracts. The G4 advisor was able to coach and teach them how to properly manage these contracts.

After assessing the operational and training readiness of the division we determined that most of the soldiers of the division were not graduates of any formal military training. There were several training programs setup to train these soldiers on basic military skills, though they varied in length and content. We made getting soldiers to one of them a top priority. Well into phase two of this mission we began to send soldiers to Military Occupation Skill (MOS) qualifying schools such as signal, engineer, transportation, explosive ordnance disposal, and military police. To assist in teambuilding usually an entire company or platoon would attend these courses together.

The officers of the division were a little different. Most officers of the 4th Iraqi Division were in Saddam's Iraqi military prior to the United States Invasion. This was both good and bad news. The good news being they provided some military structure to a unit with little experience. In addition, the bad news was they had habits from the old regime and the old way of doing things. Some of the new officers could not read, write, or speak Arabic the official language. The positions they held came from knowing people in the new government.

In June 2005 the 42nd Infantry Division gave the order to have the 4th Iraqi Army Division move its headquarters from Tuz to Tikrit by August. This order had two problems from the start. One, the division was just starting to get on its feet with all the other problems we have been working. Two, nearly 70-percent of the division was Kurdish. How do you tell several hundred Kurds that you are moving their headquarters into the heart of the Sunni Triangle? We only had a couple of months to get this mission accomplished.

What support was the division needing from the 42nd ID and what were they asking the Iraqis to do, this was something the team needed to sit down and analyze. Responsibility for planning this operation belonged to the division. It would help us validate some of the training the staff had received earlier. Once we had all the info we presented the division staff with the

mission. They needed to use the Military Decision Making Process (MDMP) or their equivalent system in tackling the problem. The 42nd ID would only provide those resources that were not available to the Iraqis at the time.

One large obstacle was the amount of training the soldiers and officers had on convoys and combat patrols. To this point most had only attended the basic military training offered by the coalition. A two-week course that covered mostly weapons training and drill & ceremony. We would need to set up some sort of lane training that would assist the Iraqis in executing the actual move. This training could serve as rehearsals as well if we could identify the number of trucks and personnel on each serial. We also planned to give all soldiers additional weapons training that would assist them if the convoy came under fire. Managing a training event this big with the Iraqi Army proved to be difficult at best. We conducted the training on Forward Operating Base (FOB) Bernstein where we had the luxury of a large airfield to talk, walk, and run the Iraqis through training. Soldiers and officers of the 4th Iraqi Army Division Headquarters were over all pleased with the training they received prior to the move.

About four weeks prior to the move the division staff was able to make a leaders recon of their new home, FOB Dagger. This FOB is located in Tikrit and was the current home of the 1st Brigade, 3rd ID. A palace complex that once belonged to the family of Saddam, it sits on the west side of the Tigris River. Most of the division staff was in awe of the wealth that the former dictator enjoyed while so many others suffered. They would point and cuss at all the gaudy fixtures adorned with his initials, SH. This recon filled in many of the unanswered questions they had about billeting, dining, and motorpool space.

Two weeks prior to the move our team got the shock of our lives; we are not moving. This whole time we are coaching, teaching, and mentoring the staff to plan and resource this mission, the division commander is trying to convince Iraq that this move is a bad idea.

Therefore, until the commander tells them that they are moving no more work will be done. It took a decision brief to GEN Casey in order to get the division commander to understand that in order to control the Salah Ad Din Province his headquarters would need to be centrally located.

Finally, after an agonizing two months worth of planning the day of execution was here, 1 August 2005. The movement from Tuz to Tikrit was going to take us over 103 kilometers with nearly 100 vehicles and 500 personnel. The target would be tempting for any insurgent along the route, fortunately for us all the planning and training would not be necessary. The entire division made it to FOB Dagger without loss of life or equipment. In our eyes this was a major success, all we had done was paying off and it showed during the execution of this move.

Since our battle hand-off to the 101st ABN DIV MiTT the 4th Iraqi Army Division has assumed responsibility for the Salah Ad Din Province and is one of two divisions under complete control of the Armed Forces of Iraq. This mission of preparing the Iraqis for their own defense is crucial in our strategy to win the Global War on Terror and eventual exit Iraq. We must continue to put our best effort into this mission.

Early in the Military Transition Team concept there were many holes in the concept, today I believe those holes have been filled. By creating and training teams here in the states first we will be able to better resource them. Another good addition to the task was the creation of the Iraqi Assistance Group (IAG). They are assisting in the creation of policy and doctrine for the Iraqis.

This was a very rewarding task for me both professionally and personally. The things I have done and seen with this division and its soldiers give me hope that they truly want to be successful in defeating the insurgents. I have developed friendships with the soldiers and officers of the division that are still maintained today.

Lessons Learned

Issue: Interpreters

Discussion: A very important part of our daily job was to communicate with our counterparts. This was difficult sometimes due to the number of interpreters we had and the category (CAT I or II) of interpreters. Some of the information could not pass through a CAT I interpreter as the information was sensitive in nature. Written communication is also very important when advising and takes a very talented interpreter to that work.

Recommendation: MiTT teams need an appropriate number of well-qualified interpreters no matter the cost.

Issue: Equipment

Discussion: Most equipment used by our MiTT team was not top of the line. Units that provided equipment did not send the best they had or the most current. This left most MiTT teams ill prepared for the mission and placed in jeopardy the success of this mission.

Recommendation: The Army or those units supporting the MiTT teams need to provide the very best equipment they have or can afford to supply.

Issue: What should the Iraqi Army look like?

Discussion: We went into this mission with no idea what the outcome was to look like. Were we to follow the American or the British military model? There were different styles and tactics taught by the teams because there was no one standard model to follow.

Recommendation: There is a need to place advisors at the highest level (Ministry of Defense) first, prior to placing them at the lowest level (battalion).