

## **Senate Democratic Policy Committee Hearing**

### **“An Oversight Hearing on the Planning and Conduct of the War in Iraq: When Will Iraqi Security Forces Be Able to ‘Stand Up,’ So American Troops Can Begin to ‘Stand Down’?”**

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October 12, 2006

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Phillip Carter. I am from California. Until recently, I served as the S3, or operations officer, for Task Force Blue, the police advisory task force in the Diyala province of Iraq. I served in Iraq from October 2005 to September 2006.

We lived and worked in downtown Baqubah at the provincial governance center, where we were embedded with the provincial joint coordination center and just a few hundred meters away from the police station. Diyala is a province comprising 1.4 million citizens, stretching from Baghdad’s outskirts east to Iran and north to Kurdistan. We frequently called Diyala “little Iraq,” because its diverse geography and demographics made it a microcosm of the country. My responsibility was to plan, coordinate and manage police and corrections advisory operations in the Diyala province, and for a time, in the South Salah Ah Din province as well. In addition to my advisory and planning role, I also led one or two combat missions per week, such as long range patrols to deliver police recruits to the Baghdad airport for movement to the police academy in Jordan. My team served at the leading edge of the U.S. effort to stand up the Iraqi security forces, and it is from that perspective that I speak with you today.

Despite the violence which swirled around our compound, and the trend towards consolidation of U.S. units onto massive super-bases in the desert, my team remained in downtown Baqubah. We shared our compound with the Diyala provincial government and its joint coordination center; the compound adjoined the provincial courthouse, and was just 800 meters down the street from the provincial police headquarters. Our proximity made us more effective, both because it made it easier for us to engage the Iraqi leaders with whom we worked, and because our experience living downtown helped us to understand our Iraqi counterparts. When the Iraqi power grid failed or water supply stopped working, we knew and felt those events first-hand. Likewise, when explosions or firefights erupted in the city, we heard and felt them, and could so judge their severity with our own senses. We learned that counterinsurgency cannot be conducted from afar.

During this time, I observed tangible progress by the Iraqi police towards their goal of being an independent, competent, self-sustaining police force capable of providing security and upholding the rule of law. We oversaw the training of thousands of new police, or police who had served under the old regime, and the growth of the police force to its full strength of approximately 9,200. My team facilitated the transfer of hundreds of vehicles, rifles, machine guns, and radios to the police. In conjunction with our civilian police advisers, we ran local training on street survival skills and investigative skills. We also advised, coached, mentored and assisted the police leadership, both in public and private, and saw improvements in their ability to manage the force. Objectively, the police force in Diyala improved during my tenure as an adviser.

We also enjoyed success in our efforts to promote the rule of law. We learned that the jails were the “center of gravity” for the entire legal system – they provided a place where we could check the work of the cops, courts, and jailers all in one spot. Iraq’s jails also represented a major point of contact between the Iraqi people and their legal system. Improving the jails would go a long way towards building the faith of the people in Iraq’s laws and legal institutions. In March 2006, the Diyala jail population spiked at 475; my team launched a major initiative to reduce this population through focused engagements with Iraqi judges, jail officials, and police leaders; review of detainee cases; and personal visits to detention facilities. Over the next six months, we watched the detainee population drop to 250, where it remained until my departure, thanks to continued pressure and oversight. Throughout this initiative, we worked through our Iraqi counterparts, pushing them to find Iraqi answers to the problems in their system, hoping that this would lead to enduring solutions. Only time will tell whether we made a lasting impact on the system. But at the very least, we made a difference for the hundreds of detainees whose freedom we secured by pushing the Iraqi legal system to work according to Iraqi law.

However, despite our successes in developing the police and promoting the rule of law, we still saw the security situation deteriorate. As the public reports make quite clear, all attack trends continue to move in an upward direction, with the greatest violence directed at the Iraqi security forces, followed by the Iraqi population, trailed by U.S. forces. This is the great paradox of the Iraq war in fall 2006: how can we be succeeding at developing the Iraqi army and police, while the insurgency continues to become stronger, broader, deeper, and more lethal? I struggle with this question daily. I have come to believe that standing up the Iraqi security forces is a blueprint for withdrawal – but it is not a victory strategy. At best, it will let us substitute Iraqi soldiers and policemen for American troops, but it will not lead to ultimate victory in Iraq.

We know what it takes to win a counterinsurgency. The academic literature, including works by T.E. Lawrence and David Galula, makes it clear that the objective of counterinsurgency is the people. Instead of a military operation, I envision counterinsurgency as an election campaign. Elections are won by spending resources to communicate a message, and by actually delivering public goods to the people. Victory is accomplished by persuading people to choose one side over another through a

combination of these means. Likewise, in counterinsurgency, we can only win if we convince the Iraqis to choose our side over that of the insurgents. Lawrence wrote in his memoirs that it takes the tacit support of just two in 100 to sustain an insurgency. Given the recent survey which found that 60 percent of the Iraqis supported the insurgency, at least passively, it is clear that this is a daunting challenge.

In my experience, the U.S. military has done an exceptional job at doing what it knows how to do – building an Iraqi military. Unfortunately, we have neglected the other aspects of the job, with telling results. Senior military leaders called 2006 the “year of the police.” But when the time came to allocate resources to this fight – to put their money where their mouths were – we received less than we needed. In Diyala, we continually stretched our military police and civilian police adviser assets to conduct the mission with economy of force. We visited the stations in the key city of Baqubah frequently, but neglected those throughout the rest of the province, because we had only enough assets to visit them a few times a month, if that. Contrast this to the military’s practice of embedding adviser teams in each battalion of the Iraqi army, and committing vast amounts of staff time and resources to the army development effort.

This is unfortunate. Arguably, developing a police force is more important during a counterinsurgency campaign than developing an army. In the few successful counterinsurgencies of the 20th Century, such as Malaya, the police played the central role in dismantling the enemy through investigations, intelligence, connections with the community and dogged pursuit of those who create disorder. An army can provide security, but it does so at the price of civil society. Ultimately, if the U.S. is to plant democracy in Iraq, it must do so by developing a viable police force capable of both providing security and upholding the rule of law.

I remain optimistic that U.S. soldiers can continue to do good in Iraq, and that their presence continues to help the Iraqi people build a better society. However, I am unsure that we can achieve our stated national goals in Iraq with the resources we have committed to the effort. I believe that an unconventional strategy — emphasizing adviser teams like mine, engaged with the Iraqi security forces and people — can continue to make progress. But to be successful, we must link the hard work of these brave men and women to a larger counterinsurgency strategy which wins the support of the Iraqi people by making good on our nation’s promises to them.