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# Iraqi Security Forces Take Advantage of Stability to Grow

By Fred W. Baker III  
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, March 4, 2008 – Iraq's security forces have taken advantage of security gains to grow their force both in size and quality, the senior U.S. commander in charge of helping the Iraqis develop their forces said today.

"They have made significant progress in size, quantity and in quality, and some of the things that were on the table, in terms of difficulties, are now off the table," said Army Lt. Gen. James Dubik, commander of Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq. The command is responsible for helping the Iraqi government in developing, organizing, training, equipping and sustaining the country's security forces.

Iraqis added more than 100,000 members to the ranks of their army, air force, navy and national police, mostly during the last six months of 2007. Last year, the army grew by more than 60,000, with more than 42,000 in the last half of the year, Dubik said. The national police grew by 8,000 in 2007, all of it in the last half of 2007.

The Iraqi government wants about 600,000 combined military and police forces and hopes to reach that number in 2010, Dubik said. As of the end of last year, there were about 531,000 combined forces -- more than 180,000 in the military, more than 340,000 in the police forces, and about 3,000 in special operations forces. Iraqi security forces now number 12 divisions, 42 brigades, 146 battalions, and four commando battalions.

"They are on a growth path where they can sustain this size of force, both with money and with equipment," Dubik said.

Developing leadership continues to be a problem for Iraqi security forces, Dubik said. They now have only about 73 percent of the officers and 69 percent of the noncommissioned officers they need. The forces are high on lower- and senior-ranking officers, but are short of mid-grade officers. The Iraqis are also short of senior noncommissioned officers, Dubik said. The national police force has replaced all its nine brigade commanders and 17 of 28 battalion commanders in an effort to improve police leadership, the general added.

The Iraqi security forces are making progress developing their logistics base, Dubik said. While the focus to this point has been on developing a maneuver force, the Iraqis now are starting to develop their other combat support systems, such as logistics, aviation, intelligence and others.

“Logistics, actually, is making some good progress. It will be until the end of this year to learn a different logistics position, but you can already see here some of the changes,” Dubik said.

To date, Iraq has built eight of a planned 13 logistics bases. Each has its own maintenance and dining facilities. Nine of 12 planned motor transport regiments are in place, Dubik said. They allow division commanders to move supplies from logistics bases to the brigades and battalions.

In aviation, the Iraqis have doubled the number of pilots from last year. They are up from 30 missions a week to more than 300 a week, Dubik said. Iraqi pilots fly Huey II and Mi-17 helicopters and have fixed-wing surveillance and reconnaissance platforms. They also have three C-130s. Plans are to double the number of pilots this year, Dubik said.

For intelligence, 10 division reconnaissance units have been formed. Twelve divisions have signal companies that run the command-and-control element.

The force will spend 2008 integrating the concerned local citizens who have helped with local security efforts into the police force. Last year, about 10,000 were hired in Anbar province, and about 12,000 have been hired in Baghdad in the past five months, Dubik said. When finished, Dubik said, he expects about 20,000 of the 80,000 concerned local citizens will be serving in the police forces.

The Iraqi military also is buying more equipment, the general said. In 2007, the country had about \$20 million worth of equipment delivered, but so far this year the total is more than \$1 billion.

Dubik also said that recent polls show Iraqis are more confident in their forces.

“Of course, all progress is marked by posing new sets of problems -- and we do have new sets of problems, but they're new,” he said. “And as the person in charge of helping them develop their security forces, as long as we're moving onto new problems, I'm satisfied.”