

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL BRYAN BEQUETTE, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING SUPPORT, CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM TIME: 10:00 A.M. EDT DATE: THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2008

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SEAMAN WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Hello, I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Blogger(s) Roundtable for Thursday, October 30th, 2008. My name is Seaman William Selby with the Office of the Secretary of Defense-Public Affairs, and I will be moderating the call today.

Note to the bloggers on the line today: Please remember to clearly state your name and blogger organization in advance of your question. Please respect our guest's time, keeping questions succinct.

Today our guest is Colonel Bryan Bequette. Did I say that right, ma'am? Make sure I'm pronouncing it right.

STAFF: Yeah. SEAMAN SELBY: And he is director of training support, Civilian Police Assistance Training Team. And Colonel Bequette, if you have an opening statement, you can go ahead with that.

COL. BEQUETTE: I don't have much of an opening statement. Kind of -- I'll describe for these gentlemen what it is that I do over here.

Part of this CPATT team working for Major General Cannon, who, coincidentally, is in the United States right now with Deputy Minister Ayden, who's in charge of Iraqi police services and Lieutenant General Hussein al Awady who is their -- he's the commanding general of the national police. He took them to the States for the Proval Marshal (ph) General Conference and also go by the military police school at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, to show him some of the current policing techniques and skills and training academies that we have.

But my job working for General Cannon is to oversee the training side of work that we provide to the MOI. I work closely -- (sound) -- did someone else just join?

Q Yes. Claire Russoe just joined.

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, Claire.

COL. BEQUETTE: Okay. Good afternoon. This is Colonel Bryan Bequette, and I'm just explaining what it is that I do.

As the director of training support, I advise and work with the vice deputy minister for training and standardization in the MOI, and that is Major General Dr. Jassim (ph). He is over all of training and standardization, all curriculum approval, and all training and strategic management comes out of his office.

I work with him in developing training center throughput, talking which provinces need capacity, and working with coalition forces as far as what we're going to build and provide, and then also the international police advisory trainers that we have out there -- former police officers, most of all from the U.S., that are over here in contract positions advising at those training centers work for me as well.

We just put it all together, assisting the Iraqis. Most of what we do is now in overwatch and assist, and there is very little that we actually substitute capacity. We've been finishing a fourth- generation model where we've been helping them crank out huge numbers of new recruits. We're continuing to develop big numbers of recruits, but at the same time we're also starting to add to the professional training -- investigator courses, follow-on leadership courses, management courses and things like that -- as we start working on the professionalism of the force along and in parallel with the size of it.

In a nutshell, that's kind of what I do. We're the -- I have the eyes and ears for CPATT as far as training assistance because my instructor -- my international police advisors are literally in every province here in Iraq, and they send in daily reports. And if we need to get something out to the field to help the Iraqis, then we can do it through that conduit. That's about what we do.

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, sir. And we'll go ahead and take some questions from the bloggers right now.

And D.J. Elliot was first on the line.

Q Yes, sir. This is D.J. Elliot with the Long War Journal.

I've been seeing a lot of reporting on the emergency response brigades and so on in the Iraqi press, things like mention of a fourth emergency division and a fifth emergency police corps. And I've also seen mentioned in the last 90-10 of the emergency response brigades getting their own training centers. Could you fill in any of that?

COL. BEQUETTE: Okay, I'll start with the -- trying to keep up with the acronyms over here as far as which units are being stood up is a sport in itself. But the ERB, the emergency response brigade, used to be part of the national police, but since I've been here in July it's off on its own. It reports directly to the minister of the Interior. The emergency response brigade does its own training. It selects its own candidates, and it has an ongoing sustainment training program, and they also rely on our special forces for some of their training. They're married up with operational detachments that provide them sustainment training. That's the emergency response brigade, and there is only one of those.

We are starting to have some of the provinces stand up what they'd call emergency response units. Those units -- we're working with the Iraqis to further develop a standard mission set or a unit of that type, but my

understanding of their basic job is that they're there as kind of a defense force or an auxiliary force or a reserve that can be called out in a province if there's a hot spot, a station that needs defense, some kind of little civil disturbance or something like that. And this unit that's a little more trained as a collective task unit would go out in those type things.

Some of those units are getting training from coalition forces partners out in the provinces through the IPA operations (in the 15s ?), but right now there's not a formal system or training academy for ERUs.

The fourth team emergency division, I've heard that term but that's not -- I don't know anything specific about a unit that specifically is named that. Within the national police, they're just standing up their third division, but I don't know about a fourth division.

Q Just as a quick follow up, I -- my suspicion is that may be what they're calling the Kurdish special police. I just can't confirm it anywhere.

COL. BEQUETTE: I haven't heard it -- I haven't heard the special police referred to as that or a -- I mean, a Kurdish special police force.

SEAMAN SELBY: Okay. You still there, DJ?

Q Yep, still here.

SEAMAN SELBY: Okay. That answered your question, right?

Q Yeah.

SEAMAN SELBY: Okay. And Mr. Fishman, if you want to go next?

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your service. If you could talk a little bit about, aside from the micro-level to the macro-level, how is the interaction -- obviously, logistics, maintenance, life support, those are pretty critical issues when we look three to five to seven years in the future. How is that coming about with the -- with the federal government in Baghdad being able to assist the national police and the local police units and being able to institutionalize so that they can start to run their own units once we finish the drawdown?

COL. BEQUETTE: You know, that's a major concern for us right now is that the leaders -- they seem pretty adept at the tactical level and they're getting it and they're leading their units, but they're just not as deeply experienced in the logistics and the management and the administration part of it.

From a trainer's perspective, we're going through right now and scrubbing all of the curriculums -- the officer curriculums, commissioner curriculums, trying to put more administrative and logistics training in those curriculums so that when they get out and they're actually managing or leading a unit that they can take care of all those functions. We see it -- that it's definitely not a skillset that they're as adept in as, say, the United States military, as far as providing logistically for the training centers especially. The training centers in the provinces all fall under the provincial directors of police for sustainment. We have -- some of the training centers where we're still in the lead for life support, but most of those will end over the next six months to a year. We have a lot of training centers that we've recently turned

over a lot of the logistic support to and the life support, and they have challenges with it.

The biggest thing is fuel, keeping fuel going to those centers, managing contracts for dining facilities, keeping their local electrical generation going as far as generators -- they just don't have the mindset of sustained maintenance like we have within our military. But they're trying and by different provinces, there's different levels of success. A lot of it has to do with the scale of what we call the PDOP -- the professional -- provincial director of police. Some of them have better administrative and logistical skills than the others, and it kind of shows in those provinces.

But that's partly what my international police advisers -- other than just being training advisers, they also advise and assist in mentoring and logistical support. And then also we have a lot of logistics folks on our Ministry of Interior transition team. We're -- got a lot of log folks over there helping the ministry create capacity in order to be able to logistically support itself as well.

But it is a challenge right now at the training center -- especially at the training centers -- keeping all that up and going. August was tough, of course, because of the heat, and the demand for power and air conditioning. Some are getting it, some aren't, but we're working with them to try to get them to where they are getting it.

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, sir.

And Claire, you were next.

Q Sir, I was just wondering if you could talk a bit about the different needs of the provinces, specifically, provinces like Salahuddin and Diyala that are sort of slower to come around, Ninevah versus something like Anbar that's made more progress, and then as I would imagine, some of the southern provinces that you've had less trouble recruiting in.

COL. BEQUETTE: If your question is specifically about recruiting, I don't have anything to do with recruiting.

Q No, sir. Not just about recruiting. But just -- if it's possible to talk about some of the different needs of the different provinces. I don't know if you have information delineated in that way.

COL. BEQUETTE: I don't really have information stratified that way. Some provinces -- one would take Kirkuk, for instance. Kirkuk just graduated a big class, and they finished out their training but not hired -- hired but untrained. So they no longer have what we call a backlog. They have every -- (inaudible) -- going into the force now is trained.

They've also had females recruit -- that they've trained through their training center. Their class that graduated 58 females. So Kirkuk's a little more progressive. They have a very involved PDOP. The training center's well involved with the field, so we see a lot of positive results from that. Interesting, though, Kirkuk has no billets, no (defact ?). It's basically the students come in every day and they leave every afternoon. So they don't face the life support issues just because they simply don't have any. But they're also locating a new training center, and they'll build one in that province.

It's interesting going into some of the other provinces that previously were picked and the Brits were in. We're going back in and helping them kind of reenergize their academies in -- (audio break) -- Dhi Qar, Muthanna. We've gone done and done assessments for them and helped their PDOPs with the road ahead on how to kind of develop a training center in order that they can be more effective.

Anbar's having -- I just came from Anbar today.

We were out there visiting Fallujah. And they're having some logistical problems, especially fuel, trying to keep the generators going and keeping the appropriation and the authorization for fuel married up together with the delivery. But they're -- they're making headway.

They've been -- then we have a national police. They're very aggressive in training their recruits wherever they can find a seat. Of course, they're nationally focused, so they don't mind training across provinces. I will say that it's kind of interesting that most PDOPs are very reluctant to send their recruits cross-province. So even though there may be a capacity, availability in one province, the neighboring province's PDOP isn't willing to send their new hires or their new recruits over there.

I've got some provinces with good training centers, but they don't seem to be attacking the backlog as aggressively as others.

Does that kind of get to what you were looking at?

Q Yes, sir. I just wonder about places like Diyala and Salahuddin where the security situation is a little tougher and how that's affecting the progression of the police forces versus somewhere like Anbar that you would -- as you said, have started to progress and is starting to deal with more administrative and logistic issues.

COL. BEQUETTE: Diyala has actually been okay because at the -- (inaudible) -- there by Ashraf has a pretty extensive security -- you know, there's a lot of security there and the training center was actually on a coalition FOB -- forward operating --

Q Oh, okay.

COL. BEQUETTE: So in Diyala, it was very easy for the PDOP to get his recruits to the training center, and then we had a very secure area to train so we didn't really have a lot of troubles in that respect. But Ninevah and Mosul, you know, that's pretty tough right now. It's hard to keep the capacity full because of the security situation, because -- especially when you can train more, but those students would have to come on a daily -- if you can get them in and keep them overnight and keep them for the full four weeks, that's better. But if you've got to bring the students in and out every day, then you've got to have a pretty secure area to do that or a stable situation like they had in Kirkuk during the last couple of months to be able to do that. Mosul suffers from not being able to do that right now and their training center's only a 500-capacity, so they've been a little slow to train up recruits. But we're expanding that this month to 1,000 temporarily, and then we'll do a full -- a full expansion will be in place permanently within a couple of months, and they'll be able to train 1,000 students at a time.

Mosul and Ninevah has had it's challenge due to the security environment in Mosul. But other than that in Mosul none of the training centers really stick out as far as having trouble within the security around the area of being able to train their students.

Q Thank you very much, sir.

COL. BEQUETTE: You bet.

SEAMAN SELBY: Okay. And do we have some follow up questions?

DJ?

Q Just one concerning the national police. I heard something about them getting their own mechanized division -- (inaudible) -- down in Qadisiyah. Do you have any data on that?

COL. BEQUETTE: No, sir. I know -- that their organization -- that they have a mechanized brigade. And other than seeing it on an org -- organization chart, I have never been out and visited the battalions or seen the battalions at the training centers. I know that -- organization-wise, that they have currently a brigade, but I haven't heard that that would grow to a division.

Q I've got a follow-up then, sir.

Can you talk a little bit about your personal experiences? You mentioned you were out in Anbar, and you've been through most of the country. What are you seeing on the ground in the last few weeks versus when your tour first started versus the end-state? Just what are your personal impressions and observations?

COL. BEQUETTE: I think when I first got here, I've seen -- I've already seen an increase in -- I'll call it discipline, professionalism -- the training centers seem to be -- trying to be more and more professional, more regimented. The students seem a little more confident. The training seems a little better structured. The national police -- I have noticed in the national police, they just seem to be very aggressive about wanting to become a force that's relied on. They're becoming more confident. They seem to be doing well in their operations. But their leadership is just very aggressive about moving ahead with good training, solid training. They're -- like I said earlier, they're aggressive about training their new recruits and then we're training with the NATO -- the Carabaniери out of Italy train at one of our base camps we call Camp Dublin on the Victory Base complex where we bring in a battalion at a time and they train them on advanced skills, refresher skills.

And the course that came in this last time -- usually we had to do a lot of pushing and a lot of prodding to get the unit organized and get them in process. This last battalion that came in, the leadership was in control from the jumpstart. They were barking orders. (Audio break) -- short of the police were executing those orders. They had high morale and they looked very professional coming in, much more professional, this group coming in, than the group when I first got here, when they came in. And that was one of the -- that's the first battalion from the brand new third division that's training right now.

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, sir.

And Jarred, did you have any follow-ups?

Q Well, another one about -- we talked a little about logistics, but how about the pay problem? How is that going as far as bringing in Sons of Iraq or the Sawa (ph) or the other forces into the police? How is -- obviously, we see different reports here in the States about the effectiveness, about the Sons of Iraq and how they're being assimilated into the security forces. Can you talk a little bit about that issue, please?

COL. BEQUETTE: From -- from my perspective in the training, I guess I take it as a good thing -- when a class loads and they're for training, we have no idea if they're Sons of Iraq or not. You may be able to tell that they're Arab, but they don't stick out in the class as far as this group is segregated as Sons of Iraq, or -- you really can't tell.

My -- my instructors, my ITAs -- they have no idea who's a Sons of Iraq hire and who's not. The pay -- the only thing that we get involved with with pay that gets tough is that it's still a cash-based system. So if you're trying to run an eight-week basis recruit training, somewhere in that eight weeks you've got to pay the Sherta and then allow them to have a weekend to be able to take that pay back home to families to be able to pay bills.

So not having the electronic banking, electronic funds, deposits and all that kind of puts a crimp in the training every once in a while for having to bring the cash officer in and have them disperse the pay. But for those two kind of questions, pay -- that's the only issue we have.

And then Sons of Iraq and the training centers, I wouldn't be able to tell you who might be a Sons of Iraq hire and who wasn't.

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, sir.

And, Claire, did you have any follow-up questions?

Q No, I don't think so.

SEAMAN SELBY: DJ or Jared, did you want to follow up anymore?

Q No, I think I've got it.

Q Well, sir, could you talk a little about -- I mean, it's -- it's a good sign you can't tell who the Sons of Iraq are, but are you getting any reports about how they are -- are there numbers of Sons of Iraq being brought into the police, because obviously one of the issues is that they're not? You know, people -- some reports show that in Baghdad they're not giving jobs to the Sons of Iraq, and that eventually that's going to be caused for great concern down the road. Other reports say, yes, they are being -- are you able to get any kind of handle about if they are being accepted as recruits? COL. BEQUETTE: I don't know the numbers because that's not my lane. And the HR -- you could have our HR folks on, possibly in the near future, they might be able to talk specifics for you. But I do know that hiring packets are moving, and there are some being hired. But I don't know in what size numbers. Of course, it, you know -- Central -- is kind of a Baghdad issue. A lot of it has to do with Baghdad, I know, but as far as the numbers out of the training centers, I don't know how many students loading in each class might be Sons of Iraq hires and which ones aren't.

And we no longer even -- we will sometimes get a request for is the class -- what's the sectarian makeup, the demographics of the class? We no longer and we discourage going and collecting that type of data because it's not on any of the administrative forms or anything that's tracked by the training centers. And the instructors and the training center deans will tell you it's more disruptive to do that type of questioning because the classes are mixed together when they come, and they're trained that way. Mixed together. And to take the time to query to find out the demographics is more harmful to the class.

Q Good point. And then -- since I just have a few more minutes -- how about the training for even here in the United States where you have the Internal Affairs divisions to try to keep an eye on either penetration of Al Qaeda or Hezbollah into the police force or just general fraud and corruption -- how is that going?

COL. BEQUETTE: That's kind of in our professionalism lane -- line of operation. I know the Internal Affairs are trying to train -- sorry, I don't have their numbers. I want to say close to around 900 folks, but I know that they're going to be training their own officers. They start with the basic recruit training as well, and then they have follow-on investigator training and Internal Affairs training. And those curriculums and courses, we're ramping up so that the I.A. can get the kind of numbers they need over the -- (audio break) -- year.

The actual curriculum is designed by the I.A. Division, but of course course that'll go through (name inaudible) for him to give the training standards approval on. And I know they're doing the training in smaller numbers right now than what they want to, but along the line of professionalization, that's definitely forces that are being ramped up.

That's probably the big tall ticket item right now is investigator training -- basic investigator and advanced investigator. Now that we've got a handle on providing the numbers to the field the next thing they want is good, quality investigative training that is producing the kind of cases that the law -- rule of law folks (audio break).

SEAMAN SELBY: Thank you, sir.

COL. BEQUETTE: You bet.

Q And any more follow-ups?

Okay, well, thank you. And thank you to the bloggers for all your questions and comments today. And I'd like to ask Colonel Bequette, if you have any final comments, you can go ahead with that right now.

COL. BEQUETTE: No real comments. I hope I was of some assistance. I hope I enlightened somebody about something, that I hope I didn't waste your time this afternoon. But I appreciate it. Q Thank you very much, sir.

Q No sir. Yeah, you didn't waste any of our time. It was very insightful.

And today's program will be available online at the Bloggers' link on dod.mil, where you'll be able to access a story based on today's call along with source documents such as the audio file and print transcript.

Again, thank you very much, sir, and thank you to our blogger participants. This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time.

END.