

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR GENERAL NELSON J. CANNON,
DIRECTOR GENERAL, CIVILIAN POLICE ASSISTANCE TRAINING TEAM, MULTINATIONAL
SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM IRAQ SUBJECT: THE RULE
OF LAW; PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE IRAQI POLICE TIME: 11:01 A.M. EDT DATE:
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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG, (Office of the Secretary of Defense for
Public Affairs): Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of
Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday (sic), April 15th, 2009.

My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of the Secretary
of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating our call today.

A note to the bloggers on the line today. Please clearly state your
name and the organization you're with.

And today our guest is Major General Nelson Cannon. He's the director
general for Civilian Police Assistance Training Team, Multinational Security
Transition Command-Iraq. Major General Cannon will discuss the police primacy
and rule of law and the professionalization of the Iraqi police.

And before I turn it over to the general, who joined us, please?

MR. BURDEN: This is Matt Burden, from Blackfive.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Matt, you're number three on the list.

So with that, Major General Cannon, let me turn it over to you. The
floor is yours.

GEN. CANNON: Great. Good morning, everybody.

MR. : Good morning, sir.

GEN. CANNON: The first thing I'd like to do is, I go by the name of
Jerry, even though formally it is Nelson Cannon; but I go by Jerry. So if you'd
do that for me, then everybody would know it was me.

But I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this morning and
talk about what we do here at MNSTC-I. CPATT falls under MNSTC-I.

And CPATT stands, if you don't know, for Civilian Police Assistance
Training Team. And our mission is to assist the ministry of interior in their

building of professional and credible police forces. And in addition to doing that, we also work with the ministry to help them build a capacity to manage their police forces.

And so historically we've dealt with issues like man, train and equip. We're just -- we'll probably wrap that up this year. And in the future, we'll be looking at more in tune with things like professionalizing the force with specialized training, things like that. I'm the director of CPATT. I've seen many firsthand accomplishments since I've been here. I've been here just about a year. And the police forces; you know, we want them to be trusted and a viable force in their community.

And we talk about police primacy. And we've arrived at our own definition. And I should say that when we developed the definition, we did it in concert with the ministry of interior. And the definition is quite simply, Iraqi police forces have primary responsibility for internal security, under civilian authority, in accordance with the constitution and consistent with the rule of law.

And when you take that and try to translate it into Arabic, it comes out perfect. And so we wanted to make sure, when we did that, that we had buy-in from everybody involved. So the minister has adopted that. General Odierno has approved that. And so that's sort of out there on the horizon. That's exactly what we're trying to work towards.

And they've made tremendous progress moving in that direction. Obviously they've come a long way. And they probably still have a way to go. But we're proud of what's been accomplished to date, not only at the national level but down to the local level. And they have many different varieties of police. And I would like to make one distinction right now.

When we talk about police officers, when we're comparing maybe to a European or a Western model, in Iraq, they have two levels of police. Officers are what we would describe as akin to what we're used to as police officers. But they also have a second category called shurta. And shurta are more like, if you're familiar with police models, would be like a community service officer.

They don't really do in-depth investigations. They can detain somebody. They would get specialized training to maybe work intersection for traffic control or security at a gate or things like that. The officers are actually responsible to do all that kind of follow-through. So when we assimilate different kinds of police forces, everybody thinks in terms of officers. That's not quite the case.

And so the big transition is bringing all the police forces, across the government of Iraq, into the Ministry of Interior.

So while we have many accomplishments, we always seem to be finding ourself a little bit on the slippery slope, because they'll bring in another organization: oil police, for example, or the facility protection police, or the electric police. And all of a sudden, when we thought we were just about reducing the backlog of untrained shirts, all of a sudden we pick up another 50(,000) or 100,000 we got to train as well.

Our mission at MNSTC-I and CPATT is to be assistants to the Iraqi government. We do a lot of different things for them, but we always keep in

mind that we want them to be able to start doing things for themselves. And they've actually made great strides in that regard as well.

I'll tell you, I could probably go on and on just with the introduction, but I certainly want to make sure that we save some time for some questions. Let me tell you real quickly about myself. I'm a National Guardsman from Michigan. I'm a career police officer myself. Been a police officer for 39 years. And so this has been a natural fit for me to come in here. I'm in the Military Police Corps, so historically both roles have served me very well.

And it's been a perfect fit this last year working with Deputy Minister Ayden, who is the primary or the principal deputy minister that I work with as far as mentoring. We're about the same age. We have the same career path. So we just sort of hit it off pretty good, and he's the right guy at the right time to lead this organization through the tremendous transition that they're going through.

So I'll sort of end the opening comments with that, and hopefully that'll leave us a little bit of time for some questions.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Let's turn it over to Marisa. Marisa, you're first.

Q Hi, sir. Thank you so much. This is Marisa Cochrane with the Institute for the Study of War. My first question is if you could just give us the details on the current timeline for the transition to police primacy and whether or not it will be staggered across the country. And if it will be staggered, what places do you see will be the first cities or provinces to be transitioned? And then which cities will be the last? (Pause.)

Hello? Sir? LT. CRAGG: Major Burks (sp), are you still there?

Major Burks (sp), are you all still there?

I don't know if they dropped off on the call. Sorry about this, guys. Just give it a second. I conferenced them into the call this morning, so let me just e-mail them real quick to make sure they haven't dropped off, okay?

Q Sounds good.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. (Extended pause.) (Audio break.)

I'm going to give him a quick call.

Do you all mind waiting for a second?

Q No, that's fine. Thanks.

Q No problem. (Extended pause.)

LT. CRAGG: (Off mike) -- you all. Can you hear me?

Q Yup.

Q Yes.

Q Yes, ma'am.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. I apologize: I need everyone to hang up and call back in to the phone line, the reason being -- is I'm going to have to conference the general into the conference call. So if everyone can hang up and call back in. I apologize for the delay.

Q Okay. No problem.

(Extended pause.)

LT. CRAGG: Sir, can you hear me?

GEN. CANNON: Yes.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, perfect. Now we'll just wait for everyone to come back in and we'll get started.

(Logistics clarifications not transcribed.)

Marisa? Maris?

Q Marisa.

Sorry. Let's go ahead with you. Go ahead and get started.

Q Sure. Sir, my question is, what is the current timeline for the transition to police (primacy)? And will it be staggered across the country? If so, what places do you envision will be transitioned first, and what cities will be transitioned later?

GEN. CANNON: Well, Marisa, the timeline is not going to work across the country at exactly the same time. It's sort of dependent on the region or the province. And so we have some provinces that in most respects are ready to assume. As a matter of fact, there was a recent meeting with all the jeedops (ph), the provincial police chiefs, and many of them said, "Hey, we're ready to go right now." And we do not know if that's exactly the case across the board, but we know in some places they are ready. But for all intents and purposes they're doing it now, but of course you've got this backdrop and safety net with the Iraqi army and obviously the coalition force.

And so, some places the timeline could move to the left, and in other cases, you know, it might have to move to the right. Obviously, in some of the hot areas, the police are still going to need support of the Iraqi army and probably the coalition forces to some extent.

Did I answer your question?

Q It does. I have a few others, but I'll wait till it's my turn again.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. We're going to go back and forth between you and Matt. So Matt, please go ahead.

Q Sir, just in your tenure, since you've been there a year, what is the biggest change you've witnessed? And I would probably ask if you could comment on the Ministry of the Interior. I'm imagining the management's probably the biggest challenge, but I'd like to hear your idea on that.

GEN. CANNON: Well, you know, when I first got here the mission was to train all these different kinds of police and get them up to a standard. And so, you know, they had a standard of -- you know, it used to be, like, six months to train. And we've really -- there was a lot of marching involved. And we said, you know, what's it really going to take?

And we took them down to about a two-month program, and in some of the areas where it was really urgent, we got them to do that same training -- it's 240 hours -- to do that in a month, four weeks. And so that was the big push, to get them trained, to help build police stations, to build training centers, to buy equipment. And as I said earlier in my opening remarks, we sort of worked through that. We're coming down to the final stages of that.

But in that process, we've come to realize that the capacity in that ministry, to grow from a number of employees of, you know, maybe five, six years ago, of 60,000, upwards of 600,000, nobody really gave the proper attention. And obviously, you know, there was a war going on and all that, but, you know, how do you manage just administratively a workforce of that size?

If you took any organization, you know, like ma and pa's grocery store, and turned them into Wal-Mart, you can't do that. I mean, you got to really do that kind of slowly.

And so you're right; the ministry has been a tremendous challenge. How do you support a force that large spread across, at least for the MOI, the Ministry of Interior, 15 different provinces? So how do you maintain vehicles? How do you get fuel to them? How do you get supplies to them?

And it's not like, you know, the model that we might look to in the United States, where you just take your car over to the local Ford dealer and you get it fixed. They don't have a local Ford dealer. So they really have to try to centralize that to kind of get things accomplished. And until we get that sort of decentralized, they have got a tremendous way to go.

So we have really MNSTC-I and the DOIA, the director of Interior Affairs, who works with the Ministry of Interior -- we have really focused on how can we put the right people partnered with those people inside the ministry (to ?) make them better.

For example, you hire 2(00,000), 3(00,000), 400,000 people. Guess how it's done. None of this is automated. It's all done with a piece of paper, a lot of pen and ink signatures and stamps and safety pins. And it's absolutely mind-boggling how in the world they're able to do that. And of course we're genetically impatient, because we're so used to the high pace and all the technology that we have at our fingertips. They don't have that.

And so we've really been pushing and -- to be perfectly honest, they've -- they're open to the ideas, but you know, if you don't have reliable electricity, it's hard to maintain a computer system. How do you network the computer system with all these different places? Those are all the things that we've been working on, and to be -- I'm very proud of the progress that we have made with the police. I can tell you I'm equally proud of the progress that we've had with that ministry, helping them rise to a level where they manage a force of this size, not just police forces but all the other ancillary responsibilities that go along with supporting that.

So that's probably the biggest change. Still a lot of work to be done, without a doubt. But they've got a great minister in Minister Bolani, sort of a down-to-earth guy, salt of the earth, honest as the day is long, has his priorities straight, has a a strategic vision. Actually we've got them working on strategic plans. And instead of, hey, the budget's adopted; now here, go figure how you're going to spend it, we're getting them to think about, this year, what they want to do for a budget in 2011.

And I mean, just getting them thinking about that sort of is an accomplishment in and of itself, because it's been my experience that there is no planning.

It's sort of the -- (remarks in Arabic) -- you know. Whatever is going to happen is going to happen. And I see a lot of that falling to the wayside, as they get a little bit more sophisticated and progressive and leaning forward on how they want to deal with issues, going into the future.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's keep on going back and forth.

Q Sir, when you talk about the strategic vision, how has the reduced 2009 budget affected that vision and affected the transition to police primacy?

GEN. CANNON: Budget is a big problem right now. Obviously you know, when we were -- I think that's probably going to be their biggest challenge this year and the forecast for even next year, probably as gloomy.

As with any kind of service organization, even in the United States, probably 85 percent of their budget is personnel costs. And so that is the number-one thing. They want to make sure they can pay their employees.

Number two is, at least with police forces, you've got to make sure that you can keep your fleet on the road and you've got fuel and you've got repair parts, to kind of make sure your fleet is operational. So that has become their second priority.

We could all think about other things that they ought to be doing. But to make sure that they are moving in the right direction, as far as assuming their responsibility in police primacy, those are the two big things. Make sure you've got people and you've got the ability to move them, into the areas where they need to be.

So that leaves very little money left for discretionary things. So what we try to do is help them where they can't help themselves. We've done a lot of things over the years.

But this year, we're trying to be a little bit more precise on, you know, what do we think they need to be doing or have so they can, you know, step forward and assume their rightful place? And we're trying to figure out a way, if there's something we can do, to help them maintain their momentum and not delay any of this, because of the budget crisis.

So it is a problem. Budget is a big problem here. Last year, when oil was 140 or whatever a barrel, you could make a couple of mistakes. And there was enough money coming in every day, every month, to overcome that.

They don't have that luxury now. It's pretty tough.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Matt, please go ahead.

Q Oh, okay. Sir, I was wondering if you could comment on your experience with contractor trainers. I'm just assuming -- you know, for my readers who probably don't understand the size and the scope of your operation, maybe you could comment on how you augment your trainers.

GEN. CANNON: We use -- are you talking about like the international police advisers?

Q I would -- if you don't mind, sir, if you could -- if you could sort of go through the scope of that, just so we have it in the transcript. Because I think that would help explain to an awful lot of people more about exactly, you know, sort of what your forces kind of look like.

GEN. CANNON: Well, we'll just talk about CPATT in particular, but there's about 662 what we call IPAs, international police advisers. And for CPATT, you know, I've probably got about 125 people that help me -- matter of fact, they are my primary means of providing training oversight at all the different training centers. We've got about 23 different training centers across the country in different provinces, at different levels. Some of them are doing basic recruit training. Some of them are working actually at the college level, like maybe at the police college or something -- at Irbil, over in Sulimaniyah. And we're getting ready to open up two additional police colleges; one in Nineveh, or Mosul, and one down in Basra.

And so, for me at CPATT, I could not do that without these international police advisers out there in the field kind of doing that work for me. So we look for people who have no less -- when we talk about trainers, IPATs or trainers, we're looking for people who have civilian experience in the United States, no less than eight years; have served in a training capacity; understand the police sciences. And we bring those onboard to kind of work with us. We provide the strategic guidance, and they implement it down there at the academy.

There's a parallel to that with the maneuver forces that are out in the field. And we don't have enough military police.

So we have -- if we could do it all with military police, it would be perfect, because they have the skill set. But we don't. And so we have, you know, combat arms forces that are out there trying to pick up the slack.

Well, how do you do that? What we do is, we will assign an IPA, an international police adviser, IPA-O, because he's dealing in operations, to work with them. So he would be the subject matter expert.

So the combat arms guys would be working on, here's how you secure your police station; here's how you run a checkpoint; you know, all the standard security kinds of things.

They've got that figured out. And then the IPA would be the technical expert on, well, here's how, you know, you may want to do police reports; here's how you want to maintain your blotter at the station; here's how you want to do inventory; things like that.

So to be perfectly honest, to cover this almost 1,400 police stations, in the country, there's absolutely no way we could do it without involving the IPAs, to help be a force multiplier for us and kind of carry that message across the country.

Does that answer your question?

Q Yeah, sir, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Continue going back and forth, if you'd like, for at least another five more minutes.

Q Sir, how do you envision the role, or who do the Iraqis envision the role, of the national police in the transition to police primacy? And after the transition, I'm sorry, after the transition is complete, how do they -- what role do they see the national police as having?

GEN. CANNON: I think most of my experience has been with various -- I mean, I deal with General Hussein al Awadi quite regularly. Right now the Iraqi army is in the lead on security forces in the country. A natural progression from the Iraqi army to the Iraqi police will pass through. The national police, because they are a part of the ministry of interior, are -- the relationship between the Iraqi army and the national police is close, because the national police leans a little bit more towards a paramilitary kind of organization. That's kind of working.

The Iraqi police and the Iraqi army; that relationship isn't as close as we would like it to be. If the interim is going to be the national police, that will work, because national police are viewed by the Iraqi police as -- obviously they're in the same ministry and more in line with police service.

And they both understand, national police and Iraqi police, that they are responsible for civil law and order in the community.

And in the long term I see the national police being a -- kind of an expeditionary -- where -- wherever problems may arise, but not to the level where they need to involve the Iraqi army. It's not external; it's internal. The national police would move into an area and assist the local police in (quelling ?) whatever the problem might be. It could be -- it could be civil disorder, it could be a natural disaster, it could be any number of things that the local police might not be trained or equipped to do. But that's going to be the niche or the role that the national police could assume.

And I would akin them to something like maybe our National Guard back home, where they would go wherever they were needed, and they would bring to bear on a problem some of the expertise that they have. Obviously, they have engineer capabilities, so they would bring in their engineer equipment if there was some kind of a natural disaster.

I can't give you any particular examples at this point in time that I've seen in my year here. But that's sort of the way I would paint that picture, you know.

Q Great. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Matt, do you have a follow-up question?

Q I don't. I can pass off to Marisa.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. And Marisa, do you have any follow-on questions before I turn it over to the general?

Q Actually, those were my three questions. So thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. And then I'll get with Major Burks (sp) on the two bloggers that were unable to attend when we called back in, and I'll follow up with Major Burks (sp) with that.

Sir, General Cannon, if I could turn it over to you with any closing thoughts.

GEN. CANNON: Oh, great. Well, listen, I really appreciate the opportunity to share our story. We're really proud of the Iraqi police. I can tell you they are proud of themselves and what they've accomplished up to this point. And they're very excited about what the future holds. And, you know, they understand that it's imperative that we separate the military from any responsibility for civil law-and-order duty. They understand that. They're ready. They're willing. They're able. They're not all at the same level. Some will be better than others. But everybody understands that they've got the same responsibility, and we're looking forward to -- (audio break).

The public -- I'll tell you, we've got some great data that's been coming in lately. The public really views the police in a much more positive light than they have in the past. A recent survey -- I think it was ABC, and I think the BBC was involved with this as well -- but 68 percent of the people view the police as capable and professional. And only 18 percent view them as being corrupt.

And there's always going to be some level of corruption. We understand that.

But maybe more importantly was there was also a question in the survey about providing security in your area. And 42 percent of them -- for the first time since I've been here, 42 percent thought, hey, the police are providing for my security. That's not to discount the Army. The Army was right behind them at 38 percent. But for the first time, the lines crossed on the graph. And we think that's a pretty big accomplishment, and this has been a tremendous help.

The public's perception is that when we get to police primacy, they do not want to do that at the expense of being vulnerable to crime. So the people have a really good feel of what their expectation is for their police. The police know that they serve the public, and they've got to deliver.

So the transition from army to police, it can't be at the expense of security. And everybody has worked hard to get it to this point. We think everybody is onboard, and ready, willing and able to do that, and that they understand that they need to subscribe to the democratic principles of policing. We know that that'll happen with the Iraqi Police Services.

I'm excited about it. It's been a tremendous year for me to be here and go through this transition. I'll be leaving in about a month. I would love to come back here in a few years and visit with some of the people that I've worked with for this last year, and just see all the fruits of our labor come

into reality and Iraq be a safe and secure and democratic community and country that we all hope that it will be.

With that, I'll close. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you. Hopefully, I've provided some insight on some of the things that's going on with the civilian police, with the phenomenal transition that's going on here. And they've got the right people in the right places. They've got strategic leadership, they've got strategic vision and they've got strategic plans.

We think they've got a large enough force to assume their rightful place and provide for the safety and security of Iraq. Thank you very much. LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. And again, thank you for participating in DOD Live Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday (sic), April 15th.

And a note to the bloggers on the line. A story will be available on a bloggers link off of the DefenseLink.mil, along with a transcript and the audio file.

Again, thank you all for participating in today's roundtable.

Q Thank you so much.

GEN. CANNON: It was a pleasure.

END.