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IRAQI ARMY LOGISTIC „SUCCESS”

Abstract: *The article reflects on the progress in military logistics of the Iraqi Army.*

Keywords: *military logistic, Iraqi army, MTR, USA*

INTRODUCTION

It hasn't been a long time since the Iraqi army just stood up. The Last U.S. troops left Iraq on 18. December 2011². Before that, the United States made a huge effort to rebuild the fostering Iraqi Army, and there was an enormous amount of U.S. military assistance at every level. In my essay, I am going to summarize the progress that have done at the logistic level. Also, experiences, methods, goals, and, of course, the efficiency of the several years that the U.S. troops have spent there.

When the coalition forces went to Iraq, after the overthrow of the Hussein regime they were welcomed as liberators. Until 2008, the Iraqi Army has made a great success, and at that time the main task was to create a logistic progress that will support the independent forces. Since then, few years have gone, and by 2011 Iraqi army became totally self-sustaining.

1. THE MTR-S

There has been nine MTR-s (*Motor Transport Regiment*) transferred to the Iraqi Army divisions. MTR deals with logistics within the Iraqi Army. What does it take shape? It consists of an average four truck companies, equipped with U.S. and Russian trucks, and one military police or security company. The leader of the unit is a colonel.

1.1. “Low-hanging fruit” analogy

It comes without saying that the coalition forces needed a huge amount of endurance, cooperation, knowledge, and, of course, the main thing: money to rebuild a “new modern army”. As months passed by, it was tangible that the Iraqi Army is developing. Of course, it meant targets or goals that are easily achievable didn't require a lot of effort. Things like that: putting the army together. What does it consist of?

- purchasing the equipment;
- fielding the equipment;
- recruiting;
- training.

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² *US troops complete their withdrawal from Iraq*, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/breaking-news/us-troops-complete-their-withdrawal-from-iraq/story-e6frf7jx-1226225154019> [downloaded on: 05.05.2014].

For the Army like the United States, it was just a cake-walk. Short and tangible tasks. What about the higher part of the orchard? These fruits are a much more hard row to hoe. These tasks consist of nontangible jobs, like applying knowledge or integrate it across the international environment. Especially, dealing with this kind of logistics is the highest part of the orchard. And without logistics, any army is just a one-armed monstrosity.

When the Iraqi Army fielded, it consisted of 10 divisions and there were plans for more divisions to be established. An average Iraqi soldier takes part in a 5-week long basic training, with nothing specific training about logistics or other complexities to be able to run the units. It was obvious to the U.S. troops and military leaders that this Army, that time, was not able to set rapid movement or heavy combat operation in the field. The divisions got their supply from the garrison supply unit, which provided the supplies, and also from regional supply units that tasks were to supply with equipment. So it comes without saying, that this system was something totally different from U.S. Army, which can run supplies to tactical units.

1.2. Maintenance crisis

The Iraqi Army equipped with American and Russian vehicles. They got all the machines at the same time so they will soon face to severe maintenance crisis (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Iraqis are finding it harder to maintain their equipment because their logistic network is falling apart

Source: <http://2.bp.blogspot.com> [downloaded on: 05.05.2014].

Insurgent groups did daily attacks on civil and military personnel also, which even made the task to stand up the Iraqi army much more difficult. It was enormous defiance to take at face value the situation. There was a significant diversity in vehicles and equipment, with more than 160 vehicle types³. With this huge amount of different sys-

³ *U.S. intelligence analyst*, Crisis Group interview, Washington 2009. The Pentagon's quarterly report on Iraq for late 2009 underscored this point: maintaining Iraqi army vehicles is *made more difficult by the large variety of vehicle manufacturers and types and the reluctance of the Iraqi system managers to distribute repair parts* (*Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, U.S. Department of Defense, September 2009, p. 56). Efforts to shrink this number to 71 had begun as of August 2010 but will take time (*Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, U.S. Department of Defense, August 2010, p. 70).

tems, it was almost impossible to create sustainable standardised training and then maintain all the necessary equipment, and ammunition. Another problem was the inconsequent operation of vehicles. They drove it until it broke down, and then they cannibalised them for spare parts to maintain the other vehicles. It could only work on a short period that the Iraqi Army proved its resourcefulness. In a long term, problems will inevitably evolve⁴. Without maintenance, the systems, especially weapon systems are unable to serve their functions. Additionally, the weather in Iraq is often unmerciful not only to man but machine as well. High humidity, the continuous sandstorms heightens the level of maintenance⁵.

So far, this issue has compounded: the Iraqi army acquired more sophisticated systems like an M1A1 main battle tank and the F-16 fighter. At an early stage, it was even much more complicated to reform the Iraqi Army logistics, which wasn't existed nor in theory neither practice. Iraq tries to resist the U.S. reform tentatives.

The previous Iraqi logistics synthesis had a facility called Location Command. Its task was to hand out supplies to subservient units based on the old patronage system, instead of up to date requirements.⁶ For maintenance, you need workshops. Lots of it, if we want to supplies an army requirement. According to the Iraqi Army vice chief, 70% of the available military budget have been spent on salaries, and life support, such as water, food, etc. The rest 30% was for solving and carrying out all the procurements.

The Iraqi Army was rather short of money, so their scope was very limited to get the spare parts, and maintain the systems. *We don't have enough workshops capable of maintaining our vehicles and supplying us with spare parts. This has nothing to do with the American withdrawal. It is the problem of our defence ministry. Why do they make deals to import vehicles without enough spare parts or maintenance workshops?*⁷ There has been an expression of interest to buy Abrahams tanks from the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS). FMS include a clause about spare parts, but not a clause about maintenance offered by the manufacturer. Iraqi defence ministry was told that without budgeting for maintenance M1A1 is a waste of money. *Good for nothing but static display in front of governmental buildings*⁸.

1.3. Clothing

Another problem was the replace of the uniforms. As the troops started to wear out their clothes, it causes big problem to change. There was a plan to exchange them, but as it turned out, the Ministry of Defense didn't act, probably because other tasks had more priority. Logistics is also influenced by the frequent occurrence within the Iraqi government which cause inefficiency.

⁴ *U.S.intelligence analyst*, Crisis Group interview, Washington 2010; *Measuring...*, op. cit., August 2010, p. 68-71.

⁵ *U.S. military officer*, Crisis Group email communication, 8 March 2010.

⁶ *Location Commands Increase Iraqi Army Command & Control Abilities (An Numaniyah)*, <http://waronterrornews.typepad.com/home/2009/05/iraq-c2-construction.html#more> [downloaded on: 05.05.2014]; *Measuring...*, op. cit., (August 2010), p. 74. Logistics problems are not unique to the army. The interior ministry's logistics system is similarly centralised. Only in mid-2010 did the ministry begin a concerted effort to train 418 mechanics throughout Iraq on the repair of modern patrol vehicles. While this is progress, it is indicative of the low base from which the ministry is beginning. *Measuring...*, op. cit., August 2010, p. 56.

⁷ *Brigade commander in the Baghdad area*, Crisis Group interview, Baghdad, 15 July 2010.

⁸ *U.S. officer, Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq*, Crisis Group interview, Baghdad, 14 December 2009.

1.4. Personnel

Owing to the old patronage system, people often got highest position without any managerial knowledge. It was still a significant issue to be solved. These people have some political connection or related to the „old army”.

The different problem was the ethnic groups. The variegation of Shia, Sunni, Kurdish ethnic that set up the army personnel is quite problematic. Imagine that now, in the army, they have to cooperate successively, and at the same time, the same ethnic groups fight in the street. It often affected everyday life, tasks in the army, when the U.S. troops made efforts to train them. That was almost impossible to avoid it entirely. On the other hand, soldiers, after they got their monthly leave, they went home to their family paid no regard how far it is. Furthermore, they spent half of their takings to get there, which often defeated the morale. It's one of those things that the troops went home didn't come back because they were killed. Violence in the street and state affairs made a simple journey

a touch and go business. In cases the soldier was killed, they had to replace, and start the new training progress from the very beginning.

1.5. Training Issues

There are more ways to skin a cat. The U.S. Army wanted to open Iraqi soldiers eyes to other options. However they often seemed to ignore the logistics or the training. The Iraqi army didn't have any doctrine or manuals to operate logistics systems. On the one hand, due to the equipment came from different nations they were just simply not interested in it. Old Iraqi officers had the past to draw from, which might have been from the old army. The U.S. wanted to create complex training programs, tried to translate manuals to the Iraqi language. As it turned out, training methods didn't reach Iraqi soldiers, so a different strategy was needed.

1.6. Disposing Cultural Differences

It is a big factor, a big challenge to solve, that has influenced even the bottommost thing like communication. Even with an interpreter (Iraqi interpreter), it was a difficult task to make each other to understand. They prefer listen to their, and the local knowledge, instead of U.S. troops or intelligence. But if it turned out, they should have listened to U.S. Corps, they didn't commit the same mistake again. Learning the hard way is the shortest way to drive home a lesson.

CONCLUSION: WHAT IS NEXT?

Before the withdrawal of the U.S. Corps from Iraq in 2009 that was an urgent question. You couldn't do too much instead of them, because they got used to it, and that just shut down their efforts. On the other hand, it was also related to their pride, which was too important to them. They accepted the help but didn't want to be regarded as beggars. The army developed slowly but steady, and at the end, they managed to make ends meet, and made a big step to master their logistics, and cope with more complex tasks. In 2008, the Iraqi Army very much depended on the U.S. Army. The solution was that the U.S. let them figure out the details of the next step, which, of course, took a lot of time.

In 2011, the last U.S. soldier left Iraq and the logistics system, immediately began deteriorating. Now that they are gone, the whole thing is collapsing. It has left each Iraqi division to take care of itself while millions of dollars of parts sit idle in places like Taji. *Taji Maintenance Depot is a perfect example of parts collecting dust that could be used to keep Humvees and other vehicles running. The Iraqi military leadership is making the*

*situation worse because they value how many resources are on hand rather than whether they are being used or operating properly. It has never understood the need for maintenance, and until it does the general staff will maintain incentives that will eventually lead to the breakdown of most of its heavy equipment*⁹. Since then, more and more attacks have been made by resistance groups (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Cooperation between U.S. Army and Iraqi Army

Source: www.defense.gov/dodcmsharephotoessay2011-12/hires_111218-A-5968J-023ab.jpg
[downloaded on: 05.05.2014].

⁹ <http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2013/07/the-breakdown-of-iraqi-armys-logistics.html> [downloaded on: 05.05.2014].

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LOGISTYCZNY „SUKCES” IRACKIEJ ARMII

Streszczenie: *Artykuł omawia rozwój logistyki wojskowej irackiej armii.*

Słowa kluczowe: *logistyka wojskowa, iracka armia, pułk zmotoryzowany, USA*