

Winning On The Ground

Helping the Iraqi Security Forces Defeat the Insurgency in Iraq

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Executive Summary

The key to Iraq lies with the people of Iraq and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Effectively trained and utilized, the ISF will create a security situation that fosters progress, but this cannot happen if the ISF is viewed as a tool of the Americans or if the ISF degenerates into a corrupt band of incompetents. Unfortunately, we Americans often sabotage ourselves with our daily interactions with the Iraqis, and this situation needs to end. A deeper positive interaction between American and Iraqi forces is required.

We currently expect American Soldiers from a non-Special Forces (SF) background to perform the SF core mission of working with local nation forces to defeat an insurgency. If we do not focus on stepping up our capabilities to support this effort, we will fail on the ground in Iraq.

For 12 months in Operation Iraqi Freedom II (OIF II), I was in a small American task force (TF) that provided mentorship to the 210th Iraqi National Guard (ING) battalion on and around Logistics Support Area (LSA) Anaconda. We conducted a wide variety of missions in support of this unit, which had been stood up right before we arrived. We organized them, trained them, ensured logistical support, and ultimately mentored them on many combat missions. Elements of the 210th ING battalion were also sent to other American units where they performed successfully, especially after the American units adopted the tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTP) presented in this article.

We lived very closely with our Iraqi counterparts. We ate the same food and shared buildings, camps, and forward operating bases (FOBs). Perhaps more importantly, we developed a solid working relationship that gave us a clear window into their lives. We were treated as friends, met their families, drank countless cups of chai, and attended their weddings and celebrations. We helped take care of their sick, and, together, we mourned their losses. The depth of our involvement was unique and led us to successfully accomplish our mission.

Force Protection and Risk

American platoons who show up to work with an Iraqi unit often totally bypass the Iraqi chain of command, do no mission planning or rehearsals with the Iraqi unit, and then pick four Iraqi soldiers at random to make sure they have enough Iraqi personnel to call it a joint mission. They do this out of ignorance of the Iraqi unit's capabilities and the fear that involving the Iraqi leadership in planning will compromise the mission. They also fear having more Iraqis than Americans on the mission.

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This fear and mistrust is the single greatest barrier that exists between American and Iraqi forces, and American Soldiers must have the courage to overcome this mistrust. Not addressing this problem will create a vacuum that the insurgents will take advantage of to infiltrate the unit and foster dissent among the Iraqi soldiers. Fostering mistrust also violates the core principles that make for an effective fighting force. Overcoming this fear and mistrust is very difficult for the average American Soldier not trained for the SF mission.

TTP

- Use the Iraqis as a unit. Do not break down a unit for any reason. Keeping the unit together will make it easier to build a cohesive Iraqi team. Adhere to this concept from the fire team level all the way up to battalion level.
- Use the Iraqi leadership. Make them do their job, include them in the planning, make sure they conduct pre-combat inspections (PCI)/rehearsals, do not allow lapses of discipline. Following these TTP reinforces their positions as leaders and your position as mentor.
 - Praise publicly and chastise privately.
 - If you have concerns about mission planning security, make sure your S2 is taking care of the problem, and use other methods to mitigate the risk such as:
 - Isolating the unit (American and Iraqis together) from the beginning of mission planning until execution.
 - If at all possible, avoid using Iraqis in their home village, especially if they are Sunnis.
- Do not let the size of the American force dictate the size of the Iraqi force. In other words, you should be comfortable taking Iraqi troops that you have trained and worked with into combat with little regard to the force ratio of Americans to Iraqis.
 - If the Iraqis see this, they will know that you believe in them and will perform accordingly.
 - There are reasonable limits to this, based on the experience/training of the Americans and Iraqis in question.
 - Know the composition of the force that you are taking. Know their village, tribal, and religious affiliations. Some key pairings to avoid:
 - If Sunnis or Shi'as from a particular tribe form the base of the local insurgency, know if you have soldiers that fit this profile in your patrol.
 - If you are going to a particular village, know which Iraqi soldiers come from that village.
 - Know which Iraqi soldiers have been recently detained or have had relatives detained by the coalition or ISF.
- SF troops always have contingency plans for dealing with the risks that come from working with indigenous forces. There are many ways to mitigate the risk, and you should engage in this risk mitigation long before the mission. Some examples:

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- Have an escape and evasion plan for missions.
- Make sure Iraqis that you can trust are in positions to cover you.
- Maintain good communications with other Americans on the patrol.
- Make sure all Americans have adequate communications to outside forces.
- Use American overwatch wisely.
- Rigidly enforce the arming posture. Either have them lock and load the AK 47 and put the safety back on (slow to put the weapon into action) or have them put in the magazine and flip the safety off but not chamber a round until they are actually under fire (very fast, but loud).
- Have appropriate signaling equipment (at the very least a full VS-17, day/night Wolf Tails, and two or three Phoenix strobes).
- Show confidence and be prepared for anything.
- Share the risk. Do not use your Iraqis as a trip wire in the most dangerous situations without sharing that danger with them. For example:
 - Using the same vehicles and weapons on missions gives them confidence that you believe in the equipment. If you lead by example, they will follow.
 - They take tremendous risks, in many cases, just to show up for work, and you should acknowledge that. Take steps to shield them from potential attack as they enter/leave the post and have battle drills that they can execute outside the entry control points (ECPs) in case of an attack.
 - Have a contingency plan to send out a quick reaction force (QRF) through the ECP to provide support for Iraqi soldiers at shift change in case of an incident.
 - If the Americans do not work hard to minimize the Iraqi's risks on missions and do not share the burden, the Iraqis know they are nothing more than cannon fodder and will act accordingly.
 - When you are in combat with them and they see that you treat Iraqi wounded with the same care that you treat American wounded, they will understand that you share the risk.
- Weed out Americans and Iraqis who cannot find common ground. Get rid of bad apples from both sides.
 - Often you will find American Soldiers who cannot bring themselves to have any trust in Iraqi soldiers, and they will insist on ludicrously conservative force protection measures. Move them down the road quietly, and use Soldiers who have enough personal courage/confidence to deal with the ambiguity that pervades this mission.
 - You will also see Iraqis who, for whatever reason, clearly do not like Americans and have trouble taking orders from the Iraqi leadership. They will eventually get into trouble, and if you are doing your job right, they will eventually appear before the discipline review board.
- Embed Americans with specific Iraqi units to build the team.
 - Embed American Soldiers early, make sure you have enough and that they are right for the job.
 - Pick American Soldiers with enough experience and judgment to understand the Iraqi point of view and still enforce the standards that need

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- to exist for high performance. Junior Soldiers will generally lack the depth of experience to succeed in such a fluid situation.
- Have enough Americans embeds. Generally a less proficient Iraqi platoon needs three or four Americans, while a proficient Iraqi platoon may require only one or two Americans. The key is to keep assignment static so the Americans and Iraqis have time to get to know each other and build the trust necessary for a good team to develop.

Overcoming Cultural Bias

"Iraqis are lazy."

From our perspective, Iraqis are lazy. American Soldiers often display obvious contempt for the lackadaisical attitude of Iraqis.

It is the rare American commander that treats Iraqi soldiers the same way he treats his own Soldiers, and that attitude persists down to the lowest ranks in the U.S. Army.

American Soldiers often treat the Iraqi soldier as if he is not pulling his weight. The well fed and equipped American Soldier moves from his air-conditioned (bunker, building, high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle [HMMWV]) out into the heat for an hour at a time with ice-cold water to drink and passes Iraqis in the intense heat with no acceptable shade, cold water, or the prospect of adequate relief from the environmental conditions. These same Iraqis travel to and from their houses under hazardous conditions to work these shifts and are often placed in the most exposed positions with severe limitations on their arming posture. Couple this attitude with the Iraqis' fatalistic beliefs about their lot in life, and you create a situation that will not build trust and respect.

TTP

- Treat Iraqi soldiers under your command with the same care that you show to American Soldiers.
 - Ensure they have proper relief, supply, and adequate facilities.
 - There is no such thing as separate but equal. Iraqis live in a social structure that is much more formal than ours, and they are much more sensitive to class structure.
 - If Americans treat the Iraqi soldiers in ways that are unequal, the Iraqis will believe that Americans do not value them as men or soldiers.
- Fight for Iraqi soldiers as if they were American Soldiers
 - If you publicly stand up for the Iraqi soldiers when they are mistreated/misused by Americans in any way, they will recognize that you are looking out for their best interests.
 - When you encounter a situation where the Iraqis feel they are being mistreated, enforce discipline. Once discipline is restored, get both sides of the story. If an Iraqi has done something wrong, turn him over to his leadership for processing through the discipline review board. If an

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American has done something wrong, correct the situation and make sure measures are put in place to make sure it does not happen again.

- Learn some Arabic and enforce the use of Arabic in your interactions.
 - Many Iraqis are poorly educated, and English is difficult to learn.
 - The more spoken Arabic you can use, the more you break down the communication barrier.
 - Use Arabic methods of greeting (you do not have to kiss both cheeks, but you can give a shoulder hug).
 - If you become accepted, key barriers will begin to disappear. You will be invited to meet their families and attend celebrations. This is an important sign of progress.
- Do not show contempt.
 - Praise publicly and chastise privately.
 - If you have to give an on-the-spot correction, do so in a respectful manner.

“Iraqis are dirty and have poor hygiene.”

Iraqis have a different standard of hygiene in part due to the lack of available water. Water usage must be reserved for cooking and drinking. Washing clothes or bathing is secondary in their culture. They often lack the basic necessities to maintain the hygiene standards we observe in the U.S. In addition, the Iraqi soldier does not have ready access to medical care and medical care is very expensive.

TTP

- Always make water available to the Iraqi soldiers. At the very least they can clean their face and hands, which is much appreciated.
- Get a good physician’s assistant (PA)/medical doctor (MD). A good PA to run sick call and ensure decent medical care is a huge help in earning their respect.
 - If possible, find ways to get treatment for dental problems. Many Iraqi soldiers have dental issues that make it hard for them to eat meals ready to eat (MREs), which are the only food generally available on missions.
 - Encourage Iraqi soldiers to bring in ailing family members, especially children.

“Iraqis are argumentative, will not cooperate, and are dishonest.”

The average Iraqi must compete to acquire the basic necessities, and so they view even the casual distribution of necessities as a chance to acquire “wealth.” Iraqis have allegiances to family and tribe that transcend any higher obedience (except to Allah) and, consequently, will often look at any discussion as the beginning of a negotiation to provide for that family. Do not let this behavior bother you. Once you gain their respect, the amount of negotiating you will have to do will decrease. Enforcing discipline that is consistent with Iraqi culture is the key.

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Make discipline paramount. Americans Soldiers are conditioned differently. Our primary allegiance is to the U.S. government. However, the Iraqis' allegiance to his country is secondary to his allegiance to his family and tribe. Their previous military service was in the conscript army of a brutal dictator, where even field grade officers were treated poorly by their standards. Commanders and the Iraqi leadership need to agree on standards to be followed and enforce them consistently. Most Iraqi soldiers are primarily motivated by the pay, so use that knowledge to enforce discipline.

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- Explain the rules/regulations in clear unambiguous terms.
 - Post the regulations governing behavior in public areas in Arabic so that the Iraqi soldiers see them.
 - Make sure they understand what the discipline review board is for, and ensure that the Iraqi leadership is properly executing that board's mandate.
- If an Iraqi soldier quits because he does not like something, let him go.
 - Take his weapon, uniform, and identification (ID) and escort him out the gate. Make sure you have something for him to wear, hospital scrubs are a good method.
 - Blackball him from ever rejoining the unit, and make sure he knows that.
 - Barring his return to the unit sends the message that he cannot quit if he does not like how things are now and rejoin later when things are easier.
- The Iraqi leadership is responsible for enforcing discipline.
 - Put Iraqi soldiers on unpaid leave between the date of their offense and the date of the board.
 - Have the board meet twice a month. This schedule provides:
 - A cooling off period that allows the soldiers to reflect on what it is like to not have a paying job
 - Time to gather facts about the incident
 - A cooling off period for the chain of command to consider the merits of reinstating or firing the soldier
 - Have them convene regular discipline review boards.
 - Have the Iraqi unit commander chair the board.
 - Hold the Iraqi leadership accountable if they fail to uphold the standards.
 - Make the board fair, if a soldier has a reasonable case he should be reinstated.
- The discipline review board should impose the following types of punitive measures:
 - Loss of pay by docking x number of days
 - Suspension from duty (and consequent loss of pay) for x number of days
 - Firing (blackballing for specific time periods)
 - Reduction in rank
 - Transfer to another unit or position
- Make sure discipline is consistently enforced across the rank structure and that no special privileges are afforded senior officers or noncommissioned officers (NCOs).

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- Break down traditional Iraqi bias through organization:
 - Officers and senior NCOs will often request special personnel, such as drivers, clerks, and bodyguards. Require that these special personnel get extra training for their jobs. Bodyguards are necessary and to be properly trained they must be accomplished in hand to hand, be physically fit, and be experts in the use of their weapons.
 - Try to break up platoons that are all Sunni/Shi'a (there are sometimes safety reasons for leaving it this way if they have to travel to work together from a specific village).
 - Do not let Iraqi soldiers who are sons of Sheikhs or Imams receive special treatment.
- Continuity: Try to have some reasonable overlap between incoming and outgoing units.
 - It takes two to three months for a new unit to learn enough about the culture, language, and Iraqi unit to become effective.
 - Unfortunately, that means that key members of the outgoing unit (experienced patrol leaders, administration, and S2/S3 personnel) should stay in place and manage the relief in place/transfer of authority (RIP/TOA).
- Physical contact/Insults: There are going to be times when you need to verbally discipline Iraqi soldiers.
 - Be careful not to offend an Iraqi's honor (such as calling an Iraqi a woman).
 - Avoid any physical contact, as it is highly offensive to an Iraqi. Such situations quickly become life-threatening, and you must be prepared to deal with the consequences.
 - There will always be situations where an American or an Iraqi offends an Iraqi soldier through an imagined or real insult or even physical contact. You must always be prepared to restore order, defuse the situation, and drive on with the mission.
 - Your judgment will be the best guide in these situations and is yet another reason why only experienced and level-headed NCOs and officers should be in this role.
- Iraqi say "maybe" when they really mean no.
 - "Maybe" means "no" in a lot of cases, and if an Iraqi tells you that he will try and fix a situation or answers your request with anything other than a firm "yes," he is often looking for an out.
 - You must work harder to get a firm "yes" or "no" from an Iraqi soldier.
 - "God Willing" is also not an acceptable answer.
- The tribe is the paramount affiliation for an Iraqi.
 - You should know what tribes the Iraqi soldiers belong too and how they are allied.
 - To get this information you will need to soldier readiness process (SRP) the Iraqi soldiers and record their tribal/religious/village affiliations and print them on the ID cards that you issue.
- Know your soldiers

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- Once you SRP Iraqi soldiers you should have a searchable database that includes:
 - All four names (first, fathers, grandfathers, great-grandfathers)
 - Tribal affiliation
 - Village/Neighborhood affiliation
 - Religious affiliation
 - Military history
 - Education history
 - Key relatives in the military
 - Names of relatives who are Sheikhs, Imams, political figures, etc.
 - Picture of soldier
 - Weapon information
 - Fingerprint would be really helpful
- Make sure the key information makes it onto their ID cards. The ID cards should have:
 - Picture (make sure it is not distorted)
 - All data in English and Arabic
 - Tribal/religious, village affiliation
 - Weapon data
 - Contact information of the issuing unit

Why Should I Care About Iraqis?

If you do not win the respect of the Iraqis you work with, they will work against you. An insurgency can only exist if it has the support of the people, and the only way to defeat it is to turn the people against it. Iraqi soldiers are a direct conduit to the civilian population. If Iraqi soldiers believe in what they are doing and take that belief back to their families to spread throughout the community, that community becomes a strong front line against terror. Any other scenario allows the insurgents to continue infiltrating the community and the ranks of Iraqi soldiers.

How do you get the Iraqi soldiers to take that belief back to their families? Find ways to improve their value to their family and tribe. It might be as simple as rewarding the platoon that does a good job with bottles of water to take home to their families. This type of simple soldier care raises each soldier's status in the eyes of his family and creates goodwill that is hard to match. Reward good performance with tangible privileges and benefits that help their families.

Iraqi soldiers were probably not treated with the respect they deserved by previous coalition units, and you need to undo some damage. Rewarding good performance with simple recognition and rewards will be appreciated.

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- Find ways to help improve the Iraqi soldier's value to his family.
 - Set realistic work hours.

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- Help them get clean water to take to their families.
- Make sure that they are being properly paid by their leadership.
- Get civil affairs involved with the villages on projects, and make sure that the Iraqi soldiers know that you have helped in that process.
- The more you know about the soldiers, the more you will be able to help them.
 - Basic data such as tribal affiliations, military background, and photos are all important to successfully understand the dynamics of the unit.
 - You will be able to anticipate and defuse volatile situations when you are aware of the tribal makeup of the unit. You will know when one tribe is in conflict with another tribe because the Iraqi soldiers will tell you.
 - You might have soldiers who have to travel great distances or travel through a dangerous area. Use that information to assign them to a platoon where they can travel to/from work together. There is definitely safety in numbers off duty.
 - Find out when soldiers have been hassled by coalition forces.
- Unit administration must be done in Arabic and English so IDs and manifests can be read by officials from both sides.
 - Think traffic control point (TCP) search of the soldier by another American unit. If the ID is in the wrong language, his weapon may end up unnecessarily confiscated.
 - Use both languages so administration sections on both sides can work effectively together.
- Use a common identifier such as a badge number to identify soldiers. Americans have trouble with Iraqi names, so using badge numbers will transcend the language barriers when you are talking about a specific soldier.
- Make sure Iraqi soldiers have their ID cards or some kind of dog tag on them at all times.
- Treat the dead with utmost respect:
 - Return their bodies as soon as possible to their families
 - Have your physician's assistant (PA)/medical doctor (MD) prepare the bodies, as this care is appreciated.
 - Arrange transportation of the body if the family does not have suitable transportation.
 - Have a proper unit memorial service (in Arabic), and make sure you have the ability to play Mawtini (Iraqi national anthem).
 - Follow-up to make sure the full death benefit gets paid to next of kin quickly.

Corruption, Corruption, Corruption

A couple of thousand years ago Alexander complained in his journals about the organization and depth of corruption in what is now Iraq. Corruption in Iraq is still a problem today.

You can, however, work to limit the corruption. The most serious examples of corruption include senior members of the unit controlling access to installations for vendors, taking

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bribes/kickbacks from soldiers, extorting vendors, and pilfering stocks to sell outside the base. Always be observant for obvious examples, investigate them quietly, and then publicly fire the offenders. Iraqi soldiers will tone down the activities to a lower level if you follow this strategy.

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- Make the Iraqis account for the payroll.
 - Observe the payroll procedures, and ensure that the Iraqi leadership is not skimming off the top.
 - Ruthlessly prosecute any officer or NCO that is taking kickbacks from the soldiers.
 - Do spot checks of pay as soldiers leave the payroll table to make sure that they get their exact pay. If they are docked pay, make sure the amount is properly documented in a discipline review board before payroll distribution.
 - Release the soldiers as soon as possible after they are paid. This tactic makes it difficult for the leadership to corral the soldiers to take their pay.
- Supervise your ECPs.
 - A common theme is to extort contractors as they enter bases.
 - Make sure the lines are managed in an orderly fashion (no cutting) and that nothing changes hands in the line.
 - Any soldiers or leaders who condone the taking of bribes to allow access to a base compromise the security of the base.
 - If a force protection issue arises, get your S2 involved.
- Do not allow Iraqi soldiers to leave/arrive in the middle of a shift.
 - Arriving or leaving in the middle of a shift is almost always a sign of potential extortion/corruption, insurgent activity in the unit, or that the Iraqi leadership does not have control (i.e., soldiers skipping out early because they are not being supervised).
 - Come down hard on the Iraqi leadership when this happens and investigate the situation.
 - Have well documented shift times.
 - Account for all soldiers on duty (those that checked in at the start of the shift). If someone appears suspicious, radio back to the battalion S1 to confirm that the soldier in question was present at the first formation for that shift.
 - Any soldier who misses the first formation by more than ten minutes should not be allowed on base. Keep stragglers to a minimum.
- Monitor what is leaving the base with Iraqi soldiers.
 - Soldiers should be properly searched outbound (also inbound), and if they are carrying contraband, it should be confiscated and the offenders should be disciplined.
 - Monitor supply sergeants to make sure they are not stealing.
- Make the Iraqi leadership personally accountable for facilities and equipment.

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- Iraqi leaders need to sign for facilities and equipment, and you need to participate in the turnover.
- Inspect air-conditioners, refrigeration units, gasoline, electrical components, hardware (screws, nuts, and bolts), and all other high pilferage items every day.
- Punish any officer who fails to secure equipment.
- Do a shakedown of all ammunition at issue and turn-in time.
 - Iraqi soldiers will often substitute poor quality ammunition or put rocks in their magazines below the top rounds to hide what they have taken/exchanged. Punish any soldier who does this.
 - Do regular shakedowns of the TA-50.
- Corruption and insurgent activity go hand in hand.
 - The insurgents make a lot of money through corruption; therefore, all corrupt activities should be viewed as potential insurgent activity unless proven otherwise.
 - If you suspect any insurgent activity, make sure that you have the right people involved to assess the situation.
 - You are the front line against subversion and espionage directed against the U.S. Army (SAEDA) in this mission.
 - Do not allow the soldiers to keep journals or take any documents (especially handwritten documents) off post.
- Corruption will often become apparent when something unusual occurs.
 - A private publicly being deferred to by a captain is an example. The deference might be because the private is running a protection scam as the leader of a gang, and the captain is afraid of him and/or receiving money to look the other way. Sometimes the private is the son of a powerful local sheikh.
 - You must always understand what is going on; critically examine any unusual situation, and do not take the easy way out. Investigate anything that is out of the ordinary.

Training/Operations

Here are some common facts about Iraqi soldiers:

1. Saddam's Army was a conscript army, and we are trying to undo some of the traits that were drilled into Iraqi soldiers:
 - The training was poorly planned, resourced, and executed.
 - The discipline was poor and inconsistently applied to those without political connections.
 - Punishment was severe for even slight infractions.
 - The higher you went in rank, the more privileges you accrued.
2. They have poor nutrition.

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3. They have poor health care with severe dental problems being common.
4. Access to clean water is limited, so many resort to using canned soda as their primary fluid intake.
5. Previous American attempts to train/operate with Iraqis met with very limited success, and the Iraqis can be very cynical about the whole process.

Take steps to make sure that your soldiers receive better nutrition, preventative medical care, and are properly hydrated. Provide access to medical care (especially dental) for severe problems. Take proactive steps to keep them hydrated during training.

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- Have fresh, cold water available at the start of every shift.
 - Make sure soldiers drink water.
 - Allow time for re-hydration to take hold before the beginning of training or an operation.
 - Keep a supply of water available throughout the shift.
 - Bring water tablets on missions so soldiers can replenish from canals.
- Do not start any training day with physical training (PT) (especially early in a cycle). PT is okay if you insure that the soldier has access to clean water, proper nourishment, and good health care.
- Sick call:
 - Run sick call at the start of every shift.
 - Over time, fewer and fewer soldiers will need to come to sick call, and the malingerers will become evident.
 - If you do some medic training, you can use those medics to help with sick call.
 - Properly resource sick call so medics have the appropriate medical supplies.

Training

Repetition is definitely the best method of reinforcement. All instruction must be done in Arabic with simple and clear instruction. Try to limit the amount of judgment that leaders need to exercise early on, and focus on very simple scenarios. Many Iraqis read poorly, so printed training materials need lots of diagrams to be effective. Often Americans will become frustrated with the Iraqi soldier's seeming inability to learn. The problem is more likely than not one of the following:

1. Poor translation. Even simple concepts get poorly translated. It is critical that Americans teach in the native language using clear simple commands.

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2. Lack of attention. Keep the classes short and to the point with lots of hands-on training time. Often a simple collective task such as react to near ambush will need to be repeated several times before it becomes a battle drill.

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- Do not get frustrated.
 - Training is often two steps forward and one step back.
 - Always review with the interpreter exactly what to say and how to say it.
 - Repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat. The Iraqi soldiers will get the idea that they must perform to standard before they can move forward in their training.
- What to train? At the minimum, the following courses will represent a 6-8 week training course for a platoon:
 - Weapons handling, maintenance, and marksmanship (AK47/RPK/PKC)
 - Move as a member of a fire team
 - Initial military training (IMT)
 - Personal hygiene
 - Buddy aid
 - Basic radio procedures
 - Preparation for combat (collective)
 - Basic patrolling (squad and platoon)
 - Squad level: React to contact, near ambush, far ambush, clear a building, cordon and search, snap TCP, and indirect fire battle drills
 - Basic driving and vehicle maintenance
- Train properly:
 - Have the best facilities possible. Provide shade in the summer and someplace dry/warm in the winter.
 - Give appropriate breaks. Much of the summer training is done in heat category 1000 and stateside U.S. troops are stripped down to their underwear for this kind of weather. Be realistic about what you can get done under these conditions.
 - The training should not be hip-pocket in nature. Training should be properly resourced with training aids, classroom areas, restrooms, cool water, and shade in the field sites. Instructors need to be subject matter experts.
 - Instructors need to be highly proficient with weapons.
 - Many Iraqis need glasses and this affects marksmanship.
 - Do not send truck drivers to teach infantry tactics.
 - Make sure soldiers move as a unit between training sites. Formation marching, tactical foot marches, or tactical vehicle moves reinforces the chain of command.
 - Reward the highest performing teams. The Iraqis like to compete, and in a team environment, they get excited about the competition.
- Training site upkeep:
 - Make sure you provide the Iraqi-style Sanicans (portable toilets).

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- Post a guard to ensure that every water bottle that goes into the Sanican comes back out.
- If a tent blows down, immediately put it back up. Do not let the camp fall into disrepair.
- Enforce daily police calls.
- Enforce proper hygiene for anyplace the Iraqis eat or sleep.
- Under the current training conditions, Iraqi soldiers will probably not achieve the same standards as an American soldier.
 - Set achievable standards.
 - Know that skills are perishable and retraining is essential.
 - Train all levels of soldiers and officers in their job.
 - Train special skills (mechanic, driver, administration, supply, and medics) as well.
- Use the troops once they are trained. Using Iraqi soldiers on missions helps keep their skills trained and makes them feel useful.
- Americans have been conditioned to use their initiative and Iraqis have not.
 - You are asking too much to expect junior leaders to make big decisions.
 - Give them achievable and simple situations to display initiative, and praise them publicly to build confidence.
 - When they fail, make sure that they understand that it was a learning experience, and get them back on track as soon as possible.

Operations

Iraqis can be just as effective as Americans when properly led. Units with poor leadership will often need the Americans to take a very active role in mentoring the leadership. Operations may lack the same crispness you would expect, but often they will achieve equal or better results.

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- Mission planning/rehearsals/PCI:
 - Bring the Iraqi leadership in as soon as possible.
 - Get as much knowledge as you can from soldiers who live in the area. They can often tell you about the best approaches, choke points, and special information about the target.
 - Have the Iraqi leadership construct the sand table, so you are confident they will be able to explain the operation.
 - Keep the plan as simple as possible. The more complicated it is, the higher the likelihood the interpreter will mistranslate with disastrous results.
 - Identify the top worst case scenarios (for example: deploying from a vehicle under fire and react to contact with casualties), and make sure they are incorporated into rehearsals. Allow enough time for rehearsals and PCI.
 - Make squad leaders do full PCI; personally spot check their work.

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- Above all, reinforce the importance of weapons' control. Tell soldiers to look to their NCOs for guidance.
- Hammer home the theme that leaders need to be prepared to make decisions without having all of the relevant information. Accomplishing the mission within the rules of engagement (ROE) is a leader's prime objective.
- Issue ammunition as the last step before leaving the base. Have ready a box of magazines loaded under the supervision of an Iraqi platoon sergeant.
- Explain in an abbreviated operations order (OPORD) if soldiers will be allowed to smoke, how often there will be rest halts, and what actions will be taken at rest halts.
- Place emphasis on the importance of water conservation for long dismounted patrols.
- Review the ROE several times during mission preparation with all participants.
- Execution:
 - Position yourself close to the key leader you are mentoring.
 - Instruct the interpreter to stay within five to ten feet, so he is instantly available.
 - Always be fully aware of exactly which Iraqi soldiers are around you and their weapons' posture.
 - Preach muzzle awareness.
 - On contact:
 - Focus your attention on the leader and the immediate team.
 - Make sure 360 degree security is maintained, and troops are properly deployed.
 - Keep the leader moving among his men so they can see that he is up and doing his job. Do not let the leader become fixed in place! His men need to see him doing his job.
 - As the mission nears its end, do not become complacent or allow the men to become complacent. Missions in a combat zone do not end until you are inside the wire, and the men have gone home after their shift.
 - Do not allow smoking on missions.
 - Enforce rest halts for sock changes, food, and rest. Do not let security lapse.
 - Resist the urge to get frustrated with laxness. Get the problem corrected quickly and firmly, and make sure the offender does not repeat the behavior.
- Post mission consolidation:
 - Immediately collect and account for all ammunition, sensitive items, vests, etc.
 - Do an immediate after-action review (AAR). Be honest and blunt.
 - Once you have accounted for all men and equipment and the AAR is completed, rest the soldiers (if their shift is on going) or send them home (unless they prefer to wait for morning).

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- Make sure you make a full and complete mission report especially with regards to unusual occurrences involving the troops.
- If at all possible do not have them conduct operations in their home village.
 - If you do, allow them to cover up, and make sure they are fully committed to doing the right thing.
 - Never forget that their allegiances are to their families and tribes.
 - They can often provide very valuable intelligence regarding the target and the target building.
- Do mission manifests that include both American and Iraqi soldier data.
 - Manifests enforce the planning process and makes casualty collection/identification easier.
 - Manifests make the patrol safer because you have firm accountability of soldiers, and you prevent insurgents from joining the patrol when you detach teams and squads.
- Train your Americans to do the right thing, and make sure you hold the American Soldiers to a high standard of personal and professional conduct.
 - Use spoken Arabic and minimize the use of interpreters.
 - Hand and arm signals need to be consistently used as they transcend the language barrier.
 - Properly arm your Iraqi soldiers with a basic load.
 - Be confident that risk mitigation is acceptable force protection, and do not treat Iraqi soldiers as threats to your personal safety because they have loaded weapons.
 - Do land navigation along with the Iraqi leader.
 - Make sure the mission brief and rehearsals include very clear instructions on exactly what to do on contact. If you do not drill this point home, they will not know how to react.
 - Be prepared to switch from observer mode to a more active leadership role if necessary, but try to avoid the leadership situation if at all possible.
- Have Iraqi medical personnel present. Iraqi medical personnel can quickly explain to a patient the treatment and prognosis, and they are incredibly brave, consequently, inspiring to the men around them.
- Do not allow trained units to be broken up. Transfers should be kept to a minimum.

Interpreters/Arabic

Arabic is a difficult language for most Americans. Learn as much as you can of the spoken variety. Any American that works with the Iraqis directly needs to have a basic grasp of Arabic.

Use interpreters. Most likely, the interpreter will be 20-30 year old Iraqi with some college, who has previously worked for American units and speaks passable English. In many cases, their English is poor and directly affects the translations. Interpreters also consider themselves superior to the average Iraqi (class consciousness), and this can cause a number of problems.

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TTP

- Insist that your interpreters translate exactly what you say.
 - Do not allow them to add anything extra or usurp your authority by giving an order.
 - Giving an order turns them into defacto leaders, which can lead to major complications about who is really in charge.
 - Once your Arabic gets good enough, do not be afraid to correct the interpreter if he is not translating exactly what you said.
- Make your interpreters live and operate under the same conditions as Iraqi/American troops.
 - In the field, interpreters should wear protective gear, observe noise/light discipline, get down when the soldiers get down, and eat the same food.
 - Do not let class distinctions get in the way, as this will reinforce Iraqi class stereotypes that you are seeking to break down.

Be aware of the interpreter's tribal affiliations. They will play up or down the class distinction based on who they are interpreting for, and you cannot allow them to do this.

Conclusions

Most Soldiers are not SF, yet they are expected to perform their mission without adequate training. The best way to accomplish the mission is to gain skill through on-the-job training (OJT) and using lessons learned.

It would also be helpful to have some mobile training teams (MTTs) in country to supplement the SF teams that are stretched thin with other missions. Access to SF training materials and even a two-week immersion course taught in theater would be very helpful to units that have to perform the same type of mission with any ISF elements.

We can succeed in this mission if our training and operational concepts evolve as we work more closely with the ISF and they continue to grow more competent in accomplishing their mission.