SMA Reach-back Report

Building Partner Capacity: Iraq

Question (R6.10): *What can the U.S. and Coalition partners realistically do to enable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to combat a long-term ISIS insurgency? Recognizing the enormous resources the U.S. poured into the ISF from 2003 until 2011, only to see much of the force collapse in 2014, what can we do to avoid making the same mistakes when training the ISF?*

Contributors

Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed, United States Institute of Peace; Ambassador James Jeffrey, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron & Case Western Reserve University; Dr. Michael Knights, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Vernie Liebl, ProSol Associates & Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning, US Marine Corps University; Dr. Spencer Meredith III, National Defense University; Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy, London University (UK); Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Gulf Research Council; Mubin Shaikh, Indepdendent Analyst; Anonymous Smith; Dr. Craig Whiteside, Naval Postgraduate School

Executive Summary

Sarah Canna, NSI Inc.

At the beginning of the Reach Back effort in 2016, Drs. Belinda Bragg and Sabrina Pagano from NSI Inc. created a qualitative loop diagram[1] of security dynamics representing Kurdish, Shia, and Sunni populations in Iraq using NSI's Stability Model (StaM).[2] They found that security dynamics in the region were driven in large part by perceptions of social accord and governing legitimacy. These findings apply today to the study of why Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) failed in 2014, why they are strengthening today, and what pitfalls they may face in the future.

---

[1] A qualitative loop diagram is a visual heuristic for grasping complex recursive relationships among factors, and is a useful means of uncovering unanticipated or non-intuitive interaction effects embedded in complex environments such as that we see in Iraq. It is intended to serve as a "thinking tool" for analysts, practitioners, and decision makers. Once produced, the "map" of the direct and indirect relationships between legitimacy, social accord, and Iraqi perceptions of security, can be used to explore those relationships, test hypotheses about them, and provide a broad picture of second- and third-order effects on critical nodes in the system.

[2] The StaM framework consolidates political, economic, and social peer-reviewed quantitative and qualitative scholarship into a single stability model based on three dimensions – governing stability, social stability, and economic stability- and, critically, specifies the relationships among them. As such, the StaM represents a cross-dimension summary, which draws on rich traditions of theory and research on stability and instability from diverse fields, including anthropology, political science and international relations, social psychology, sociology, and economics. The StaM aids users not only in identifying the factors that explain the stability or instability of a nation-state, region, or other area of interest, but also in making the connections between and among the various stability factors apparent—allowing users to derive all implications of a potential engagement strategy.

As we know, key security concerns of Sunni populations in Iraq revolve perception of inequality and fear of retribution (Bragg, Hamasaeed, Kaltenthaler, Pagano).

> Iraq's Sunni Arabs have voiced fears that, once areas of Iraq controlled by ISIL have been liberated, Kurdish and Shia Iraqis will seek to exact retribution against Sunni populations in these areas for the actions carried out by ISIL (Amnesty International, 2016; Fahim, 2016; Hauslohner & Cunningham, 2014; Rozen, 2016). "There are many barriers [to Sunni IDP's return], including the fear of revenge for atrocities that have been committed, black lists of people accused—rightly or wrongly—of complicity and lack of coordination among local authorities and security forces" (United States Institute of Peace Staff, 2016). (Bragg & Pagano, 2016).

The loop diagram in Figure 1 suggests that to alleviate fears of retribution and to enhance Sunni perception of the government's legitimacy, Sunni representation in the police become an essential part of the professionalization of the ISF going forward (Bragg & Pagano, 2016). Failure to do so may turn Sunni populations, particularly in areas where ISF forces must operate in the fight against Daesh, against them (Hamasaeed, Kaltenthaler). However, as this type of analysis shows, there is also a "virtuous" loop where in crease Sunni perception of equality enhances perceptions of legitimacy, which enhances security, which ultimately enhances a sense of fair political representation (Bragg & Pagano, 2016). This loop highlights the centrality of political and social factors to the potential for stability and security in Iraq moving forward, which is also supported by Mr. Hamasaeed.
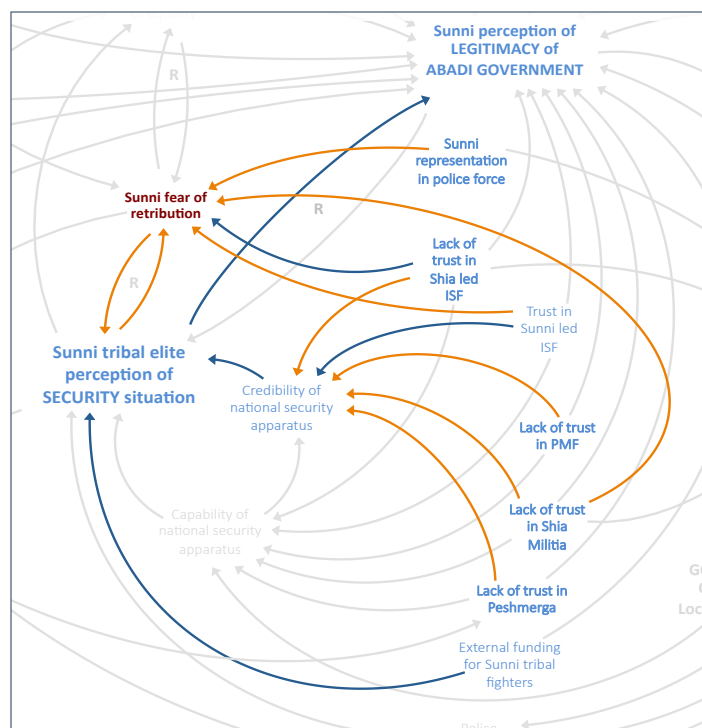

Figure 1: Decreasing Sunni Arab fears of retribution

By updating the loop diagram to focus primarily on the role and function of the ISF, we can get beyond a list of the sources of failure and potential solutions to get at the heart of the problem: large segments of Iraq's population (primarily Sunni Arabs and Kurds) do not trust the government, and by extension, the ISF. Where there is no trust, there can be no legitimacy.[3] A government that protects the interests of

---

[3] Governing legitimacy is rooted in the perception of actors within a state. Specifically, legitimacy encompasses the perception of the citizenry of a state that those institutions have the right to govern, generally follow the rules adopted by that authority, and use governing institutions to allocate public goods and services, while allowing for voice of political grievances or needs and protection of civil rights and liberties.[3] People who view their government as legitimate are more likely to accept the rules determined by that authority, self-identify with that authority, seek public goods (e.g., security, justice) from its institutions, and voice their political grievances or needs within the systems established by that government (Bragg & Pagano 2016).

Shia over Sunnis results in institutions, like the armed forces, that promulgate a negative feedback loop where the unwillingness of forces to protect Sunnis erodes Sunni trust in the government, resulting in the ISF being perceived as an illegitimate and ineffective force.

Experts note that ISF has made marked improvement in combating Da'esh over the last year (Liebl, Whiteside). They point to a new sense of nationalism among the citizens of Iraq and the ISF in the face of an adversary that has come to be seen as an existential threat. However, it begs the question of what will happen when the threat that has unified the country to some degree recedes. It also raises concern that while the population on average may experience rising nationalism, specific groups may not share in that experience, which can lead to unrest that affects the country. This is even more pertinent as ISF chases the remnants of Daesh fighters to rural, Sunni dominated areas with a military force led and comprised primarily of Shia personnel.
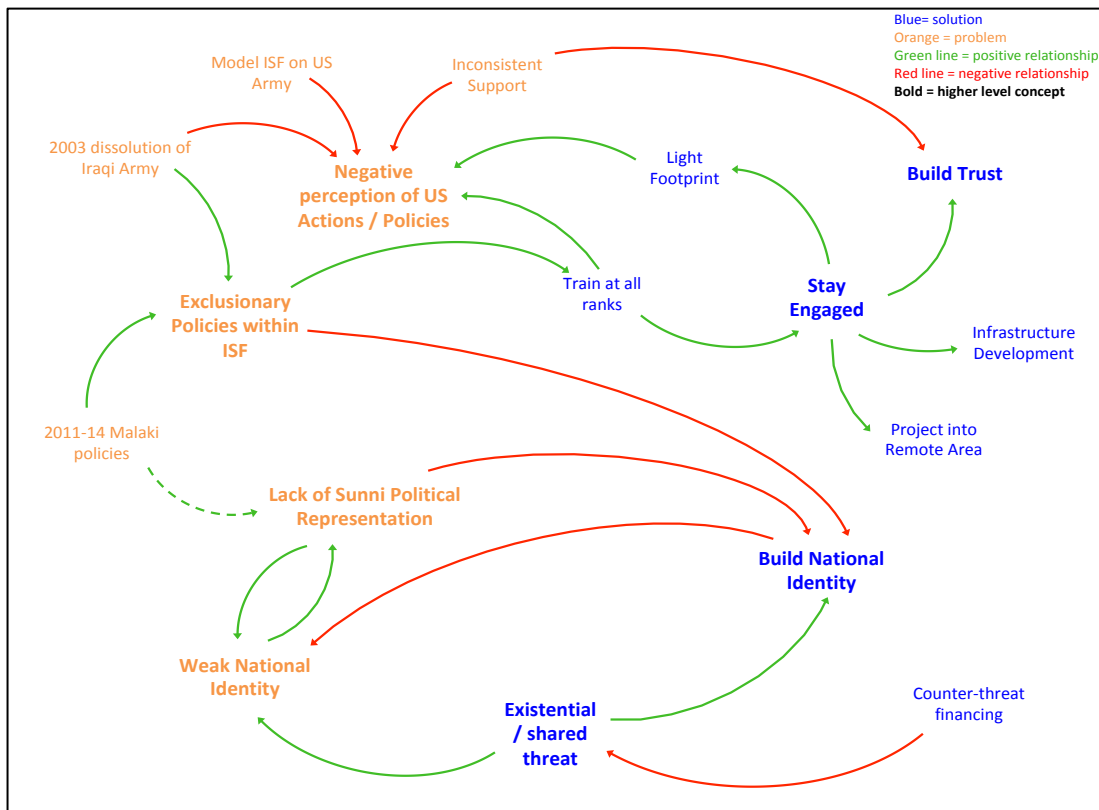

Figure 2 Enhancing legitimacy and trust of ISF

Figure 2 above provides a visual summary of the dynamics at play in the professionalization of the ISF. As mentioned above, the key drivers of ISF failure as identified by experts since 2003 include 1) lack of Sunni political representation, 2) weak national identity, 3) exclusionary policies within the ISF, and 4) negative perception of US policies and actions. This last point highlights the role the United States has played in undermining the success of ISF. Starting in 2003, the dissolution of the Iraqi army not only emboldened exclusionary policies that sidelined Sunni participation and trust in the armed forces, but also eroded US standing with Sunni populations in Iraq (Hamasaeed). Since then, inconsistent support (in terms of both training and funding) opened a vacuum, particularly after 2011, for Prime Minister Maliki to hollow out the officer corps to make it "coup proof" instead of effective and representative (Hamasaeed, Jeffrey, Kaltenthaler, Liebl, Sager, Whiteside).

The most frequent recommendation made by experts to ensure the ISF becomes a force able to combat a long-term Da'esh insurgency would be a US commitment to consistent, sustained engagement with ISF in the form of advice and, particularly, training. Figure 2 shows that a long-term US commitment consisting of a light footprint, training, and advice would help professionalize the army and build an institution built on strictures that would enhance the ISF's standing as a legitimate, representative, rules-based organization. The population's trust in the ISF is a necessary component to ensure that ISF can operate in and amongst Sunni populations where Daesh is likely to hide.

The threat and subsequent successful campaign against Daesh in Iraq has presented an opportunity for the country to build on a nascent sense of nationalism to professionalize and institutionalize Iraqi Security Forces as a legitimate guarantor of security for the people of Iraq. However, this transformation requires the consistent, sustained commitment of the US and Coalition partners to provide training and advice to Iraqi forces. As we saw in 2011, disengagement creates an opportunity for sectarian policies, fears, and grievances to emerge that would quickly erode any trust Sunni population might have for the ISF, making Iraq's efforts to combat Daesh ineffective at best and counterproductive at worst.

The stability model constructed in 2016 tells us that "attempting to isolate security engagement efforts from the broader political and social forces at play in Iraq is futile…Security is intrinsically linked to perceptions of governing legitimacy and the dynamics of ethno-sectarian relations. Thus, whatever diplomatic, informational, military and economic levers the U.S. employs in Iraq, attention must be paid to the influence they might have on both of these factors." (Bragg & Pagano, 2016). As happened in 2011, if OIR is declared a success and the US pulls out, ISF risks becoming once again into the tool of Shia sectarian forces. In the event that a Maliki-aligned, pro-Iranian government is elected in May, Dr. Kaltenthaler concludes, "it is better to be forced to leave Iraq rather than withdraw before the *long term* mission of stabilizing Iraq is complete."

In closing, we will leave you with a disruptive thought presented by Dr. Craig Whiteside of the Naval Postgraduate School: it is the local police, not the army that has the primary role in combating terrorism. He argues that army units should be employed to prevent Islamic State fighters from openly grabbing territory and having access to the population, but it is the local police that are best poised to adjudicate relations between the population and insurgent groups.

Appendix A: Recommendations

The suggestions below are mechanisms suggested by experts that the USG and its Coalition partners, in conjunction with the Iraqi government, could undertake to professionalize the ISF. Experts note that the US is not accepted by all political actors, and it will be important to work with Coalition members to play a mediating role in the Iraqi political process, which will determine the effectiveness, legitimacy, and population's trust in the ISF.

Domain	Recommendation
Advice	- Prove expertise in conflict analysis, prevention, mitigation, and resolution through trusted Iraqi third parties like Sanad for Peacebuliding and Network of Iraqi Facilitators (Hamasaeed) - Forge collaborative relationships with communities in areas where ISF deployed through Iraqi partner organization (Hamasaeed) - Intelligence cooperation on issues related to Da'esh (Jeffrey) - Remain mentally in Phase 0—perpetual preparation of the environment in order to best prevent radicalization (Meredith)
Training	- Establish political agreement or treaty allowing US or Coalition partners to have official oversight role in ISF (Jeffrey, Kaltenthaler, Sager) - Continuous, sustained training (Hamasaeed, Jeffrey, Kaltenthaler, Knights, Liebl, Meredith, O'Shaughnessy) - Keep Combined Joint Task Force engaged and focused on achievable goals (Knights, Meredith) - Fight against Daesh needs to be Iraqi-led (Knights) - Training in communication and propaganda techniques (O'Shaughnessy)
Institutional Development & Planning	- Create civil affairs functions in ISF to engage with communities and civilian institutions (Hamasaeed) - Establish deconfliction mechanisms with other forces and communities (Hamasaeed) - New structure of command and control (Kaltenthaler, Liebl) - Develop sense of ethos, prestige, and military professionalism (Kaltenthaler, Liebl) - Develop simple and authentic (to Iraq) COIN instructional material and doctrine (Knights, O'Shaughnessy) - Re-design battlefield geometry to project power into remote and difficult terrain (Knights) - Enable logistics surge to allow ISF to redeploy to remote areas (Knights) - Rebuild strategic capacity at ministries (Knights) - Integrate militias into army (Knights, Liebl, Sager) - Integration of forces from local to national (Whiteside)
Governance	- Improve inclusiveness of ISF (Hamasaeed) - Improve inclusiveness of Iraqi government to prevent political and communal competition that could escalate to violence, dragging the ISF into it (Hamasaeed, Sager) - Encourage local reconciliation efforts to prevent revenge violence and allow for the return of IDPs (Hamasaeed)

	- Develop counter-threat finance capabilities in cities as Daesh becomes more like a transnational criminal organization (Knights) - Protect training funds from corruption and nepotism (Liebl)
Materiel	- Replenish equipment lose in fight with Da'esh: armored vehicles, trucks, artillery, small arms, uniforms, body armor, ammunition, tactical gear such as night vision, etc. (Kaltenthaler, Knights, O'Shaughnessy)

Expert Contributions

Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed

United States Institute of Peace

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

The ISF will be present and active in areas that are politically and socially fragile, and conduct operations in coordination or competition with other forces, such as the Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), the Sunni Tribal or National Mobilization Forces (TMF or NMF), the Kurdish Peshmerga, and others.

This situation will require the ISF to operate with great sensitivity. In an environment like that, the ISF will benefit from:
1- Expertise in conflict analysis, prevention, mitigation, and resolution. Such expertise could be developed and exist in-house, and through building relationships and partnerships with institutions that can offer them such expertise and capabilities. Sanad for Peacebuilding and the Network of Iraqi Facilitators are examples of Iraqi non-governmental institutions that the Government of Iraq, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Canadian Government, and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) have tapped for analysis, leading facilitated dialogue processes, and specialized conflict resolution expertise to support reconciliation and stabilization of areas liberated from ISIS.
2- Forging collaborative relationships with the communities in the areas they are deployed in, which could help with early detection of issues, community cooperation to address problems, and establishing joint-problem solving mechanisms. (USIP and Iraqi partner organizations have implemented a program called Justice and Security Dialogues (JSD), which enabled these kinds of results with the police, and sometimes with other Iraqi security forces, in Kirkuk, Baghdad, Karbala and Basra provinces.)
3- Having civil affairs functions similar to that of the U.S. military to engage with the communities and civilian institutions.
4- Improving the inclusiveness of the ISF to have more representation from the Sunnis, Kurds, and minorities.
5- Establish de-confliction mechanisms with other forces and communities, especially in areas that could be flashpoints.

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?
The U.S. efforts to "train" the ISF did not necessarily result in failure. The effectiveness of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) is a good example where U.S. training was successful. However, it is true that by the time the U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq at the end of 2011, the ISF as a system and elements of it still needed further development and professionalization. It was known then that the ISF was still lacking capabilities in areas like gathering intel, coordinating logistics and supplies, and airpower. These contributed to their failure stopping the advances of ISIS, but were not the only reasons. Political and

governance failures, and involving the ISF in a sectarian fight were among the critical factors that resulted in the military failure.

What we should learn from the 2003-2011, and even post 2011 experience, is that training and having a capable force in terms of training and equipment is not sufficient. Peace and stability does not come through the application of force. Even if the GoI controls territory and a good level of security is achieved – as was the case after the "Surge" – they could be lost if they are not matched by the right political process. Today, the same risk exists.

After the 2011 troop withdrawal, the U.S. and other countries were quick to say the relationship with Iraq has become a normal diplomatic relationship, and what happened in Iraq was internal Iraqi business that the Iraqis should figure out how to address. Strong actors interpreted this that they can do what they want, and desperate actors either allied with or did not oppose ISIS. Iraqi leaders have been saying in private meetings, and some in pubic occasions, that they need U.S. and international community help with the political process. The U.S. is not accepted by all the political actors, that's why the U.S. and other Coalition members will need to work together to play a mediating role in the Iraqi political process.

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?

The U.S. and the Coalition can help the ISF by complementing the military progress against ISIS with supporting the needed political steps to prevent political and communal competition from escalating to violence, or dragging the ISF in, either as party to the conflict or trying to stop it.

ISIS sowed seeds of communal division and violence in area it controlled, which could lead to revenge acts of violence among the communities, especially tribes. The conflicts could be Sunni-Sunni, Sunni-Shia, Minorities-Sunni, Christian-Shabak, Minorities-Kurd, etc. There are successful Iraqi-led efforts of local reconciliation aimed at preventing revenge violence, and removing barriers to the return of millions of people to their homes. The U.S. and other members of the Coalition could support the continuation and scaling up of such efforts, which will help with stabilizing the liberated territories, building community resilience, and offering alternatives violence.

Ambassador James Jeffrey

Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?

Element 1: At the military level (1) a politically-backed agreement for the U.S. or an international coalition to have an 'inspector general' role with the Iraqi military leadership and Prime Minister to warn of nepotism, corruption, and other negative leadership traits that gradually poisoned the ISF 2012-14; (2) intelligence cooperation at every feasible level focused on both al Qaeda/ISIS elements and underlying social-economic-political factors that seed the ground for new terrorist outbreaks; (3) U.S. military presence as an end in itself (i.e, beyond facilitating (1) and (2) above, possibly better if embedded in a NATO or anti-ISIS coalition international presence), that will stabilize the situation in the officer corps otherwise vulnerable either to Iranian penetration or to disillusionment at abandonment of the West and consequently dominant role of Iran.

Element 2. Based on the author's experience as one of those involved in this question during that period at the senior level:

(1) post-2011 both military leadership and political leaders especially Maliki felt that they had been abandoned by us to either the Baathists or to Iran; thus the importance of (3) above. Maliki personally feared for his life, relied heavily (without admitting it) on U.S. force presence, and without that 'security blanket' which had proved its worth in Basra '08 (and of course again '14-17) turned to counter-productive oppression of Sunni Arabs, politicizing of the military to 'ensure' loyalty over competence, and increasing reliance on Iran whose interests included eroding a professional military and side-lining Sunni Arabs (and Kurds).

(2) Persistent tendency of the U.S. military over this author's 50 year's experience to believe, and to act on the basis of that belief, that conventional forces designed to mirror U.S. forces in their military capabilities and degree of loyalty to the state are effective in internal, highly ideological, religious, or ethnic internal conflicts.

There are two reasons why such forces have not been effective. First, historically, during internal or civil conflicts and insurgencies, from the post-1917-18 period of civil conflicts in the Ottoman empire, Russia, Eastern Europe and Germany, to the Vietnam war, or various more recent conflicts including the battle against ISIS, the most effective forces were either local, ideologically motivated levies (Viet Cong, ARVN "Ruff Puffs" and Phoenix, ISIS troops, PMU's) whose local expertise and motivation compensated for equipment and training deficiencies, or top end elite forces ("Mike Forces," Ranger, Airborne, and Marine ARVN battalions in Vietnam war, CTS in anti-ISIS conflict). Often such elite forces organized for special operations wind up as the only effective 'shock infantry' among conventional forces, who

otherwise often are relegated to hold terrain (often badly), and provide 'enablers' such as communications, airlift, fires and armor to the top end forces and irregulars who actually 'close with and destroy' the enemy.

Secondly, the U.S. military approach to organizing conventional forces usually compounds the basic problems above with conventional forces by promoting forces that look just like U.S. forces, with high tail-to-teeth ratios, overreliance on sophisticated supply and maintenance, and force management/command-control expertise requirements beyond the individual and cultural experience of those the U.S. is trying to turn into an effective force.

(1) By far the most important is to work at the regional, diplomatic and political level, supported by military presence/efforts and (least important) development/civil outreach/information operations, to minimize "Lebanization," i.e., Iranian influence on Iraqi sovereignty, on decision-making vis-à-vis Sunni Arab (and Kurdish) areas, and on the ISF (through infiltration/undercutting by the PMF).

(2) Taking responses to Element 1 and 2 to heart in dealing with ISF and GOI.

(3) Doing a great job on Element 2, which is the likely priority of CENTCOM and thus USG, is likely irrelevant if Element 1 is not successful. Doing a sorry half-way effort on Element 2 will probably be sufficient if U.S. succeeds with Element 1.

Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler

University of Akron &
Case Western Reserve University

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

The ISF need several things in order to prevent another ISIS or ISIS-type insurgency in Iraq. In terms of resources, ISF needs to be replenished with or outfitted with many things that were lost/surrendered/ or did not exist during their fight against ISIS. This includes armored vehicles, trucks, artillery, small arms, uniforms, body armor, ammunition, and other tactical gear such as night vision, etc. While these things are of crucial importance for a military that did a lot of scrounging when it re-gained the will to fight ISIS, this is not as important as the non-hardware assistance the ISF need. They need new training, a new structure of command and control, a new ethos, and new sense of military professionalism. These non-hardware items are crucial to preventing and crushing any new ISIS or ISIS-like insurgency. The ISF must not only not provoke a new insurgency in the predominately Sunni areas of Iraq, they must be a bulwark against forces in Iraq that may wittingly or unwittingly provoke Iraq's Sunni population into insurgency or supporting elements of ISIS that have come out of hiding. This will be possible with the right kind of force structure and proper training. What this type of force structure and training would look like will be discussed in the response to the next question.

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?

The US efforts to train ISF from 2003-2011 were based on the correct principles of what should be done to create a new national army that could fight with advanced weaponry and carry out missions in an efficient and effective manner. The collapse of the Iraqi army in 2014 was not due to US training mission failure but to what the Maliki government had done to the army and the Sunni areas of the country. Maliki undid much of the training that was done to the ISF command structure by politicizing it to make it "coup-proof." Shias loyal to him and his political movement were given officer positions even if they were less than competent or sufficiently trained. The NCO-ranks of the ISF, even before Maliki, were never sufficiently developed with training or authority to make the NCOs capable of real command and control in battlefield situations. Maliki's efforts did two very detrimental things to the ISF. First, it created a highly sectarian Shia officer contingent that did not trust or like Iraq's Sunni Arabs. Second, it created an officer corps populated by individuals there for their political loyalties and not their competence.

Both of these factors helped to create the conditions that facilitated the insurgency taking off and contributed to the ISF falling apart when ISIS emerged as a battlefield force in 2014. The abuse of Sunnis by Shia-dominated ISF after 2011 was important in fueling a sense of Sunni resentment and anger that fed and largely accepted the rise of ISIS as a potent insurgency. Furthermore, when ISIS attacked Iraqi cities, ISF fled because its officer ranks were incompetent and prone to panic. Also, there was a sense among many Shia soldiers and officers that it was not worth their lives to protect the Sunni population from ISIS. This led to the large-scale retreat of ISF from Sunni-dominated areas into the Shia-dominated areas to the South in Iraq.

The key take-away from this experience is that Iraqi ISF must be developed as forces with a common national ethos and sense of purpose. If they devolve back into a Shia-dominated sectarian set of forces, they will be both a source of a new insurgency and will likely be less than effective in the battlefield. We have seen that the Iraqi CTS has developed largely along these lines. Part of this is due to intense training with Coalition forces and part of it is due to the prestige that they have developed because of the fighting they did against ISIS. This model should be replicated as much as possible for the rest of the ISF. This will take a large investment of time and money from the US and hopefully other countries, but it is well worth it as the threat of another insurgency emanating from Iraq's Sunnis is very real.

How does the US keep its investment of time and money from being squandered again? The best way to protect the US investment in Iraq is to keep a permanent training presence in the country. Helping to develop a professional, non-sectarian military will take much time and effort. If the US declares OIR a success and pulls out, it leaves an opening for Iranian-tied forces in the country to once again turn the ISF into tool of Shia sectarian forces. While a US training presence in the country cannot undo an Iraqi election that could result in a Maliki-aligned pro-Iranian government, it is better to be forced to leave Iraq rather than withdraw before the *long-term* mission of stabilizing Iraq is complete.

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?

It will take several years for the Iraqi army to be transformed into a professional, unifying force in the country. But in the next year and half to two years, the foundations can be built to model the training of enlisted, NCOs, and officers that will set the path into the future. This means establishing the role of US and other foreign training elements in the permanent structure of training Iraqi security forces. This could be best achieved by a treaty arrangement with Iraq. The US should try to create the type of cooperation and training with Iraqi forces that has existed for years with Jordan or Kuwait. That means officer exchange arrangements, basing US training forces in Iraq, and joint US military and DOS operations to help with the humanitarian and security issues plaguing the areas devastated by the battle against ISIS. This is not so much to create good will among Iraqis as it is to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe that can create the seeds of a new Sunni insurgency. The ISF are now stretched much too thinly and under-resourced to manage security and helping with governance on their own. It is in the United States' strategic national interest to help resource the ISF to overcome this very difficult re-building period in Iraq. Failure to do so could lead to a re-emergence of ISIS and/or a much greater Iranian presence in Iraq than US interests could likely tolerate.

Dr. Michael Knights

Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?

MK: These seem like the same question put three ways, so I'll provide thoughts below.

- **Keep CJTF together and focused on achievable advising and training goals.** As my reply to question R6.3 notes, CJTF is a vital force multiplier – not just for us, but for the Iraqis. More countries, more capabilities, diverse capabilities (like Carabinieri training, for instance) is all helpful and reassuring for Iraq. Job one is staying engaged, as America and as the coalition. Continue providing direct intelligence and advisory support to the Iraqi Joint Operations Command. Stick with by/with/through and train-the-trainer. Keep things simple.

- **Population-focused COIN doctrine**. Iraq needs simple and feels authentically Iraqi COIN instructional material, drawing on experiences of best Iraqi COIN practitioners and support from Sunni and Shia religious endowments.

- **Train the ISF for this war.** This needs to be taught and exercised for all forces, new and going through refresher training. Needs to be Iraqi-led, by/with/through, not a Western imposition on them. <u>This is vital because ISF needs to protect populations, tribal leaders, pro-gov police and Sahwa/ Tribal Sec Forces (TSF) from Daesh in a way they failed to do in 2012-2014.</u> The Iraqi DCOS Training needs to be replaced and the best officer possible put in his place.

- **Big "re-plan" of battlefield geometry** to design an ISF force laydown that can project ISF power for the foreseeable future into the remote and difficult rural areas where Daesh will regenerate, namely:

  o Diyala – which has a major political component Iran-backed PMF cannot be allowed to dominate this environment and run Diyala like a fiefdom, of Daesh will keep its strong foothold there. Other non-Badr ISF need to come in, as does CJTF air and ISR.
  o The Kurdish-federal frontline from Kirkuk through Tuz Khurmatu through northern Diyala. This is in need of a Joint Security Mechanism that sustainably nets together Kurdish, federal, PMF, TSF and police for the long term. This is the easiest place for Daesh to come back – along the disputed area seam.
  o Rural Kirkuk (Hawijah. Riyadh, Rashad, Zab) and southern Nineveh – proper garrisoning arrangements, incl well-supported TSF.
  o Baghdad belts.
  o The Anbar-Syria border and Wadi Horan.

- **Logistics surge** for ISF to allow ISF to redeploy in these remote areas. The DCOS Logistics needs to be replaced and the best officer possible put in his place. The commander of the Iraqi Army General Depot Command at Taji should be a three-star general appointment (not a two-star as it presently is) so that the depot can interact on an equal level with the other Operations Command (including the powerful Baghdad Operations Command, where Taji is located). There should be an audit of all military warehouses to rediscover and salvage unaccounted-for military materiel.

- **Surge on enablers.** Focus on multi-year program to prioritize the building of "enabler" units. A key lesson from the last decade has been the need to build support units in the right proportion to combat brigades. In parallel with amalgamating weak combat brigades (to reduce duplication of brigade enablers) the Iraqi government needs to undertake an even more aggressive program of "catching up" in the creation of engineering, artillery, logistical, medical, communications and intelligence units. Added manpower should reflect a 5:3 ratio of combat soldiers versus support forces.

- **Force protection/sustainment.** Iraq is starting the long game of COIN. Casualties will add up an units will suffer. Force protection equipment and training, including field engineering, fortifications, mine-protected vehicles, plus combat lifesaving, casualty evacuation and combat surgical hospital capabilities are all key requirements. COIN will take years or decades, so our training/train-the-trainer can as well.

- **Counter-threat finance (CTF) in cities.** Daesh comes back as criminal mafia first, hitting merchants and taking cuts of city projects. It does kidnap for ransom and taxes rural people. The ISF needs to be able to detect this and stop it. This is not just closing exchange houses – it is real Sicily-style crime fighting, protecting judges, bringing in outsider judges, raiding, site exploitation, financial intel. Kirkuk, Mosul, Beyji/Tikrit, Qaim, Ramadi and Fallujah should be the focuses.

- **Strategic capacity building at ministries.** The big picture stuff is vital to underpin all of the above:

  o Protect the Chief of Staff (currently Ghanimi) and help strengthen Iraq's Joint Headquarters (JHQ) and other good reform-minded officers. Give him all assistance possible to impose discipline, fight corruption, hold off encroachment from the PMF and Iran. Encourage open-vote selection boards and careful anti-corruption efforts at recruitment centres and academies. Support the commandants of all officer and NCO academies and other training centres.

  o Help Iraq establish a Defense Resources and Requirements Board and a 3-5 year plan for ISF procurement, budgeting and sustainment. This board should focus on improving multi-year planning, programing, budgeting and evaluation (PPBE).

  o Support the development of Iraq's Defense Language Institute in order to steer a new generation of leaders toward foreign exchanges and professional military education and remove the language barrier that reduces the value of international training and equipment.

Mr. Vernie Liebl

ProSol Associates &

Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning,
US Marine Corps University

J39/SMA Question Responses for CENTCOM, As Requested

Vernie Liebl

26 December 2017

Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, Marine Corps University

vliebl@prosol1.com

Response to R6.10 - What can the U.S. and Coalition partners realistically do to enable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to combat a long-term ISIS insurgency? Recognizing the enormous resources the U.S. poured into the ISF from 2003 until 2011, only to see much of the force collapse in 2014, what can we do to avoid making the same mistakes when training the ISF?

Sub response - Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

Iraq Security Forces will continue to require funding, which is currently insufficient if sourced only from Iraqi government financial resources. The Iraqi economy is in a shambles, suffering from high unemployment and even higher underemployment, rampant corruption, shortage of skilled labor, outdated infrastructure, insufficient essential services and antiquated commercial laws. This does not include the massive destruction layered over these problems by the episodic rounds of destruction suffered from 1981 to 2017 (through the various conflicts with Iran, with the U.S.-led Coalition(s), civil conflict or against insurgent organizations like Al Qaeda or Daesh). Therefore, Iraq has been heavily dependent upon non-Iraq donors, be they other countries or a variety of international organizations. Even then, funding has been inadequate to support rebuilding, much less maintenance of existing infrastructure. The funding efforts have also suffered from extensive corrupt practices within the Iraqi government, greatly lessening positive impact of the funding.

At this point in time, there is no way that this analyst can say that the existing 'culture of corruption', based largely as it is on a 'zero sum' cultural outlook serving family, clan or tribe as the societal network, suffused with ethnic and/or religious exclusivity, will not be solved. That implies that the lack of adequate funding or the misdirection of existing funding will continue to be a problem restricting Iraq from establishing a safe and professional national security environment.

Iraqi Security Forces will continue to require military assistance, mentoring and training for the foreseeable future in order to retain combat effectiveness without devolving into nepotistic and corrupt security organizations dominated by regional or local strongmen and/or external actors. Presence of U.S./Coalition training and assistance teams will remain necessary to prevent extensive degradation of current Iraqi military forces. The withdrawal of that support at the end of 2011 until 2014 showed how deleterious to the Iraqi forces such an absence/lack of support is.

An excellent examination of this support and its impact and consequences of its loss can be found in the monograph "The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service" by David Witty, 16 March 2015, Center for Middle East Policy at Brookings Institute. Although several years old and focused on the CTS/ISOF, its breakdown of support and the consequences of removing it is a necessary read.

A corollary to the efficacy of direct support and 'corseting' of ISF units/organizations is the Iranian provision of aid, mentoring and military personnel to select Hashd al-Shaabi units (non-Sistani or Sadr sponsored). These means and methods also deserve examination, as clearly Iranian-supported Hashd (PMUs/PMFs) units have proven combat capable in locations such as Tikrit, Ramadi, Tal Afar and elsewhere.

Sub response - <u>Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?</u>

Much has been written, pointed out and debated as to the 'lack of results' in the training of the ISF. I will not regurgitate such but will point out, as one who assisted in preparing USMC 'Advise and Assist Teams (AATs), that U.S. trainers, every time, went into the training assuming that the Iraqis they were training had a sense of national identity and esprit de corps in the struggle against internal insurgents. In reality, for most of the ISF members, there was no sense of nationalism and a desire to 'defend the Father land', The U.S. decision to disband the standing Iraq Army in 2003 removed numerous men who had a long-standing sense of Iraqi nationalism (those who had 'won' the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq conflict, for one). Then the creation of the 'Coalition Military Assistance Training Teams (CMATT) in 2004 aimed to raise 27 battalions to be formed into 3 divisions, with a focus on external defense. Qualifiers for recruiting was exclusion of all former Saddam regime security & intelligence organization members, members of the Special Republican Guards (approximately 15,000 soldiers), high-level Ba'ath Party members (to include members of Ba'ath Party security & militia organizations). This removed a significant trained pool of potential recruits, and in fact drove many into the insurgent ranks.***

The CMATT essentially was a recycling of the U.S. World War 2 training program of focusing on intensive training of officers and NCOs, providing the vast bulk of enlisted men with only basic military skills. The intent was to have those thoroughly trained officers and NCOs to provide all the follow-on skill training and unit training to the enlisted troops. This approach was culturally inappropriate as recent history has shown, the opinion of most Arab officers is that the enlisted are merely cannon fodder and receive rigidly centralized training which discourages any initiative. Likewise, the concept of NCOs as a skilled military backbone and enablers of both the troop skills and officer success is not a Middle Eastern concept, but rather a 'Western' military cultural concept.

That the CMATT effort was unsuccessful was epitomized by the refusal of several "trained" Iraqi battalions, in April 2004, to fight in the first battle of Fallujah.

The CMATT was dissolved in mid-2004 and replaced by the Multi-National Security Transition Command – Iraq (MNSTC-I) with the intent to retrain those Iraqis trained under CMATT but to also increase the order of battle from 3 divisions to 7 divisions. Filling in temporarily as combat forces was the Iraq Civil Defense Corps (ICDC), founded as a Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Iraqi militia to provide temporary and emergency security services. Established in September 2003, their mission was multifold: joint patrolling with Coalition Forces; fixed site security; route security; natural disaster aid, and general assistance. This force was supposed to reach roughly 15,000 divided into 18 lightly-equipped battalions but never went beyond 6,000. This force was transferred to the Iraq Ministry of Defence in April 2004, renamed the Iraqi National Guard (which was dissolved in September 2004 due to suspected links to various insurgent groups, its manpower largely absorbed into the regular military units).

The MNSTC-I had a training focus on creating units capable of executing counter-insurgency missions, as opposed to external defense. Established to assist the MNSTC-I in this mission was NATO Training Mission – Iraq (NTM-I), which was specifically for training and support as opposed to the MNSTC-I mission, which also included partnering and mentoring in combat. Billions in funding and years of training was in many instances proven to be wasted as when U.S./Coalition forces were largely withdrawn by the end of 2011, insurgency began to strengthen and spread through much of central and western Iraq. The rise of the Islamic State (then in its iteration as ISIS) in 2014 saw large portions of the Iraqi Army collapse in the face of numerically inferior insurgent forces. In mid-June the 2nd Infantry Division (Mosul), the 3rd Infantry Division ((al-Kasik), the 12th Infantry Division ((Kirkuk) and the 4th Infantry Division (Tikrit), either completely or largely dissolved. Significant factors in the dissolution of these units was that much of the tactically effective leadership had been purged by the Maliki government (political loyalty was deemed more critical), basic training of most of the troops was only three weeks in length with little follow-on individual soldier skills or small-unit training at the home unit, and a general unwillingness of Shia troops to fight in Sunni areas. Compounding this was a general unenthusiastic support to the Maliki government, an unwillingness of the commanders to prosecute attacks against Sunni insurgent groups such as JRTN or former Sahwa militia members. However, possibly the largest issue was that the most motivated troops in each of those infantry units were primarily Kurds, whose loyalty to the Baghdad government was questionable. Thus, all four units (along with the all-Kurdish 7th Commando Battalion) deserted, with the great majority going over to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) Peshmerga.   This left a huge security vacuum in significant parts of Iraq, a vacuum filled by ISIS initially and later in part by KRG Peshmerga (very recently enlarged), Iraqi Ministry of Interior (MoI) Federal Police, and Popular Mobilization Units (called PMUs, also PMFs or Hashd units or Peace Companies, depending on sourcing) until a resurgent Iraqi Army arrived on the scene in 2016.

Which leads to the primary point in all of this. Despite all the money spent in recruiting, training and equipping Iraqi Security Forces, from 2003 until 2017, none of that provided the basis for the resurrection of the Iraqi Security Forces. Conventional foreign military forces from the U.S., Europe, Iran or anywhere else did not provide the core binding agent for the 'new' Iraqi Army. An argument can be made that the close and intimate training effort by the U.S. and several other western national Special Forces was and is the foundation of a literally unique (for the region) ISOF culture and resulting combat prowess, much as can be pointed to the heavy Iranian IRGC presence and esprit within Iranian-supported Hashd units. However, even with those forces leading the way, the regeneration of Iraqi military effectiveness, first noted in the fight in Mosul and then during the ensuing campaigns at Tal Afar, Hawija and the Western Euphrates, can only be attributed to one single and over-riding factor. That would be the realization of an existential threat to the Iraqi people from the Islamic State. The relentless massacres, executions and propaganda by beheading, even of children, associated with the assertion of an arid Wahhabi-based theology with no softness or general attractiveness to it, this mobilized the Iraqi people. No longer would foreign-supported Iraqi forces be considered as collaborationists, where Iraqi Sunni insurgent groups previously considered ambiguously as Iraqi patriots struggling against foreign invaders were looked at with a blind eye. ISIS was an unambiguous threat to Iraq and the Iraqi people. Dying to protect Iraq was no longer something considered shameful, as the soldiers were no martyrs protecting their families and their faith. That was the factor of critical importance. And of course, with this triumph of what we might call a nationalistic spirit and a new found military reputation, this has inevitably led to the situation over Kirkuk, the re-establishment of the conditions delineated within the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, a collapsing KRG and potential confrontation with Iranian Hashd forces within Iraq (there will likely be no interdiction of Iranian forces moving between Iran and Syria, as that is something that favors Iraqi national interests).

The U.S. and Coalition partners are continuing to provide training to Iraqi Army forces today. However, what is significant is that those conventional forces are now given follow-on training by CTS teams, all combat veterans of the fight against ISIS. That means the CTS, which has absorbed a great deal of U.S. military culture, and has moved away from being a purely regime maintenance force traditional to most Middle Eastern countries, is capable of injecting concern for law of warfare and regard for reducing civilian suffering. This is truly a potentially transformative possibility but must be handled with great care and subtle encouragement. Whether the U.S. is capable of that remains to be seen. As the old saw goes about Palestinians never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity, the U.S. is also frequently guilty of the same in regards to the Middle East, and of late in Iraq.

*** It is interesting to note that the core of the Sons of Iraq/Anbar Awakening, the tribal cadres who opposed Al Qaeda and ultimately worked with U.S./Coalition forces in Anbar Province, were often composed of former Special Republican Guard soldiers who found a way to protect their families and use their military training in support of their country. Of course, no mention of this was noted by U.S./Coalition forces.

Sub response - Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?
The absolute wrong thing to do would be a mass reintroduction of U.S./Coalition military forces. Not only would this likely reignite xenophobic nationalist insurgency, but would also validate several years of ISIS/Daesh propaganda about western/infidel efforts to destroy Islam. The resurgent of Iraqi Security Force efforts and reclamation of the country from Daesh insurgents (and Kurdish expansionism) completely mitigates such a course of action.
The U.S. needs to continue the Advice & Assist Training Team program, and the USSOF needs to continue their intimate and intensive training program with ISOF (CTS). What the Iraq government needs is a massive infusion of funding to begin rebuilding at the local level, otherwise a resurgence of an ISIS 3.0 is inevitable. However, the CTS, with their broad cross-sectarian appeal, can to some extent ameliorate this situation if they are continued to be seen not only as formidable fighters but as the protectors of the Iraqi people and respecters of human rights and of democratic secular governance. They would also counter mounting Iranian political pressure via the Hashd, as well as see to an 'honest' relationship with the Kurds of the KRG (within the constitution). A tall order.
As to the sourcing of the funds, that is beyond the purview of this response. However, such funds need to be self-generated and not provided by international donors. That Iraq cannot do so at this time due to the poor and damaged industrial infrastructure I first noted in Element 1 response. One solution might be a significant rise in the cost of oil, although that would have negative impacts external to Iraq.
Ultimately, the only way to prevent another ISIS-like resurgence, given the seriously stressed internal situation within Iraq, is an amelioration of the strictures of Islam itself. Islam provides a scriptural foundation/motivation for regime change (overthrow of munafiqin, murtadd or rafidah), expulsion of the kufr (infidels - aka U.S., Coalition, Kurds, etc) and wealth redistribution. It should be noted, this is not unique to the religion of Islam but as almost all other faiths have been supplanted by Islam in Iraq; that is where it is left. That there is little political will to confront any kind of religious reformation does not preclude its recognition, despite any discomfort caused by politically correct thought.

Dr. Spencer Meredith III

College of Insternational Security Affairs
National Defense University

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency? *Phase 0 – perpetual preparation of the environment, blanket messaging of historic successes replicable out of present crisis. *Need to be realistic though – radicalization is inherent to a lot of issues, the goal should be channeling it non-violently or through the legitimate means of coercive force. Lots of caveats at that one though, because it requires competent, capable, legitimate states…*

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently? *Lofty goals crashed into impossible realities of local interests and long-standing conflicts. Naiveté that 1) the US vision could unilaterally shape the outcome, and 2) absent strong-arming the ruling Shia in early reconstruction government, historic antipathies either did not exist or would not inevitably return. All sides accept them as natural and necessary (and desirable when they get a chance at power) – this is not endemic to this region alone, it is common across regions (politicized, polarized politics plague advanced democracies as well, even if the conflicts are not currently resolved violently in most Westernized countries).*

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising? *SDF is the best bet now, but neither can its model of governance/operation be replicated whole cloth, nor can it serve as a dumping ground for related discontented/disaffected groups to "build a brighter future together" as this would fundamentally dilute the group's capacity to succeed and play into Russia/Turkey's hands. BLUF: patient vigilance is the call to action in the near term. Overestimating what can be done is a sure fire way to fail, as with the initial regime/nation building short-sightedness of 2003 and beyond.*

Dr. Nicholas O'Shaunnessy

Queen Mary
London University (UK)

Element 1: What sort of resources and assistance does the ISF need to combat another long-term ISIS insurgency?

It continues to need specialist training and sophisticated equipment as well as effective forces: its leadership cadre must continue to be strengthened and recruitment of intelligent, mentally tough individuals is an important part of this. But training in communication and propaganda techniques – the phrase 'hearts and minds' was first invented by British general Sir Henry Clinton during the American War of Independence – is critical since so much of the Isis success was attributable to its mastery of propaganda.

Element 2: Why did our efforts to train the ISF from 2003-2011 result in failure? What should we learn from this experience? What can we do differently?

The cause of failure here was the decision of Paul W Bremer to dissolve the Iraqi army of 300,000 men, ignoring the lessons from World War II. Another cause was that the US had responsibility without power: this new Iraq army was organized on a sectarian base by the government of Iraq.

Undoubtedly the most critical lessons apply to the training of junior officers as well as senior officers and specifically in inculcating the importance of taking initiative in junior officers.

Element 3: What can the U.S. and the Coalition do within the next 18-24 months to help the ISF prevent another long-term ISIS uprising?

The US has learned a great deal from the failure and arrived at a new methodology – that is to say the provision of specialist units only plus providing training as well as advisory leaders plus substantial air support. This is a formula which has now succeeded and will succeed elsewhere because it provides critical strategic and tactical support while avoiding all of the political and cultural problems associated with bringing in large western armies.

At this point US must continue to support the Iraq forces with training, leadership, and selective military support when needed. But it also must keep a careful eye on the morale of the Iraq army as well, as this is quite crucial and a major reason for its collapse in the face of tiny Isis forces. The US must continue however to be unobtrusive: Iraqis must believe that this is indeed their army and that it has liberated them from Isis and will continue to be their shield, and then also be vigilant that Sunnis are not discriminated against. This is the crux of the political issue but it is also a matter of propaganda: there needs to be a new rhetoric and culture of inclusion in Iraq.

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

Gulf Research Council

What can the U.S. and coalition partners realistically do to enable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to combat a long-term ISIS insurgency? Recognizing the enormous resources the U.S. poured into the ISF from 2003 until 2011, only to see much of the force collapse in 2014, what can we do to avoid making the same mistakes when training the ISF?

The previous approach failed because it allowed for a sectarian government to supervise the military forces and to integrate the material into the force structure according to its own plans and not those of the United States. The result was an underdeveloped and not professional army. There was never an attempt to build the army around national professional standards. In the end, the US must ensure that it has a level of control over the process itself. There should be at least joint control when it comes to the structure of the army to ensure its non-political nature. But this also includes two key components: that militias are integrated into the army and not allowed to exists apart from the national structures, and that the nature of the government itself must be changed away from its sectarian nature.

Mr. Mubin Shaikh

Independent Consultant

What can the U.S. and coalition partners realistically do to enable Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to combat a long-term ISIS insurgency? Recognizing the enormous resources the U.S. poured into the ISF from 2003 until 2011, only to see much of the force collapse in 2014, what can we do to avoid making the same mistakes when training the ISF?

The risk of a second collapse is negligible at this time as the conditions that existed in 2014 are no longer present. Iraqi CT units have demonstrated great skill in battle and have developed a much better capability based on experiences they simply had not properly implemented in the years leading up to ISIS, having come immediately after the years of the AQ insurgency. In thinking of these post 2003 invasion years, it is also noteworthy to recall Iranian support of core AQ in this same period. Now that Iran has a much bigger foothold in Iraq due to the Syrian situation, responding to a serious insurgency challenge in Iraq will be absorbed also by Turkey & Iran.

A caution is extended here: significant military action against Iran can quickly run a risk of pitting an Iraqi, Turkish and Iranian coalition (even only of proxies) in a manner hostile to CENTCOM operations.

Dr. Craig Whiteside, LTC, USA (ret.)

Naval Postgraduate School

The following is an unedited transcript from a panel discussion session hosted by the Naval Postgraduate School in support of the SMA/CENTCOM Reach Back Effort.

Glenn Robinson: I want to turn the floor over to Dr. Craig Whiteside who's been one of the leading scholars in the country in recent years on radical Jihadism and has done a lot of work particularly on ISIS.

Craig Whiteside: All right. Thanks, Glenn. I appreciate it.

I gravitated towards Question 10. What can CENTCOM realistically do to enable ISF? Mostly because it… the rest of the question says to comment along the terms ISIS insurgency, which I think is a reality and it's well understood that ISIS recently, in its own statement, has said that it's transitioning from this hybrid, conventional, and irregular style to a uniformly irregular style in almost all of its areas understanding that it's different. So my short answer is that the current approach of training and security system is actually probably performed better than we thought. There's just the gap. There's a capability gap, and I'll go into it through the use of a case study of some of my research. But there's no need to throw the baby out of the bathwater, if you will.

I'll start with two assumptions. One of them is these are based on private research, is that we're very critical to ISF performance in 2014 certainly for good reason. It's had its problems. It was asked to do the impossible. It wasn't doing what it was trying to do. It wasn't organized very well. In some cases, it was poorly led and politicized. I think these are all well understood. However, still they're setup from failure. Judging them on the ISIS takeover of territory in 2014 is unfair test for a largely conventional force across the board, both its police and its army units, and I'll get more into that.

Mostly that is because this **[0:45:02 inaudible]** agency and their campaign, which I think is still with more research to do is one of the more brilliant and regular work for a campaign, and it last a lot longer than we give credit for. The second assumption is that 2018 is not 2009. Right? The 2009, I kind of marked as the start of the comeback of the Islamic State of Iraq. They're going to use that through the playbook again or they think they are with some minor adjustments. The revelations are more productive than they **[0:45:35 inaudible]** overtime. It's a very patient strategy. It took five years to see its culmination. That's the timeline we should think about. That's how long it took them. It might not take them as long next time and it might not happen at all.

The case study that I'll talk about to look at how that irregular warfare took place in a place called **[0:46:03 inaudible]** which is a north battle, but it's south

of Baghdad. It's a very strategic place. Currently, it's depopulated. A lot of **[0:46:11 inaudible]** because they're so cognizant of the ability of IS to come back in such an area like that, the current insurgency tactic to be sure. My research, I quoted, IS claims, Islamic State open source claims. Over the period, their operational summary **[0:46:26 inaudible]**. Right? What I found was that, one, there was a significant military presence in the area that should've prevented all this from happening. There was a solid delegation of 200 folks. There were local police. There was an army battalion in the area. There is an emergency reaction force regimen as well, so a tremendous increase in security forces all trained in large degree by the US.

None of that prevented the IS comeback in **[0:46:58 inaudible]**, which was one place of many that I study. All right? In addition, the mayor was the Sahwa leader which shows the integration of political military at the local level, which is ideal in combating regular stock campaign.

How IS went about it? They stayed away from the heavy conventional units, particularly the US. There are two attacks in the US in four years despite a constant US presence between 2008 and probably one of the last units to leave Iraq in 2011. All right? As early as October 2008, the **[0:47:34 Sahwa]** over our military leader was assassinated, which shows the amazing amounts of intelligence, but also the beginnings of this campaign of how they were going to get back into the game. It's partly an overarching campaign called The Dignity Campaign **[0:47:48 inaudible]**. If you look at the attack patterns briefly to go into some granular detail, in 2008 and 2009, over two-thirds of all attacks in that district were against the Sahwa only. They were going against the low-hanging fruit, the local project forces that were relied on to secure the area and as an adjunct to the more conventional security force.

By 2010, it's 10 of 23, so just under half but still a heavy number. By 2011, 20 of 45, so similarly, just under half. Over half of them are close-kill assassinations, showing great intelligence networks as well as the integration between local forces and what's probably a traveling professional squad of the assassination teams or the nights of the **[0:48:40 inaudible]** that the Islamic State called at the time of the propaganda. A quarter of them were sticky of bombs, which is the ability to put a bomb in someone's PUV and destroys it very discriminately. All discriminate attack current to the acquisition that they have, a very indiscriminate **[0:48:55 inaudible]**. They do, but that's for the other people.

Twenty-six of 58 attacks, the victims were named in this operational summary, so they absolutely knew who they were going for. So over half. 23 of those 58 were leadership targets. So there's the decapitation campaign. Out of the top leaders of the security architecture at the local level, it killed the military Sahwa leader. It killed and wounded the… I'm sorry, they wounded the mayor in two different attacks and ran him off - he was also a Sahwa member - and they killed the chief tribal leader of that particular federation, the Judami Federation, as he was returning from a reconciliation conference with the Maliki government and other tribes. Yeah, that's October 2012.

This is again a longstanding campaign, but it's fairly effective. That's the gap that I was talking about. The conventional forces during this time period are relatively not being attacked. They're being attacked in increasing numbers to be sure, but it starts off with the local proxy forces that were eliminated. These are patterns that you can actually see in other campaigns in other histories like in the Viet Cong. It's the same thing in the late 50s, early 60s as they're trying to undermine the **[0:50:13 inaudible]** regime. By the time conventional forces are engaged and pushing in to take over the job of local small police and local proxy forces or malicious, it's too late. They're overwhelmed by the lack of intelligence.

If you look at other campaigns in Iraq during this 2009, it's all there. You look at Mosul. It never had a Sahwa. By November 2011, if you compare attack data across the region of Diyala, 20 attacks in the month of November 2011 and **[0:50:51 inaudible]** 52, so significantly more. But not as much as Mosul or Nineveh, which is 73, which the majority of the attacks are happening in the metropolitan area of Mosul. By October 2012, that's jump from 73 to 200 attacks a month. By the same time in 2013, it's almost up to 300 attacks a month. These are directed all of at conventional forces, all on a regular style. It's not something that they're able to combat. They're simply… it's a comparison of apples and oranges.

Summary. The conventional forces are a poor match for the coming IS campaign. The proxy force, the Sahwa Movement, the Awakening movement that use the secured areas did well until 2006 or 2008 when it has great intelligence on their enemies. However, as that intelligence is dated, as new people are recruited, as people are coming out of prison and rejoining the Islamic State Movement, that imbalance shifts back towards the Islamic State's favor and they're able to undermine the Sahwa, they're able to dismantle it in many places, and that's the key to their success. Then ramping up more serious attacks against conventional forces, IEDs and mortars, you start to see happening after they've secured their local areas. This all comes out of the IS strategy document in 2009 where they changed their organizational structure and created a tribal engagement that's allowed them to try to mobilize the population.

In 2018, you see tremendous political defeat for the Islamic State, and this is looking forward. The Caliph is in hiding and it's questioned whether he should still be called the Caliph or not. They've got extremely limited access to the population. They cannot engage conventional forces in the style that they have in the past three years. They're really back to the capabilities that they had maybe in 2008 or 2009. They've lost some tremendously important leaders and cadres that are hard to replace, like **[0:53:03 inaudible]**. These are going to be very difficult to replace, but you can assume that they will replace them with people from a more recent combat.

What are some of the takeaways? The integration of the local and the national is where IS had the advantage in this comeback and where they were able to run around the smaller irregular government forces that were more locally based, which is good in some way, but they didn't… they were not able to search and they were not able to shift resources in a larger operational campaign, which IS was. I would argue that that was how IS was able to defeat their like and much more difficult opponent, the gap, this idea of the irregular forces.

The integration from local to national is key. That would be key for governmental capabilities to be able to have local forces that are tied at the national level. If you think immediately of Hashd al-Shaabi, we have problems with that. But that is a force that's probably being successful in a lot of areas. However, we obviously have issues that might tie in with some of the other comments that were made here. However, the US has kind of dealt with this before in the same theater in Iraq, and that was the awakening movement. That's splitting semi-resistance fighters from the true insurgence, which were the Islamic State Movement. That was successful in kind of co-opting. The question I would pose or curiosity that I have is, is that a possibility with Hashd al-Shaabi? Can you co-opt or split them in some way politically for more moderate members and certainly the city elements in the Hashd al-Shaabi, which have joined because it seems to be a popular and effective organization, at least from their perspective.

The local police, we continue to think that local police are good counter insurgence. I really am questioning that, did some of my own research, looking back at previous case studies. We tend to confuse local police with special police or special branch police or intelligence-oriented policing. Whereas local policing really are good at adjudicating relations between the civilian population, which is necessary. They should be produced. Army units should be continued to be produced and they keep the Islamic State from openly grabbing territory and then having access to the population **[0:55:44 inaudible]**.

However, they're not the best ones to combat them. That's the conundrum, I think, of Question 10. Then I'll finish with what ability is there to train interrogators, the special police skills, corrections folks, intel people, the folks that are doing… the folks that could do something like **[0:56:11 Dr. Phillip]** talked about in the social network analysis, and people who are actively trying to recreate what this network and hierarchy of the Islamic State looked like in order to prevent what happened last time, to be honest, which was resurgence of the Islamic State Movement because of their ability to regenerate human capital from the prison system, the immense and overwhelmed and sometimes corrupted prison system.

It's their ability to train those skills, in addition to more broadly leadership and more unique training for the **[0:56:53 inaudible]** of your conventional forces that can deal with this irregular campaign that's going to come. With that, I'll close my comments.

Q&A Session

Craig Whiteside: I'll just chime in and follow up on Dr. Arquilla's comment, which I thought was… it's something that bothers me as well. The campaign of defeat of the Islamic State militarily and to some degree politically has been very successful in a lot of different ways. I won't take anything away from that at all. It's a very complex operation to be sure. But there's a little bit of sensitivity over the Mosul, rambling of Western Mosul and what could possibly be the excessive use of air strikes as Dr. Arquilla mentioned. The economic impact to that, defeating Mosul or the small stay-behind force or the relatively small stay-behind force for sure is significant to some degree, especially if you're taking it from the people who took it from them.

But the economic implications of **[1:26:27 inaudible]** is not going to help the future and defeating a future IS resurgence if that is in the card politically. It's going to make, especially in… for a bunch of allies that don't want to contribute or to what they've already done to resurrect these places, this could be a bright product of ISIS in general strategy, this scourge or strategy. But now the government has a responsibility and it's going to be looked at to resurrect these areas. That's made much more difficult by the style of warfare that we are conducting even with the light footprint advantages that we talked about.

Biographies

Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed

Sarhang Hamasaeed is the director of Middle East Programs at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP). He joined USIP in February 2011 and works on program management, organizational development, and monitoring and evaluation. His areas of focus include political and policy analysis, conflict analysis, dialogue processes, reconciliation and post-conflict stabilization, and ethnic and religious minorities. He writes, gives media interviews to international media, and is featured on events and briefings on Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East. He provided analysis to NPR, Voice of America, Al-Jazeera America, Fox News Al-Hurra TV, Radio Sawa, Kurdistan TV, Kurdsat TV, Rudaw, Al-Iraqiya TV, NRT TV, Skynews Arabia, the Washington Times, PBS, and CCTV. He is a member on the Task Force on the Future of Iraq, and was member of the Rebuilding Societies Working Group under the Middle East Strategy Taskforce, both initiatives by the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He regularly gives a lecture at the Foreign Service Institute on ISIL and Challenges to Governance in Iraq.

Hamasaeed has more than 15 years of strategy, management, and monitoring and evaluation experience in governmental, nongovernmental, private sector, and media organizations.

As a deputy director general at the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (2008-2009), Hamasaeed managed strategic government modernization initiatives through information technology with the goal of helping improve governance and service delivery. As a program manager for the Research Triangle Institute International (2003-2004), he managed civic engagement and local democratic governance programs in Iraq. Hamasaeed has worked as a planning and relations manager at Kurdistan Save the Children (1997-2002). Hamasaeed has also worked for the Los Angeles Times and other international media organizations.

He holds a Master's degree in International Development Policy from Duke University (2007) and is a Fulbright alumnus.

Ambassador James Jeffrey

Ambassador James F. Jeffrey is the Philip Solondz distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute where he focuses on U.S. diplomatic and military strategy in the Middle East, with emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

One of the nation's most senior diplomats, Ambassador Jeffrey has held a series of highly sensitive posts in Washington D.C. and abroad. In addition to his service as ambassador in Ankara and Baghdad, he served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration, with a special focus on Iran. He previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, where his responsibilities included leading the Iran

policy team and coordinating public diplomacy. Earlier appointments included service as senior advisor on Iraq to the secretary of state; chargé d'affaires and deputy chief of mission in Baghdad; deputy chief of mission in Ankara; and ambassador to Albania.

A former infantry officer in the U.S. army, Ambassador Jeffrey served in Germany and Vietnam from 1969 to 1976.

Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler

Karl Kaltenthaler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University. His research and teaching focuses on security policy, political violence, political psychology, public opinion and political behavior, violent Islamist extremism, terrorism, and counterterrorism. He has worked on multiple research studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, and the United States. He is currently researching the radicalization and recruitment process into Islamist violent extremism in different environments as well as ways to counter this process (Countering Violent Extremism). His work has resulted in academic publications and presentations as well as analytic reports and briefings for the U.S. government. He has consulted for the FBI, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Intelligence Community and the U.S. military. His research has been published in three books, multiple book chapters, as well as articles in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Science Quarterly, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, as well as other several other journals.

Dr. Michael Knights

Michael Knights is a Lafer fellow at The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the Gulf Arab states.

Dr. Knights has traveled extensively in Iraq and the Gulf states, published widely on security issues for major media outlets such as *Jane's IHS*, and regularly briefs U.S. government policymakers and U.S. military officers on regional security affairs. Dr. Knights worked as the head of analysis and assessments for a range of security and oil companies, directing information collection teams in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. He has worked extensively with local military and security agencies in Iraq, the Gulf states, and Yemen.

Dr. Knights has undertaken extensive research on lessons learned from U.S. military operations in the Gulf during and since 1990. He earned his doctorate at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, and has worked as a defense journalist for the *Gulf States Newsletter* and *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

Mr. Vern Liebl

VERNIE LIEBL, M.A., M.S.

Middle East Desk Officer
Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning
vliebl@prosol1.com
703-432-1743

Degrees:
- M.A. National Security and Strategic Studies
- M.S. History
- B.A. Political Science

Areas of Interest:
- Culture and History of Middle East
- Culture and History of South Asia
- Culture and History of Islam

Vernie Liebl is an analyst currently sitting as the Middle East Desk Officer in the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). Mr Liebl retired from the Marine Corps and has a background in intelligence, specifically focused on the Middle East and South Asia.

Prior to joining CAOCL, Mr. Liebl worked with the Joint Improvised Explosives Device Defeat Organization as a Cultural SME, and before that with Booz Allen Hamilton as a Strategic Islamic Narrative Analyst. He has also published extensively on topics ranging from the Caliphate to Vichy French campaigns in WW2.

Mr Liebl has a Bachelor's degree in political science from University of Oregon, a Master's degree in Islamic History from the University of Utah, and a second Master's degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College (where he graduated with "Highest Distinction" and focused on Islamic Economics).

Dr. Spencer Meredith III

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III is a professor of national security strategy at the US National Defense University. With a doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, and two decades of research and work on post-Soviet regions and the Middle East, his expertise bridges scholarly and practitioner communities. To that end, he has published widely on strategic topics related to democratic development, conflict resolution, and special operations. He is a Fulbright Scholar and a regular advisor and contributor to several DoD and interagency projects, including multiple Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessments, intelligence community workshops, and JSOC efforts supporting the joint warfighter in the areas of governance, human factors of conflict, and influence operations.

Dr. Nicholas O'Shaunnessy

Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy is Professor of Communication at Queen Mary, University of London, UK and latterly director of their Marketing and Communications Group; Visiting Professor (2016-) in the Department of War Studies at King's College London, and a Quondam Fellow of Hughes Hall Cambridge University. Earlier in his career he taught for eleven years at Cambridge. Nicholas is the author or co-author or editor of numerous books on commercial and political persuasion.

Ultimately his concern is with the 'engineering of consent'- the troubling matter of how public opinion can be manufactured, and governments elected, via sophisticated methodologies of persuasion developed in the consumer economy.

A co-authored book, Theory and Concepts in Political Marketing, was published in April 2013 with Sage. Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand (Hurst) was published in September 2016, and a second volume – Marketing The Third Reich: Persuasion, Packaging and Propaganda- has been out since September 2017 with Routledge. 'Key Readings In Propaganda' (with Paul Baines, four volumes, Sage London 2012): Volume One: Historical origins, definition, changing nature. Volume Two: The psychology and sociology underpinning Propaganda. Volume Three: Propaganda in military and terrorism contexts. Volume Four: Advances and contemporary issues in Propaganda.

Other topics in propaganda are pursued in numerous journal articles such as Selling Terror: The Symbolization and Positioning of Jihad (with Paul Baines), Marketing Theory Volume 9 (2) (pp 207-221) 2009. The Dark Side of Political Marketing, Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims with Paul Baines et al, European Journal of Marketing.V44 3/4 2010. Al Qaeda message evolution and positioning, 1998- 2008: Propaganda analysis re-visited, Baines and O'Shaughnessy, Public Relations Inquiry pp 163-191 May 2014 .Putin, Xi, And Hitler: propaganda and the paternity of pseudo democracy. Defence Strategic Communications (the official journal of NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence) Vol 2 Spring 2017. The Politics of Consumption And the Consumption of Politics**:** How Authoritarian Regimes Shape Public Opinion By Using Consumer Marketing Tools. Journal of Advertising Research, June 2017, 57 (2).

His perspective has always been that persuasion is the hidden hand of history, its core dynamic. And certainly it is the case that propaganda has become again an important part of our global public and civic discourse.

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

A Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, **Dr. Abdulaziz Sager** is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Jeddah with a well-established worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe.

In this capacity, Dr. Sager has authored and edited numerous publications including Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The GCC's Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq and Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions. He

is also a frequent contributor to major international media channels and appears regularly on Al-Arabiya Television, France 24 and the BBC. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Sager is actively engaged in track-two and mediation meeting. For example, he has chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in December 2015 and November 2017.

In addition to his work with the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager is President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments. Furthermore, he holds numerous other appointments including on the Makkah Province Council, Advisory Board of the Arab Thought Foundation, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Faculty of Economics and Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Ministry of Education, Geneva Center for Security Policy and German Orient Foundation. Dr. Sager has also sat on the advisory group for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, and participates in the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

Mr. Mubin Shaikh

Born and raised in Canada, **Mubin Shaikh** grew up with two conflicting and competing cultures. At the age of 19, he went to India and Pakistan where he had a chance encounter with the Taliban before their takeover of Afghanistan in 1995. Shaikh became fully radicalized as a supporter of the global Jihadist culture, recruiting others but the 9/11 attacks forced to him reconsider his views. He spent 2 years in Syria, continuing his study of Arabic and Islamic Studies and went through a period of full deradicalization.

Returning to Canada in 2004, he was recruited by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and worked several CLASSIFIED infiltration operations on the internet, in chat-protected forums and on the ground with human networks. In late 2005, one of those intelligence files moved to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) for investigation. The "Toronto 18" terrorism case resulted in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists after testifying over 4 years, in 5 legal hearings at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

Shaikh has since obtained a Master of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (MPICT) and is considered an SME (Subject Matter Expert) in national security and counterterrorism, and radicalization & deradicalization to the United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate, NATO, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), CENTCOM, various special operations forces, the FBI and others. He has appeared on multiple U.S., British and Canadian media outlets as a commentator and is extensively involved with the ISIS social media and Foreign Fighter (including Returnees and rehabilitation) file. Shaikh is also co-author of the acclaimed book, *Undercover Jihadi*.

Email: mubinshaikh6450@gmail.com
Twitter: @MrMubinShaikh
LinkedIn: https://ca.linkedin.com/in/mubins

Dr. Craig Whiteside, LTC, USA (ret.)

Dr. Craig Whiteside is an Associate Professor at the Naval War College Monterey, California where he teaches national security affairs to military officers as part of their professional military education. He is a senior associate with the Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and lectures at the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School. Whiteside's current research focuses on the doctrinal influences of the leadership of the Islamic State movement, the evolution of its political-military doctrine since 1999, and the tribal engagement strategy that fueled its return since 2008. His doctoral research investigated the political worldview of the Islamic State of Iraq (2003-2013), relying on an analysis of over 3,000 original documents published by the movement as well as captured documents that have been recently declassified. Prior to his doctoral work, he was a U.S. Army officer with counterinsurgency experience in Iraq from 2006-7.

Sarah Canna

Sarah Canna applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa™) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.