

OBSERVATIONS FROM OPERATIONS IRAQI FREEDOM AND ENDURING FREEDOM (31 MAY-13 JUNE 2003)

1 JULY 2003

1. The following is a compilation of OBSERVATIONS that the JRTC Intelligence and Fire Support team viewed while in the CENTCOM AOR during OPERATIONS Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. There were numerous things to cover, but we tried to remain focused on issues that were intelligence and fire support related.

2. The team was comprised of LTC Bob Chamberlain, MAJ Dan Pinnel, CPT Mike Liverpool, and SSG Norris Whitford. Numerous units and locations were visited throughout Iraq, Afghanistan, Qatar, and Kuwait, from 31 May to 13 June 2003.

3. Topics covered in this Trip Report ...

[Excerpts follow]

Issue: Iraq-Civilian detainees

Observation: Detention facilities in Iraq are overcrowded and undermanned. For this discussion we'll focus on the 4th ID's detention facility.

Discussion: The 4th ID detention facility in Tikrit currently (as of 3 June, 2003) has two hundred and eighteen detainees in a facility built to hold eighty persons. Running this facility is an obvious strain on the unit's manpower (detention facility manning will be discussed during a future issue), not to mention the implications it will have on Civil Affairs operations in the future. One questioned asked was "does everyone in the facility need to be there?" HUMINT assets, the interrogators and the interpreters, were unable to support the facility due to its size and other on-going missions in the AO. According to the HUMINT NCOIC for the facility, approximately 80% of the persons are unnecessarily detained and were probably just victims of circumstance (i.e. round up the usual suspects). What we also observed was that there was a lack of guidance or standard for detaining and releasing persons (release authority will be discussed during the next issue). There also appeared to be no Division SOP for conducting EPW or detention facility operations at this scale. The military police unit is the divisions "fix-all" when it comes to running the detention facility.

JRTC Operations Recommendation: Commanders need to establish guidelines for the detention and release of civilian detainees. JRTC must also replicate division SOP that addresses this issue during future rotations.

Issue: Iraq-Release authority for detainees

Observation: The detention facilities throughout Iraq were overcrowded and there appeared to be no standard release criteria. It's like the Roach Motel, "They can check in, but they never check out!"

Discussion: The detention facility at Baghdad International Airport (BIAP) was growing daily at an alarming rate. The facility was built to detain three hundred persons but is currently detaining over eight hundred persons. We asked numerous officers and NCOs who had the authority to release detainees after it was determined that they were not criminals or had no intelligence value. Every person had a different answer, most being "I don't know." Besides being a security risk to U.S. personnel, we were not winning the battle of the "hearts and minds" of the Iraqi people. Some of the detainees happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, others randomly accused of crimes by vindictive neighbors and enemies. And the detention facility continues to grow.

JRTC Operations Recommendation: The release authority and criteria for civilian detainees should be common knowledge throughout the AO. Lists of detainees should be scrutinized and reviewed daily to ensure innocent civilians or persons with no intelligence value are not detained. Randomly detaining civilians will create future enemies of the U.S.