HEADQUARTERS
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE – IRAQ
BAGHDAD, IRAQ
APO AE 09342-1400

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

MNFI-CG

8 May 2007

MEMORANDUM FOR IRAQI SECURITY FORCE TRANSITION TEAM MEMBERS

SUBJECT: Commander's Guidance and Expectations

1. Congratulations on being assigned to a transition team. You will be embarking on what will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging – and most important – jobs of your professional career. By helping develop Iraqi Security Forces and assisting them in taking on an increasingly greater responsibility for the security of their country, you will be directly contributing to mission success. Capable Iraqi Security Forces are critical to our effort to secure the Iraqi people.

2. As a Transition Team advisor, your job is to teach, coach, and mentor your Iraqi unit. While your primary mission is to ensure that your Iraqi unit becomes a capable fighting force – one able to secure its people – you also need to build a fighting force that can ultimately be viable on its own, long after you depart. So, my guidance to you is this: whether your unit is in training or in operations, go the extra mile. Be relentless. Create a unit that is well-trained, well-led, and well-disciplined, and that will make a difference on the battlefield, in the police station, and along the border. But in doing so, also develop a unit that will thrive within Iraqi culture and that is commanded by Iraqi leaders.

3. To succeed, it will be critical for you to understand and work within the Iraqi culture. The Iraqi culture puts a premium on respect and personal relationships, frequently valuing such relationships over the professional qualities an individual might possess. Demonstrating respect and investing in personal relationships with your counterparts will yield valuable dividends. You will need to be sensitive to the fact that Iraqis are heavily influenced by ethnic, religious, tribal, and political allegiances.

4. In watching the development of Iraqi Security Forces over time, it has been very clear that unit leadership is the key element in achieving success in operations. Indeed, a leader in an Iraqi unit has an even greater impact on the success of his organization than does a leader in one of our formations. To accomplish your mission, therefore, you will need to invest heavily in leaders and leader development – as well as in the development of capable headquarters elements and staffs. Make Iraqi leaders strong; make them heroes in the eyes of their Soldiers. And as you do this, remember that your example, your values, your actions, and your warrior ethos will be critical. They will be emulated by your Iraqi partners.

5. As part of their training, your Iraqi counterparts need to develop a respect for the rule of law and an understanding of fundamental human rights. This includes compliance with the laws and standards governing the treatment of detainees and the Laws of Armed Conflict. You will receive detailed instruction on this subject during your training at the Phoenix Academy. Pay close attention to it, for in order to maintain popular support, Iraqi forces must distance themselves from the abusive practices of the former regime and adhere to accepted norms of human rights and standards governing the use of force. You must train and re-train in this area and be willing to make on-the-spot corrections. You must also be vigilant regarding evidence of abuses. Take all reasonable action in accordance with the ROE to stop and prevent suspected detainee abuse, and promptly report violations to your Iraqi counterpart and through your Transition Team chain of command. It is very important that we never turn a blind eye to abuses, thinking that what Iraqis do with their own detainees is "Iraqi business;" nor can we wink at suspected transgressions. The legitimacy of, and popular support, for Iraq's security forces would plummet were they to sink to the levels of Al Qaeda, the insurgents, or those of the prior regime.

6. Even though we have made enormous progress, we still have more work ahead of us. The way ahead will not be without frustrations, challenges, or setbacks. Few tasks are easy in Iraq, and you should be prepared for good days and bad days. I would ask, however, that you always strive to be a positive example for your Iraqi partners in dealing with adversity, as well as in carrying out all your other duties.

7. Thank you for your service and sacrifice. I am honored to serve with you again.

DAVID H. PETRAEUS
General, USA
Commanding