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## V CORPS TASK FORCE WORKING TO 'MATURE' IRAQI SECURITY FORCES THROUGH INTEGRATED OPERATIONS, TRAINING

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Task Force 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE SUMMERALL, Bayji, Iraq** — In recent weeks, Soldiers of Task Force 1-7 Field Artillery of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division have conducted an increasing number of joint operations with elements of the Iraqi National Police and Iraqi National Guard.

As part of an increasing effort to transition security duties, Iraqi security forces are becoming more and more a part of daily operations. Many of these operations feature raids or checkpoints intended to capture insurgents suspected of trafficking weapons, distributing propaganda and conducting attacks along Highway 1 here with improvised explosive devices.



SGT JOSE ROCHA

Iraqi police conduct a joint patrol in Bayji with Soldiers of V Corps' Task Force 1-7 Field Artillery, 1st Infantry Division.

Some of these operations have involved soldiers from the Bayji and Tikrit Iraqi National Guard battalions and as many as 100 Iraqi police officers. In Bayji, Task Force 1-7 works closely with Charlie Company of the 201st ING Battalion, which is under the task force's operational control.

The task force is also continuing to integrate the ING and INP into its operations as those forces begin to mature. Equipping, manning and training these forces has been a major focus for Task Force 1-7 since its arrival here in March.

Starting anew, these forces were created to provide for public safety in the new Iraq. The ING, formed from the former Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, is charged with the mission of securing the countryside and highways, while the INP works mostly within the cities.

Capt. Brian D. Vaughan is the commander of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery and primary liaison to Charlie Company, 201st ING Battalion.

His unit is largely responsible for training the forces, guiding and overseeing the efforts of a number of NCOs.

Since they were created just a year ago, Vaughan and his Soldiers have trained the ING on the entire spectrum of soldier tasks, from individual through company collective operations.

That training progressed rapidly, and Charlie Company was certified on all its soldier-level tasks well ahead of a December 1 target date.

Though they are maturing with coalition assistance and continue to take on more and more responsibility, the new forces continue to face challenges, such as

equipment shortages.

Vaughan, however, says he is pleased with their progress and operations.

"They have developed significantly in the last four months," Vaughan said.

Their recent operations have "served as a capstone," for the ING unit, he added proudly.

Conducting joint operations presents some significant challenges for coalition leaders and Soldiers. Language is one of those challenges. Each platoon typically operates with at least one interpreter and simple commands and instructions are carefully coordinated and rehearsed in advance, so that Soldiers speaking different languages may communicate even in stressful situations.

Integrating the Iraqi units also adds another degree of difficulty to already complicated operations, but task force officials say it's worth the long-term payoff of establishing self-sustaining security and Iraqi self-reliance.

Task Force 1-7 has learned lessons along the way about on how to better integrate the Iraqis into their operations.

"Especially when the INP are added, there are a lot of moving parts," says 1st Sgt. Michael Grinston of Charlie Battery, Task Force 1-7. "It's a learning process."

One useful technique has been to establish relationships among small units of U.S. and Iraqi soldiers, so the same Soldiers always work together and rapport can be

built through repeated interaction. Detailed, hands-on rehearsals have also proven to be a tried-and-true way to ensure every Soldier is on the same page, and the Iraqi and U.S. forces are linked up well ahead of time for cooperative planning and rehearsals.

Some standard operating procedures have also been established along the way, such as methods of marking clothing or equipment, so that different elements can recognize each other in unfamiliar uniforms quickly, in limited visibility or nighttime conditions.

In addition to preparing the Iraqi security forces for assuming more responsibility, task force officials say the force integration also serves to improve Iraqis' reactions to military operations. U.S. Soldiers may still be viewed by the townspeople as outsiders and occupiers, and the reasons for the necessity of military operations may not be immediately clear. When people see Iraqi police or Iraqi National Guard soldiers alongside coalition forces, acceptance of the operations is increased and the people gain more faith in their new security forces.

The task force's Soldiers say they realize the importance of integrating the Iraqis into their operations and helping them mature into skillful forces.

"We are training the future of Iraqi security. These men will take control of their own destiny and become the forefathers of their democracy," says Capt. Michael Byard, commander of Charlie Battery, Task Force 1-7.

After working with the Iraqi National Guard on several operations, Byard said he is impressed by their enthusiasm despite a lack of experience.

"These guys are motivated, and they are willing to take on all tasks assigned," he said as a group vigorously rehearsed clearing rooms of a building for a recent raid.

"I could not be prouder of the forward momentum we have achieved with integrating ISF into our daily battle rhythm," says Lt. Col. Kyle M. McClelland, the commander of Task Force 1-7.

"We will continue to maintain the offense in Bayji until the remaining 10-15 insurgents are killed or captured. We owe it to the people of Bayji, and they stand ready to assist Coalition Forces in obtaining these goals. Just the other night, a combined CF/ISF operation netted our high value target Number 2 -- it was INP first at the door and ING conducting the search of the premises.

That is forward momentum from where we were six months ago. Iraqis should feel confident and proud of their security forces ... we will continue to transition tasks to the INP and ING as part of the overall security mission."

