

MNF-W COMMANDER'S COMMENTS

I SPENT THE ENTIRE DAY INSPECTING THE FALLUJAH CITY JAIL. I FOUND THE CONDITIONS THERE TO BE EXACTLY (UNBELIEVABLE OVER CROWDING, TOTAL LACK OF ANYTHING APPROACHING EVEN MINIMAL LEVELS OF HYGIENE FOR HUMAN BEINGS, NO FOOD, LITTLE WATER, NO VENTILATION) TO THOSE DESCRIBED IN THE RECENT (18 FEBRUARY) FOX NEWS ARTICLE BY MICHAEL TOTTEN ENTITLED THE "DUNGEON OF FALLUJAH." WHEN QUERIED THE IRAQIS AND MARINES PRESENT THROUGHOUT MY INSPECTION AS TO WHY THESE CONDITIONS EXISTED, THREE CONDITIONS WERE UNIVERSALLY CITED AS PROBLEMS IN FALLUJAH AS WELL AS THE REST OF ANBAR. FIRST, THERE IS ZERO SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT FOR ANY OF THE JAILS IN ANBAR. NO FUNDS, FOOD OR MEDICAL SUPPORT HAS BEEN PROVIDED FROM ANY MINISTRY. SECOND, THE POLICE THAT RUN ANBAR'S JAILS ARE ALSO THE SAME PERSONNEL RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATING CRIMES. THESE JAILER/INVESTIGATORS ARE UNDERMANNED AND MORE OFTEN THAN NOT SPEND MOST OF THEIR TIME OUT BEGGING AND SCAVENGING FOR FOOD THAN INVESTIGATING CRIMES. (IT IS UNLIKELY THE PRISONERS WILL EAT TODAY). THIRD, ANBAR LACKS TRAINED IRAQI CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS (ICOS) TO RUN THE JAILS IN ANBAR. THE DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT OF TRAINED ICOS WOULD ENABLE THE IP TO FOCUS ON CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION RATHER THAN JAIL SUPERVISION. I BELIEVE THE IRAQI POLICE ARE DOING THE BEST THEY CAN, AND THEY LITERALLY BEGGED ME ON HUMANITARIAN, MORAL AND RELIGIOUS GROUNDS TO HELP THEM HELP THE PRISONERS BY SOMEHOW MOVING THE GOVERNMENT TO ACTION.

WE NEED TO GO TO GENERAL QUARTERS ON THIS ISSUE RIGHT NOW. THERE ARE FOUR AREAS THAT MNF-W NEEDS IMMEDIATE SUPPORT WITH TO CORRECT THESE DEFICIENCIES. FIRST, GOI MUST PROVIDE FUNDING SUPPORT TO PROVIDE CARE FOR IRAQI PRISONERS IN IRAQI CUSTODY IN ANBAR. TO STATE THAT THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS BROKEN WOULD ERRONEOUSLY IMPLY THAT THERE IS A SYSTEM IN PLACE TO BE BROKEN. MOST JAILS IN ANBAR HAVE A MIXED PRISONER POPULATION OF PRE-TRIAL PRISONERS AND POST-TRIAL CONVICTED PRISONERS. THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR IS BELIEVED TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FORMER AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE THE LATTER. SINCE THE ANBAR JAIL POPULATION IS MIXED WITH BOTH GROUPS THE GOI SOLUTION MUST INVOLVE BOTH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE (MOJ). SECOND, ANBAR NEEDS ICO TRAINERS TO ESTABLISH AN ICO COURSE IN ANBAR TO DEVELOP AND EMPLOY THAT CAPABILITY PROVINCE WIDE. THIRD, ANBAR LACKS A DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MOJ FOR THE PROVINCE. ANBAR NEEDS ONE APPOINTED AND WORKING IN ANBAR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. FOURTH, IRAQI SECURITY FORCE FUNDS (ISFF) MUST BE MADE AVAILABLE TO UPGRADE A MAJORITY OF THE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES WITHIN ANBAR TO COMPLY WITH BASIC INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS OF CARE FOR PRISONERS.

ONE OF THE MAIN GOALS OF MNF-W IS TO SUCCESSFULLY TRANSITION THE IP FROM A SECURITY FORCE TO A PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT FORCE. THE IRAQI POLICE WILL ULTIMATELY BE THE ONES UPON WHOSE SHOULDERS THE BURDEN OF WINNING OR LOSING THE FIGHT WILL BE CARRIED. TO DATE, LITTLE ATTENTION HAS BEEN PAID TO THE IRAQI CORRECTIONS SYSTEM IN ANBAR AND ITS CURRENT DISCREPANCIES WILL PREVENT THE IP FROM BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT FORCE UNLESS IMMEDIATE AND SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT IS PROVIDED. AS I UNDERSTAND IT THE COALITION HAS ABSOLUTELY NO AUTHORITY TO DIRECT WHAT GOES ON IN THESE 'FACILITIES,' AND WHEN WE HAVE INTERVENED RECENTLY IN OTHER JAILS WITH THE SAME CONDITIONS WE HAVE BEEN CRITICIZED FOR NOT MAKING THE IRAQIS SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS. THE CONDITIONS IN THESE JAILS ARE SO BAD THAT I THINK WE NEED TO EITHER TAKE A TF-134 APPROACH AND THAT IS TO DO THE RIGHT THING IN TERMS OF CARING FOR THE PRISONERS EVEN WITH OUR OWN DOLLARS, OR RELEASE THEM.