

# The US Army in Kirkuk: Governance Operations on the Fault Lines of Iraqi Society, 2003-2009

**Peter W. Connors**



**Occasional Paper 35**



**Combat Studies Institute Press**  
US Army Combined Arms Center  
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas



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### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Connors, Peter W.

The US Army in Kirkuk : governance operations on the fault lines of Iraqi society, 2003-2009 / Peter W. Connors.

p. cm. -- (Occasional paper ; 35)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-9837226-3-2 (alk. paper)

1. United States. Army--History--Iraq War, 2003- 2. Iraq War, 2003---Political aspects--Iraq--Karkuk. 3. Civil-military relations--Iraq--Karkuk. 4. United States--Army--Stability operations. 5. Postwar reconstruction--Iraq--Karkuk. 6. Karkuk (Iraq)--Politics and government--21st century. 7. Karkuk (Iraq)--History--21st century. I. Title.

DS79.769.C65 2011

956.7044'21--dc23

2011043211

First Printing: November 2011



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## Foreword

The Combat Studies Institute presents *The US Army in Kirkuk: Governance Operations on the Fault Lines of Iraqi Society, 2003-2009* by Dr. Pete Connors. This work chronicles the challenging task of bringing stability and representative government to the Iraqi city of Kirkuk after the fall of the Baathist regime.

Although the plan for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM (OIF) required US forces to prepare to conduct stability operations at the end of combat operations, many commanders and their staffs rightfully focused on the offensive operations that were part of the initial invasion of Iraq. As a result many tactical units were not adequately manned or trained in civil-military lines of operation, such as governance, essential services, and the rule of law. Many commanders believed civilian teams from other US government agencies would assume responsibility for the new political order in postwar Iraq after the defeat of the Baathist regime. This assumption proved wrong and the responsibilities for creating new democratic governing bodies were in many cases given to tactical-level maneuver units.

Despite the lack of preparation for what became known as *Governance Operations*, US Army units in the initial years of the campaign in Iraq were able to develop and implement ad hoc plans to install representative forms of government in the cities and provinces of Iraq with varying degrees of success. In the case of the city of Kirkuk, there was the added challenge of creating democratic governing bodies in the midst of serious ethnic turmoil. The smoldering hostilities were a constant source of friction that chronically threatened to bring down the representative forms of government created in the city.

Dr. Connors' study is a systematic recounting of how the US Army approached the challenge of creating democratic local forms of government. This work, however, is more than just a chronicle of the many units that deployed and operated in Kirkuk. Dr. Connors offers an analysis of how US Army brigades and battalions assisted a foreign population to adopt democratic institutions and resolve conflicts without resorting to violence. These insights may be of value to future Soldiers who find themselves in similar situations. *CSI-The Past is Prologue!*

Roderick M. Cox  
Colonel, US Army  
Director, Combat Studies Institute



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## Chapter 1. Introduction

The city of Kirkuk is situated in northeast Iraq approximately 150 miles from Baghdad along the Khasa River. Archeologists estimate the city to be more than 5,000 years old.<sup>1</sup> Kirkuk's citadel, much of which is still in existence, dates back to 3000 BC. Known originally as the ancient city of Arrapha, Kirkuk rose to distinction while under Assyrian governance during the 10th and 11th centuries. Ruled subsequently by a succession of empires, such as the Babylonian, Median, Persian, Parthian, Macedonian, and Ottoman, Kirkuk slowly evolved into an ethnically mixed city inhabited by Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Assyrians.

The city remained a home for this broad group of ethnicities into the 20th century. The discovery of oil after World War I in the nearby Baba Gurgur region heightened ethnic tensions in Kirkuk. After assuming political power in Iraq in 1968, the Baath Party initiated deliberate "Arabization" procedures to ensure Arab control of the lucrative oil fields. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds and Turkmen were forced from Kirkuk and replaced by Arab settlers from southern Iraq, thereby significantly altering the city's ethnic balance. After Coalition forces liberated Iraq and forced Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party from power in 2003, displaced Kurds and Turkmen began returning to Kirkuk to reclaim their land as Arabs fled the city. With proven reserves of ten billion barrels of oil, production levels of one million barrels of oil a day, and pipelines stretching to ports on the Mediterranean Sea, the Kirkuk region became a principal producer of Iraqi oil revenue. The equitable distribution of this revenue became a contentious issue in Iraq that further exacerbated ethnic unrest in the strategically and economically important city.<sup>2</sup>

Other factors have added to the tensions in the city. With the re-Kurdification of Kirkuk, a process that began with the fall of the Saddam regime in 2003, Kurds once again became the majority. Both major Kurdish political parties—the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—claimed Kirkuk as their regional capital and insisted that the city be recognized as the capital of any future Kurdish federal state in the new Iraq. A minority of Kurdish leaders held out hope for establishing of an independent Kurdish state despite previous failed attempts to do so.<sup>3</sup> A more realistic scenario involved the annexation of Kirkuk by the semiautonomous Kurdistan Regional Government which oversaw Iraqi Kurdistan, an officially recognized region within the federal nation of Iraq. Unfortunately, a constitutionally mandated referendum addressing whether Kirkuk should remain within

Baghdad-led Iraq or join Iraqi Kurdistan was postponed repeatedly between 2007 and 2010.<sup>4</sup> If this referendum occurs and passes, however, non-Kurdish residents of Kirkuk, who are opposed to annexation, are likely to revolt, thus adding to the mounting ethnic tensions in the city. *The Iraq Study Group Report*, published in 2006 by the US Government, described ethnic hostilities in Kirkuk as an explosive powder keg and made the recommendation that the referendum on the future of Kirkuk be delayed to avoid potential violence.<sup>5</sup>

In the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent overthrow of the Saddam regime, the Coalition made a concerted effort to deal with the status of Iraq's Kurdish population. In 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority, the US-led body installed to rule Iraq, added stipulations to the Transitional Administrative Law intended to remedy Baathist transgressions against the Kurds. These measures included restoring expelled residents to their homes, providing compensation for lost property or land, and promoting new employment opportunities.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, major controversies involving Kirkuk remained unresolved. According to one study, "ethnic tensions, long-standing hatreds, [and] past atrocities," characterize the historical context as well as the present situation in Iraq's Kurdish region.<sup>7</sup> These festering issues abruptly confronted US Soldiers from the time they first arrived in Kirkuk in early 2003 through 2009 in the wake of The Surge.

This Occasional Paper will describe, evaluate, and analyze US Army governance operations in Kirkuk between 2003 and 2009. While not a doctrinal concept when the campaign in Iraq began in 2003, the concept of *governance operations* aptly described the type of multi-faceted missions conducted by US Soldiers as they tried to replace Baathist governmental structures with representative institutions that reflected broad constituencies within Iraqi society. By 2010, the term *governance* had entered the doctrinal lexicon and was defined as the governing entity's ability "to serve the citizens through the rules, processes, and behavior by which interests are articulated, resources are managed, and power is exercised in the society, including the representative participatory decision-making process typically guaranteed under inclusive, constitutional authority."<sup>8</sup> Although many aspects of the governance operations conducted by the US Army units that served in Kirkuk were unique, others were more typical and fit easily into this broad definition.

In revealing the US Army's governance efforts in Kirkuk, this study will use the United States' overall strategy for Iraq as its point of departure. According to a 2005 statement by the Department of Defense, the

broad purpose of the campaign in Iraq was “to assist in creating an Iraq that is at peace with its neighbors, is an ally in the war on terror, has a representative government that respects the human rights of all Iraqis, and has security forces that can maintain domestic order and deny a safe haven for terrorists in Iraq.”<sup>9</sup> Military commanders and administration officials had refined Operation IRAQI FREEDOM’s strategic objectives over time. In 2003, for example, the US Central Command campaign plan called for “A stable Iraq, with its territorial integrity intact and a broad-based government that renounces WMD development and use and no longer supports terrorism or threatens its neighbors.”<sup>10</sup> The 2005 *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq* described the US long-term Operation IRAQI FREEDOM strategic objective as “An Iraq that is peaceful, united, stable, democratic, and secure, with the institutions and resources to govern themselves justly, and proving the fruits of democratic governance to the region, and a full partner in the global war on terror.”<sup>11</sup> And, as the surge began in early 2007, documents released by the White House described the Bush Administration’s goal as, “a unified, democratic, federal Iraq that can govern itself, defend itself, and sustain itself, and is an ally in the war on terror.”<sup>12</sup> Present in all of these statements was the desire to introduce dramatic changes to the way Iraq was governed at all levels. Kirkuk posed perhaps the greatest challenge to the Coalition’s desire to reform Iraqi politics.

Governance operations in Kirkuk were shaped heavily by the counterinsurgency approach taken by the US Army in Iraq after 2003. One of the primary objectives of a counterinsurgency campaign is “fostering effective governance by a legitimate government...ruled with the consent of the governed.”<sup>13</sup> To do this, the counterinsurgent force has to foster host nation military and police activities, establish and enforce justice and the rule of law, cultivate public and financial administrations, and create an electoral process for representative government.<sup>14</sup> These tasks were not entirely unprecedented in the history of the US Army. Indeed, US Soldiers have been involved in developing new governments since the 1800s. Examples of this include Mexico in the 1840s, reconstruction after the American Civil War, Puerto Rico and Cuba in the Spanish-American war, Germany and Japan after World War II, the Civil Operations for Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program in Vietnam, and governance efforts in Grenada and Panama in the 1980s. The governance requirements encountered by Soldiers in each of these contingencies were all quite similar in nature—implementing political and economic reconstruction and supervising essential political transi-

tions necessary to consolidate victory.<sup>15</sup> This study will focus on both the Army missions in Kirkuk directly related to restructuring the city and province government as well as those tasks that fostered security and economic stability, both of which were closely connected to the establishment of new political structures.

More recently, US Army conventional combat forces have performed governance-oriented tasks, both on their own and when paired with specialized civil affairs units.<sup>16</sup> These capabilities were demonstrated in the 1990s during the major peacekeeping operations in the Balkans: Operations JOINT ENDEAVOR, JOINT GUARD, and JOINT FORGE. Several US Army divisions took part individually on a rotational basis as Task Force *Eagle* in the NATO-led effort. Because these operations placed heavy emphasis on security and maintaining a peaceful environment in the region, there was little requirement for Soldiers to provide extensive direct assistance to local governance. Both Civil Affairs and conventional units, however, did participate in limited ways in addressing those governance issues that did arise. US Soldiers liberating Kirkuk and other Iraqi cities in April 2003, however, were immediately required to become directly involved in local governance and in fact served as the actual governors of the city for a short period. Although the majority of the Soldiers who served in Kirkuk arrived without the benefit of experience in any type of governance, they adjusted quickly and were soon helping Kirkuk establish and strengthen its local government infrastructure. Colonel David Paschal, an Infantry Officer who served in Kirkuk in 2007, emphasized the unconventional aspect of the mission, stating, “I was involved with trying to figure out...a lot of things that they didn’t teach [me] in Infantry Officer Basic School.”<sup>17</sup>

Following the overthrow of the Saddam regime, Soldiers from the 173d Airborne Brigade (173d ABN BDE)—the first unit designated to establish a new government in Kirkuk—found themselves in the “midst of squabbling ethnicities,” as they attempted to restore the physical, political, and economic infrastructure of the city.<sup>18</sup> Over the next ten months, the 173d ABN BDE established a 30-seat multiethnic city council in Kirkuk, helped develop five new city-wide directorates, and assisted Kirkuk’s officials with preparing their 2004 city budget, while at the same time successfully keeping the lid on ethnic violence. For an infantry unit that was untrained in governance to take on such complex political, social, and economic issues was striking. As the brigade prepared to leave Kirkuk in the winter of 2004, Colonel William Mayville, the unit commander, was uncertain of how to define a clearly successful political

outcome in the city. He hoped that his Soldier's efforts, at the very least, had helped Kirkuk to "break even."<sup>19</sup>

Smoldering ethnic tensions persisted in Kirkuk throughout 2004. Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen were more concerned with pursuing their own respective ethnic interests than they were with accepting compromise or understanding the vagaries of western-style democratic procedures. Despite efforts of the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division's Team Governance to foster political progress in Kirkuk, most ethnic grievances remained unresolved, prompting KDP leader, Massoud Barzani, to proclaim "Kirkuk...the Jerusalem of Kurdistan."<sup>20</sup> Two years later, ongoing governance operations in Kirkuk were difficult for US troops because of their inability to distinguish not only friend from foe but also truth from fiction. The "dueling narratives" of the city's contentious ethnic groups led Colonel David Gray, commander, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, to describe the chaotic situation in Kirkuk as "an amalgamation of a knife fight, a gunfight, and three-dimensional chess."<sup>21</sup>

Although a succession of US forces had successfully kept violence in Kirkuk to a minimum, ethnic hostilities continued to simmer in 2007. "It's a long-term, 1,000-year distrust of each other," explained Major General Benjamin Mixon, commander of US troops in northern Iraq. "We have to try to build some bridges [as] best we can. But at the end of the day, it's going to be up to [the Iraqis] to figure out how to make it work."<sup>22</sup>

The operational environment in Kirkuk calmed somewhat by 2009 when Colonel Ryan Gonsalves and the 2d Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 1st Cavalry Division, assumed responsibility for the city. Their responsibilities included enhancing Kurdish-Arab relations, disrupting insurgent activities, securing the environment in which the Kirkuk political process could move forward, and protecting the local population. These activities were to be carried out in collaboration with the 2d BCTs Iraqi partners—local Iraqi Security Forces and government officials.

This study follows a chronological structure, discussing and evaluating governance operations in Kirkuk conducted by a succession of US Army units that operated in and around Kirkuk between 2003 and 2009 (See Order of Battle-Appendix). The core chapters of this study rely on a variety of primary sources, including interviews with participants and unit documents, to examine the initial attempts by US troops to reorganize, structure, and actually run Kirkuk's city government. The focus here is clearly on the operations of US Army units. Those efforts, how-

ever, were assisted by the Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team, Judge Advocate General officers, nongovernmental organizations, the United Nations, and Iraqi military leaders and government officials, all of whom will be examined as well. Moreover, the discussion will at times trace the development of Iraqi national politics and Coalition decision making which also affected US Army Governance operations in Kirkuk.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, it is important to emphasize again that few if any of the US Soldiers that entered Iraq in 2003 were trained or otherwise prepared to conduct Governance Operations. Despite the complex and culturally-sensitive nature of these missions, US Army units adapted and learned. The relatively stable political development of Kirkuk between 2003 and 2009 is a testament to the officers and Soldiers who served in the city during these six years. Their experience further offers critical insights to those seeking to understand the campaign in Iraq during this critical period as well as to military professionals who might face similar challenges in the future.

## Notes

1. Several geographic entities are named Kirkuk. Kirkuk province has a city and a district named Kirkuk and a subdistrict name Markaz Kirkuk. Kirkuk in this paper will refer only to the city or the province and will be identified as such.
2. Kirkuk Business Center, "About Kirkuk," 2005, 1-7, <http://kbciraq.org/Kirkuk.pdf> (accessed 12 February 2010).
3. The United Nations controlled zone in northern Iraq (1992-1996) had the potential of becoming an autonomous Kurdistan, however efforts by Kurdish leaders to form an independent state fell short.
4. See the Kirkuk Referendum in Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution.
5. James Baker and Lee Hamilton, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2006), 45.
6. The Coalition Provisional Authority, *Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period*, Article 58, 8 March 2004.
7. Association of the United States Army (AUSA), *Defense Report from AUSA's Institute of Land Warfare, The Kurdish Question*, September 2009, 4.
8. DoD Dictionary of Military Terms, "Governance," [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod\\_dictionary/](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/) (accessed 26 April 2010).
9. DoD, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, Report to Congress, October 2005, 2.
10. Catherine Dale, CRS Report for Congress No. RL34387, *Operation Iraqi Freedom: Strategies, Approaches, Results, and Issues for Congress*, 2 April 2009, 31, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34387.pdf> (accessed 21 January 2010).
11. President George W. Bush, *National Strategy for Victory in Iraq*, 30 November 2005, 3, [http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/nss/strategies/iraq\\_national\\_strategy\\_20051130.pdf](http://merln.ndu.edu/archivepdf/nss/strategies/iraq_national_strategy_20051130.pdf) (accessed 18 March 2010).
12. President George W. Bush, "Highlights of the Iraq Strategy Review," Briefing, January 2007, Slide 8, <http://italy.usembassy.gov/pdf2007/other/iraq-strategy011007.pdf> (accessed 24 August 2010).
13. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-24, Counterinsurgency* (Washington, DC, December 2006), 1-21.
14. Headquarters, Department of the Army, *Field Manual (FM) 3-24, Counterinsurgency*, 5-15.
15. Nadia Schadow, "War and the Art of Governance," *Parameters*, Autumn 2003, 87, 89.
16. The US Army did not stand up specialized civil affairs units until after WW II.

17. Colonel David Paschal, interview by Contemporary Operations Study Team, Combat Studies Institute, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 20 November 2009, 31.

18. Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 95.

19. Colonel William Mayville, Donald Wright, and Colonel Timothy Reese, *On Point II* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 417.

20. Massoud Barzani L. and Paul Bremer III, *My Year in Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006), 271.

21. Anderson and Stansfield, 95; Colonel David Gray, "DoD News Briefing with Colonel Gray from Iraq," 21 April 2006, 1, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=1264> (accessed 16 February 2010).

22. Major General Benjamin Mixon Rick Jervis, "US Scrambles to Keep Kirkuk from Igniting," *USATODAY.com*, 15 May 2007, 1, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-05-14-kirkuk\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2007-05-14-kirkuk_N.htm) (accessed 9 February 2010).

23. In 1976, Saddam Hussein changed the name of Kirkuk province to At-Tamim. In 2006, the name was changed back to Kirkuk. The Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk is occasionally referred to as Team Tamim, but will be described only as Team Kirkuk in this paper.



## **Chapter 2. Kirkuk-Ancient City in an Ancient Land<sup>1</sup>**

For centuries, Arabs, Kurds, Turkmen, and Assyrians have lived in harmony in and around Kirkuk. “It used to be beautiful and very peaceful, a real mosaic,” One resident said in describing the region prior to the 1958 overthrow of the British-backed Hashemite monarchy.<sup>2</sup> Sunni and Shia Muslims peacefully coexisted alongside Christians while each group retained their respective languages and cultures. With the advent of pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, and the rise to power of Iraqi Baathists in the 1960s, thousands of non-Arabs were driven from Kirkuk. Forced Arabization, which brought untold numbers of southern Iraqi Shia to Kirkuk, strikingly realigned the ethnic dynamics of Kirkuk. Kurds fared the worst, as hundreds of thousands fled into exile or were killed during the 1988 Anfal extermination campaign.<sup>3</sup>

In the months following the defeat of Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime by Coalition forces in 2003, the city of Kirkuk remained relatively peaceful. After decades of repression under Saddam, Kurds reemerged as the dominant winners in Kirkuk, and they vigorously lobbied for official incorporation of the city with its oil-rich surroundings within the boundaries of Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurdistan Democratic Party and PUK leaders used their new constitutional powers to regain a political majority in Kirkuk by ending the previous regime’s Arabization policies, encouraging Arabs to leave the city, and facilitating the return of displaced Kurds. Arab and Turkmen resentment toward Kurd actions led Coalition authorities to view Kirkuk as a potential “powder keg or tinderbox of ethnic hatred,” on the verge of erupting into civil war.<sup>4</sup> Competing, mutually exclusive, aspirations for Kirkuk among its multiethnic citizenry pushed tensions to the brink and often left fundamental politico-economic matters both unsettled and uncertain. Despite these concerns, serious civil unrest never materialized in Kirkuk, due in large part to the successful efforts of a succession of US Soldiers deployed to the city to assist with governance and to keep the peace.

### **Origins of Kirkuk’s Diverse Population**

Its complex ethno-sectarian composition makes Kirkuk a textbook divided city. Kirkuk lies in the region of northern Iraq where “the cradle of civilization” or the Fertile Crescent of Mesopotamia first gave root to the establishment of non-nomadic agrarian culture and society. Early settlers domesticated animals, raised wheat and barley, and developed rudimentary irrigation methods. Cuneiform writing, the 60-minute hour and 24-hour day, the concept of square and cube roots, and a system of weights

and measures were all developed between 4000–3000 BC by residents of the region.<sup>5</sup>

By about 2400 BC, a group of people called the Hurrians expanded southward from the Caucasus and assumed control of the settlement of Arrapha—the site of present-day Kirkuk—in northern Mesopotamia from the Assyrians. The Hurrians went on to play a major role in transporting goods and providing services for the great empires surrounding them. In approximately 1600 BC, the Hurrians merged with a group of Indo-Asyan peoples, formed the Mitanni state, and went on to dominate central Mesopotamian culture for the next 200 years. By the 13th century BC, however, the Hurrian/Mitanni Empire had measurably declined after debilitating wars with the Hittites and Assyrians. The kingdom eventually collapsed, the Hurrians were absorbed into Assyrian culture, and Assyrians regained control of Arrapha.<sup>6</sup>

The Iranian Medes attacked Arrapha from the east in 615 BC, and, in alliance with Babylonia, drove the Assyrians out of Mesopotamia.<sup>7</sup> Over the next 400 years, Babylonians, Macedonians, and the Seleucid dynasty ruled Mesopotamia, followed by the Parthians (129 BC – 234 AD) and Sassanid Persians (224-636 AD).<sup>8</sup> With the Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia, Kirkuk fell under the influence of the Arab Muslim Abbasid Empire in 750 AD. Soon Baghdad became the center of Arabic civilization, and, for the next several hundred years, control of the region vacillated back and forth between several competing Islamic dynasties.<sup>9</sup> The Abbasid Caliphate and the Seljuk dynasty recruited Turkmen groups from central Asia to serve as soldiers in their respective military forces. After the Mongolian invasion in the 12th century, the Turkmen Black Sheep and White Sheep tribal confederations seized control of northern Iraq, including Kirkuk and the trade routes that ran through the city, and then they ruled the region for the next 200 years.<sup>10</sup>

In 1534, Ottoman Turk sultan Suleiman the Magnificent captured Baghdad. Under Ottoman rule, Mesopotamia was the “Principality of Baghdad” and remained an Ottoman province until World War I. The Ottomans, who joined the Central Powers during World War I, lost Mesopotamia to the British, and the entire Ottoman Empire officially dissolved in 1922. The Treaty of Sevres, between the Allies and the Ottomans (Turkey), forced Turkey to renounce sovereignty over Mesopotamia, which first became a British mandate, and eventually the modern-day state of Iraq. Ottoman influence in the region persisted, however, as the Empire’s Turkmen descendents still considered northern Iraq, including Kirkuk, their home.<sup>11</sup>

Under its mandate, the British government helped organize a voting referendum in Baghdad that led to the selection of Faisal I as King of Iraq in 1921. British officials divided Iraq into districts, introduced common law to replace Islamic codes, established the Indian rupee as the official currency, built a new army and police force manned by Indian immigrants, and assigned key Iraqi governmental positions to Sunni Muslims despite the fact that Shia Muslims were in the majority.<sup>12</sup> Britain maintained a keen interest in Iraq due to the vast oil reserves near Basra and Kirkuk, but also because transiting through Iraq significantly shortened the trade routes to India, its prime colony. The British had also promised to help the Kurds establish their own nation in exchange for Kurd assistance in fighting the Ottomans during World War I. Instead, the British government reneged on this promise and split the Kurdish region into three areas that Turkey, Iran, and Iraq incorporated. Perceived British duplicity towards Kurdish independence remained a contentious point with Kurds to the present day.<sup>13</sup>

By 1925, the British and Iraqi governments had settled on the official boundaries of the new Iraq. Then, in 1927, petroleum engineers from the British-controlled Turkish Petroleum Company drilled Iraq's first oil well—Baba Gurgur No.1—just south of Kirkuk. Geologists calculated that the Kirkuk oilfield stretched more than 60 miles from Kirkuk northwest through Dibs to a point south of Al Kuwayr along the Great Zab River. Issues involving Iraq's oil wealth would henceforth dominate the country's economic future and political debate. Preventing Kurdish political autonomy now became a matter of national security as Iraqis struggled with how to manage, protect, and share their newfound wealth within their own boundaries. Kirkuk's oil became a source of continuing conflict between Kurdish leaders and the Iraqi government as nationalist Arabs grasped the importance of keeping Kirkuk within the new Iraqi state. The genesis of the Baath Party's Arabization of Kirkuk and the manipulation of Kirkuk governorate (provincial) boundaries have revolved around Iraqi nationalist efforts to retain control of the Kirkuk oilfields.<sup>14</sup>

The British mandate ended in 1932 when Iraq joined the League of Nations. During World War II, Iraq with a British garrison, eventually sided with the Allies and declared war on Germany and the Axis powers. After the war, Arab nationalism and resentment over Western imperialism grew as the United States expanded its Iraqi oil interests. Under the Eisenhower Doctrine, the US offered military assistance to Iraq in an effort to prevent Soviet expansion into the region. With British sponsorship, Iraq became part of the United Nations in 1945, became a charter member of the Arab League in 1946, and held its first free direct general elec-

tions in 1953. A military coup overthrew Iraq's Hashemite constitutional monarchy in 1958; the country's new prime minister Abdel-Karin Quasim, quickly strengthened relations with the Soviet Union.

Intent on promoting Arab unity, the Baathist Party, an organization that professed secular socialist principles, briefly gained power in Iraq for eight months in 1963, lost it for five years, and then rose to power again permanently in 1968. Iraq fought alongside Syria, Egypt, and Jordan in the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli conflicts. By 1975, the Baathist government had nationalized the country's industries, including the lucrative oil business. Although it opposed the United States, Great Britain, Israel, and Iran, the Baathist regime recognized the Kurds in northern Iraq as a separate and distinct nationality, allowed the Kurds to establish their own militia—the Peshmerga, and acknowledged Kurdish desires for governmental autonomy. The regime refused to sanction a complete separation as a separate institution from Iraq. Saddam Hussein replaced General Ahmed Hussein al-Bakr leader of Iraq's Baathist government when he resigned in 1979. Saddam Hussein would lead the Republic of Iraq for the next 24 years until the United States military forcefully removed him in 2003.<sup>15</sup>

Over the course of Saddam's reign, Iraq waged an eight-year war with Iran, invading its neighbor to the east in 1980 over disagreements regarding the Shatt al-Arab waterway, the Strait of Hormuz, and religious differences with Iran's leading Shia Muslim cleric, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Iran eventually forced Iraqi troops back across the border then assumed the offensive against Iraq. By the end of 1988, both Iraq and Iran accepted the terms of the UN Security Council Resolution 598, thereby ending hostilities in what had become a war of attrition.

Due to their historical ties with Iran, Kurds in northern Iraq rebelled against conscription into the Iraqi army during the 1980s. To quell the rebellion, in 1986 Saddam ordered a scorched-earth policy (the Anfal campaign), under which Iraqi security forces destroyed numerous Kurdish cities and towns by killing, capturing, torturing, and relocating thousands of Kurds. The most notable incident of this three-year campaign was the merciless murder of 5,000 Kurdish men, women, and children in an airborne-delivered poisonous gas attack on the village of Halabja, in Sulaymaniyah Province, 90 miles east of Kirkuk. The annihilation took less than an hour.<sup>16</sup>

Kurds in and around Kirkuk were also hurt economically by the Iran-Iraq war. Oil export terminals and infrastructure were destroyed; Syria closed the pipeline to the Mediterranean; the price of crude oil dropped by

75 percent. This forced Saddam to pledge future oil revenues to pay for the billions of dollars in debt that he had amassed in financing the war.

The unsuccessful war with Iran wore down both the Iraqi state and Iraqi society. Yet less than two years after its termination, Saddam launched a new military adventure. Although the State of Kuwait had been an independent sovereign Arab emirate since 1961, many Iraqi leaders, including Saddam, believed that Kuwait was rightfully part of Iraq. Saddam's government still owed Kuwait billions of dollars that it had borrowed to help finance the Iran-Iraq war. Kuwait's surprisingly high levels of oil production and its Persian Gulf deep-sea port, however, enticed Saddam and he viewed Kuwait as lucrative property. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, defeating the small nation and annexing the country. In February 1991, a US-led, 38-nation coalition, backed by a UN Security Council Resolution 678, launched Operation DESERT STORM, in which Saddam's army was defeated and Kuwait quickly liberated.<sup>17</sup>

In the aftermath of the Iraqi defeat, the Kurds in northern Iraq rebelled against Saddam's regime. Combined Kurdish militias from the KDP and PUK party gained control of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, including the city of Kirkuk. However, the more heavily armed Iraqi loyalist forces, led by the Republican Guard, suppressed the Kurdish uprising within a few months. In an effort to protect Kurds, the United States, Great Britain, and France initiated Operation NORTHERN WATCH, which established a no-fly zone in northern Iraq. Subsequently, a small coalition of US, British, French, and Turkish ground forces provided relief for Kurdish refugees, protection for humanitarian relief efforts, and deterrence against further Iraqi attacks in Operations PROVIDE COMFORT I and II, which continued through December 1996.<sup>18</sup>

In response to Saddam's ongoing refusal to allow United Nations weapons inspections, the United States and Britain launched Operation DESERT FOX in 1998. According to Secretary of Defense William Cohen, the four-day bombing campaign "struck military and security targets in Iraq that contributed to Iraq's ability to produce, store, maintain, and deliver weapons of mass destruction."<sup>19</sup> After the first Gulf War, the United Nations also imposed economic sanctions on Iraq. By 1995, these measures evolved into an oil-for-food program; exported Iraqi oil revenues provided the means to purchase food, medicine, and other sustaining products to benefit the Iraqi people. Despite over a decade of involvement in Iraq, the US still feared that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction and had become a breeding ground for al-Qaeda terrorists. This fear combined with Saddam's failures to comply with UN resolutions, prompted

the US to seek a regime change in Iraq. A US-led military coalition initiated Operation IRAQI FREEDOM in March 2003. By 9 April, US Forces had captured Baghdad, Saddam's regime had crumbled, and US Forces had liberated the Iraqi people.

### **The Arabization of Kirkuk**

The Arabization of Kirkuk began in the early 1930s with the production and export of crude oil from the Baba Gurgur fields, long before the 1963 Baathist coup. When Kirkuk emerged as the central hub of Iraqi oil production, Arab nationalists became keenly aware of the fact that Kurds and Turkmen, not Arabs, controlled the city. A limited number of Arabs from southern Iraq migrated to Kirkuk to work the oilfields, first for the Turkish Petroleum Company, then later for the Iraqi Petroleum Company. As pipelines opened and oil exports grew, Iraqi Petroleum Company moved its headquarters to Kirkuk and increasingly turned to experienced Arabs to fill high paying, high skilled, oil industry jobs. Additionally, as Kirkuk grew in size, Turkmen assumed increasing bureaucratic responsibility for city management and administration. Excluding Kirkuk's Kurds socially and economically from the city's booming prosperity, provided tension between the excluded Kurds and those Arabs and Turkmen who were gainfully employed. In 1959, a group of Kurds attacked a Turkmen residential area in Kirkuk. Iraqi nationalist military units from Baghdad soon captured then executed the Kurdish perpetrators. Shortly afterward, Kurds began voluntarily moving away from Kirkuk, while others transferred to jobs elsewhere. The oppression of Kurds in northern Iraq intensified soon after the 1963 coup and the Baathist regime assumed power in Baghdad.<sup>20</sup>

Resolved to impose further anti-Kurd controls on Kirkuk, Baathists destroyed nearby villages and Kurdish neighborhoods within the city. Names of streets, schools, and public buildings changed from Kurdish to Arabic, and the Kirkuk police department recruited Arabs to join the force. The regime replaced expelled Kurds with Arab tribesmen, who resettled in outlying regions of the Kirkuk governorate, especially along oil pipelines. Kirkuk's Kurds could not buy and sell property. The second Baathist regime in 1968 paid Arabs to relocate to Kirkuk with guaranteed jobs and free housing. To ensure not only Arabization but also the de-Kurdification of Kirkuk, Kurds received similar financial incentives to leave the city. In 1974, fighting between the Pesh Megra and Iraqi forces resumed. This Kurdish rebellion was short-lived because the 1975 Iraq-Iran Algiers Agreement forced Iran to formally withdraw their much-needed support from the Kurdish fighters.<sup>21</sup>



Baathist efforts to marginalize Kurdish influence in Kirkuk accelerated from the late 1970s onward. The regime built six thousand new homes for arriving Arab families; farmlands, previously owned by expelled Kurds, became nationalized for Arab use by the Baghdad government. The demographic impact of Baathist Arabization policies on Kirkuk Province was striking. Throughout the period 1957-1997, the provincial population increased by 94 percent, from 389,000 to 753,000 residents—due entirely to Arab migration. During this time, the Arab community in the province grew nearly 400 percent from 110,000 to 545,000 residents. Meanwhile, the numbers of Kurds and Turkmen in Kirkuk Province dwindled from 188,000 to 156,000 (17 percent less) and 84,000 to 50,000 (40 percent less), respectively. These demographic changes in Kirkuk were dramatic and served as the driving force behind the animosity and ethnic tensions encountered by US Soldiers when they liberated the region at the outset of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.<sup>22</sup>

### **Competing Ethnic Narratives in Kirkuk**

Kurds today contend that Arabized Kirkuk is historically and demographically Kurdish. According to the Kurdistan Regional Government, Kurds wish not to recapture Kirkuk militarily, but to reclaim the city “peacefully through the democratic process and under the rule of law.”<sup>23</sup> “We must secure and guarantee the historic achievements of our people and realization of our full and just rights by restoring Kirkuk and other Arabized areas...to the embrace of the Kurdistan region,” Kurdish representatives argued in the government’s 2006 Unification Agreement.<sup>24</sup> Geography, not ethnicity, is the basis for Kurd insistence that Kirkuk is singularly linked to Kurdistan—“[Kirkuk is] not a Kurdish town, but a Kurdistan town.”<sup>25</sup>

Additionally, Kurds claim to have had a plurality in Kirkuk prior to Arabization and that Turkmen are comparative newcomers, not having arrived until the Ottoman Empire. Kurds also see distinctly different Kirkuk Arab subsets. The original indigenous Arabs of Kirkuk were simply nomadic tribesmen who settled in the region, as opposed to those Arabs who came to Kirkuk under the recent Arabization process and now found themselves unwelcome. Kurds, however, consider both Turkmen and early Arabs as legitimate residents of Kirkuk and worthy of becoming protected minorities in the city. “We have no problems with the Turkmen and Arabs who lived in Kirkuk before 1957—they are Kirkukis. The Arab tribes are not originally from Kirkuk, but they settled a long time ago and became Kirkukis,” explained Nasih Ghafour Ramadan in describing Kirkuk’s complex ethnic situational environment.<sup>26</sup> Finally, Kurdish leaders point

repeatedly to the Baathist regime's de-Kurdification of Kirkuk as *prima facie* justification for returning control of the city to the Kurds. Furthermore, the Kurdistan Regional Government considered it a legal right that all displaced Kurds be permitted to return home and that previous Kurdish areas which were relinquished during Arabization, be returned to their rightful owners—the Kurds of Kirkuk.

Not surprisingly, Turkmen disagreed with the Kurdish viewpoint. They considered Kirkuk to be an original Turkmen city where other ethnic groups Kurds and Arabs, happened to reside. They viewed Kurdistan as their land, referred to as Turkmeneli. Turkmen argued that their arrival in Kirkuk, primarily as soldiers under the Ottoman Empire, predated that of the masses of Kurds who migrated to the region in the 1920s and 1930s to work the oilfields. Turkmen further claimed to have suffered through Arabization during the Baathist regime when they lost property and jobs, and were forced to register as Arabs in order to remain as residents in Kirkuk.

The return of large numbers of Kurds to Kirkuk after Saddam's demise was seen by Turkmen as Kurdification with more Kurds settling in the city than were ever expelled. Since 2003, Kurdish interests in Kirkuk have revolved primarily around control of the oil revenue, according to the Turkmen narrative. "The only reason the Kurdish people need Kirkuk is oil," claimed Rayadh Sari Kahyeh, leader in 2005 of Turkmen Ele Party.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, Turkmen opposed incorporating Kirkuk into Kurdistan, since, as Turkmen Ibrahim Beyraqdar pointed out, "it [Kirkuk] was never part of Kurdistan."<sup>28</sup> As an alternative, many Iraqi Turkmen supported the notion of a federal region and special status for Kirkuk. "Our position is that the best way forward is for Kirkuk to be a separate region," explained Tahsin Kahyeh, Turkmen Islamic Union leader in Kirkuk.<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately, the Turkmen position in Iraqi politics was geographically weak; since their people were so highly dispersed throughout northern Iraq, Turkmen represent only a minority of the local population wherever they live.<sup>30</sup>

With respect to Kirkuk's Arabs, they readily admitted that Arabization did take place, but contend that the number of removed Kurds was insignificant. "We are not opposed to the return of those [Kurds] who were expelled by Saddam," community leader Abd-al-Rahman Manshed al-Asi told the International Crisis Group. "But in the period 1991-2003, they expelled a total of [only] 11,856 individual Kurds from Kirkuk, a figure that did not justify the [large] Kurdish influx since the regime's fall," al-Asi explained.<sup>31</sup> Arabs considered Kirkuk a mixed area that should not be part of Kurdistan. Indigenous Arabs favored special status for Kirkuk, as do many Turkmen. On the other hand, Arabs who went to Kirkuk under the Baathist



Arabization program supported the concept of direct Iraqi central government control of the city. Additionally, numerous Arabs claimed “victimization” under Arabization for being relocated to Kirkuk against their will. Many of these Arabs were willing to move out of Kirkuk, if compensated adequately, however they now had nowhere to go. Still others claimed to have relocated to Kirkuk solely for the oilfield employment opportunities. University lecturer Abd-al-Karim Khalifa summed up Kirkuk’s Arab sentiment noting, “the region makes everyone salivate...a solution to the Kirkuk problem is easy to reach...once the central government decides that Kirkuk should remain an Iraqi town, then these parties that wish us ill will have to shut up.”<sup>32</sup>

Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Syriacs, who comprised the Christian community in Kirkuk, believed that, due to their historic connections to the Assyrian Empire (c.1800-600 BC) they too had legitimate rights in the city. Kirkuk’s Christians considered all other ethnic and religious groups in Kirkuk to be intruders, trespassing on their territory. “We are considered second class citizens in Iraq,” said Sargon Lazar Sliwa, leader of the Assyrian Democratic Movement. “But in fact all the others are guests... this is originally Assyrian land, and we are the original Iraqis,” Sliwa explained.<sup>33</sup> The number of Christians residing in Kirkuk in 2010 was comparatively small so their wishes and desires were often overlooked or disregarded.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, since they were considered infidels by Arabs in Kirkuk, Christians feared possible oppression from Salafist Muslim sects in the city. After the fall of the Baathist regime in 2003, Kirkuk’s Christians were mostly concerned about a looming crisis brought on by ethnic tensions over which groups would control the city. “We are arming ourselves...we are afraid...there is talk of civil war,” warned Sliwa, who was also one of six Assyrian representatives on the Kirkuk governing council.<sup>35</sup>

Although Kurds, Turkmen, and Arabs have generally lived harmoniously in Kirkuk over the millennia, the discovery of oil and the more recent emergence of Iraqi nationalism in the late 20th and early 21st centuries were causes of the ethnic violence, tension, and unrest. In an effort to control northern oil production and subsequent revenues, both the Arabization and de-Kurdification policies initiated by successive Iraqi regimes politicized Kirkuk and unduly agitated its disparate population. Kurdish desires to return to power in Kirkuk derived from the assumption that Kurds needed the oil revenues as a financial base to form an independent Kurdistan. Kurd leaders however, agreed to the terms of Article 112 of Iraq’s 2005 constitution, which stipulated that the fair distribution of Kirkuk’s oil revenues will be in proportion to Iraq’s population.<sup>36</sup> This

proportional distribution assured that the Kurds and all of Kirkuk's population would receive a steady stream of oil revenue. This revenue may shrink considerably under an independent Kurdistan, since the region has no refining capabilities itself and relies on other regions and countries for pipeline usage and exportation.<sup>37</sup> Central control versus regional control of Iraq's oil industry remained a significantly unresolved controversy in Kirkuk.

Clearly, based upon the demographic statistics provided earlier, Kurds were the largest ethnic group in Kirkuk. Power sharing arrangements between Arabs and Turkmen have been historically contentious. Since 2003, Kurds have insisted that power sharing be proportional based on residential population, while Arabs and Turkmen have demanded an equal distribution of power among the three distinct ethnic communities. Temporary solutions have addressed the power sharing issue; a permanent resolution has yet to emerge.

Equally ominous is the emergence of Kirkuk as a focal point in Iraqi national politics. Kurds of Kirkuk have been described as separatists because of their desire to form an independent Kurdistan, while most Sunni and many Shia Arabs, who wish to retain Iraq's territorial integrity, have been described as centrists or nationalists. Essentially, Kurds who wanted separation were adversaries to Arabs who wanted a cohesive, united Iraq. This conflict can be characterized as a contest of Kurd "separatists" versus Arab "nationalists." In this equation, Arabs viewed minority Kurds as nationally obstructionist and the majority of Arabs considered the Kurds an impediment to the peaceful resolution of the vexing political troubles in Iraq.

As for the city of Kirkuk, both the Iraqi Arabic Kirkuk Front and the Iraqi Turkmen Front proposed that Kirkuk remain separate from any independent Kurdistan region. The city administration should come from the Arab-dominated central Iraqi government and the city "power sharing" should be equal, not proportional. Kurds naturally opposed this alternative, preferring that Kirkuk join the Kurdistan region and be supervised autonomously by a proportionately based, local governing council—a system that favored the city's Kurdish majority. A Kurd compromise might have been the most likely outcome, one in which either Kirkuk becomes part of Kurdistan, or power sharing becomes proportional, but not both.

## Notes

1. Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, *Crisis in Kirkuk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 9.
2. International Crisis Group, *Iraq and the Kurds: The Breing Battle over Kirkuk*, Middle East Report No. 56, 18 July 2006, 2.
3. Human Rights Watch, *Genocide in Iraq: The Anfal Campaign against the Kurds*, 1993, Ch 3.
4. Anderson and Stansfield, 7.
5. Courtney Hunt, *The History of Iraq* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005), 12-16; Gilles Munier, *Iraq: An Illustrated History and Guide* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2004), 9-11; the city of Kirkuk is approximately 50 miles east of the Tigris River and, therefore, not within the boundaries of ancient Mesopotamia (land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers); the western border of Kirkuk Governorate (formerly known as Tamim) is partially formed by the Tigris River near the village of Shaykh.
6. Kessler Associates, *Hurrian Empire of Mitanni*, 2010, 1-4. <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsMiddEast/AnatoliaHurrienMitanni.htm> (accessed 23 February 2010); Kessler Associates, *Hurrian Kingdom of Arrapha*, 2010, 1. <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingListsMiddEast/AnatoliaHurrianArrapha.htm> (accessed 23 February 2010).
7. Iran Chamber Society, *History of Iran: Median Empire*, 2010, 2. <http://www.iranchamber.com/history/median/median.php> (accessed 23 February 2010).
8. Gilles Munier, *Iraq: An Illustrated History and Guide* (Northampton, MA: Interlink Books, 2004), 15-17.
9. Hunt, 35.
10. Anderson and Stansfield, 15-17.
11. Hunt, 51-56.
12. The plan to employ hired Indians as Iraqi soldiers and policemen was soon abandoned. The British then assisted Iraqis in establishing their own indigenous military and police forces, however the Shia were forced into the enlisted ranks, while Sunnis became the officer corps.
13. During the Conference of Cairo, the British had another opportunity to assist Kurds in establishing an independent Kurdistan, but did not do so after concluding that Iraqi nation unity was a more important objective.
14. Anderson and Stansfield, 26-30.
15. Munier, 39-45.
16. Amer Salih, "Never Forget Halabja 88," Kurdish Network Flashmovie, <http://www.halabja.org/> (accessed 25 February 2010).
17. "Essential Documents: UN Security Council Resolution 678, Iraq/Kuwait," Council on Foreign Relations, 29 November 1990, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/11205/un\\_security\\_council\\_resolution\\_678\\_iraq\\_kuwait.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F408%2Fkuwait](http://www.cfr.org/publication/11205/un_security_council_resolution_678_iraq_kuwait.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F408%2Fkuwait) (accessed 9 August 2010). UN Security Council Resolution 678, passed on 29 November 1990, gave Iraq a withdrawel

deadline of 15 January 1991, and authorized “all necessary means to uphold and implement Resolution 660,” and a diplomatic formulation authorizing the use of force if Iraq failed to comply.

18. John P. Abizaid, “Lessons for Peacekeepers,” *Military Review*, March 1993, 11-19.

19. William S. Cohen, “Operation Desert Fox,” DoD Briefing, 20 December 1998, 1, [http://www.defense.gov/specials/desert\\_fox/](http://www.defense.gov/specials/desert_fox/) (accessed 26 February 2010).

20. Anderson and Stansfield, 30-34.

21. Anderson and Stansfield, 35-39.

22. Anderson and Stansfield, 39-44. Within Kirkuk city, the 1957 Iraqi census indicated Turkomans represented 37 % of the population, Kurds 33%, and Arabs 22%. By 2005, based on election statistics, Turkomans represented only 13% of the city’s population, Arabs 27%, and Kurds 53%. These figures do not total 100% since minority groups, such as the Assyrians, were not included in the analysis. See Liam Anderson and Gareth Stansfield, 236-237.

23. Kurdistan Regional Government, “Unified Cabinet’s Program: A Bright Future for All,” 7 May 2006, 1-2, <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?lngnr=12&smap=&nr=95&nr=10934> (accessed 27 February 2010).

24. Kurdistan Regional Government, “Kurdistan Regional Government Unification Agreement,” 21 January 2006, 1, <http://www.krg.org/articles/detail.asp?nr=223&lngnr=12&nr=8891&smap=02010100> (accessed 27 February 2010).

25. International Crisis Group, “Iraq and the Kurds: The Brewing Battle Over Kirkuk,” 18 July 2006, 3.

26. International Crisis Group, 3.

27. International Crisis Group, 5.

28. International Crisis Group, 5.

29. International Crisis Group, 5.

30. Anderson and Stansfield, 69.

31. International Crisis Group, 5.

32. International Crisis Group, 6.

33. International Crisis Group, 6.

34. Yahya Barzanji, “Kidnapping of Christian Assyrians in Kirkuk Continues,” *Christians of Iraq*, 4 October 2009, 1, <http://christiansofiraq.com/kidnapping-ofassyrians-in%20Kirkukcontinues.html> (accessed 1 March 2010). Approximately 10,000 Christians lived in Kirkuk in 2009.

35. International Crisis Group, 6.

36. Lionel Beehner and Greg Bruno, “Why Iraqis Can’t Agree on an Oil Law,” *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounders*, 22 February 2008, 3, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/13298/why\\_iraqis\\_cannot\\_agree\\_on\\_an\\_oil\\_law.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13298/why_iraqis_cannot_agree_on_an_oil_law.html) (accessed 1 March 2010).

37. The Arab-dominated Iraqi central government controls the cash flow to Kirkuk, which is seen by Kurds as problematic.

### Chapter 3. Quelling Chaos, 2003-2005

Phase II of 1003V, US Central Command commander General Tommy Franks' plan for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, called for the insertion of Special Operations Forces into Iraq about two weeks ahead of the main effort to destroy key targets and set conditions for the primary air and ground campaigns. In northern Iraq, this meant that teams of Special Operations Forces would support the Kurdish Peshmerga militia, protect the local oilfields, and assist Other Governmental Agencies (OGA) paramilitary teams in supporting anti-Saddam opposition groups.<sup>1</sup>

Realizing that it had few intelligence sources inside Iraq, the OGA presented a covert action plan outlining proposed Iraq regime change operations to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in February 2002. Shortly thereafter, President George W. Bush signed an Intelligence Order directing the agency to support US military efforts to overthrow Saddam and further authorized the OGA to disrupt the Baathist regime's governmental operations by supporting opposition groups, sabotaging Iraqi facilities and financial systems, and misleading the regime with disinformation and deception.<sup>2</sup>

On 20 February 2002, just four days after the president signed the Intelligence Order, an OGA survey team infiltrated Iraq's northern Kurdish region and began preparations for the arrival of paramilitary teams. US officials briefed PUK Secretary General, Jalal Talibani and Kurdistan Democratic Party President, Massoud Barzani, in March to reassure the two Kurd leaders that US financial assistance, the OGA, and the military were on the way. Finally, during the second week of July, two four-man paramilitary teams, called Northern Iraq Liaison Elements, crossed the Turkish border into Iraq. One team established a base camp close to the border, while the other moved further south to Sulaymaniyah Province, an area controlled by the PUK and just east of the Iraqi military stronghold of Kirkuk. The teams' collective mission was to establish covert action bases from which to overthrow Saddam, penetrate the regime's military, intelligence, and security of operations, and train and arm Kurdish militias to fight northern Iraqi forces. Their goal was to prevent eleven regular Iraqi army divisions and two Republican Guard divisions from moving south toward Baghdad as Coalition forces approached from Kuwait.<sup>3</sup>

Both teams of the Northern Iraq Liaison Elements were pulled out of Iraq abruptly at the end of August, due primarily to objections from the Republic of Turkey. By October, however, the Turkish government once again granted transit rights to the CIA teams. This time the teams

were more robust, with Special Forces Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group attached to provide training for the PUK militia. In January 2003, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard Myers acknowledged that Special Operations Forces personnel were already in Iraq. When asked at a press conference if there were US military forces on the ground in the Kurdish part of northern Iraq, General Myers responded, "I don't think we want to get into where our forces are right now, but there are not significant military forces in northern Iraq."<sup>4</sup> The next day an unidentified Pentagon press official elaborated further, "US military personnel are working with agency teams conducting liaison missions with Kurds in northern Iraq. A small number of US Special Forces liaison officers joined the CIA teams that have been meeting with Kurdish leaders in the autonomous Kurdish zone," the briefing officer explained.<sup>5</sup>

On 15 March 2003, Kurdish forces destroyed a segment of the railroad line between Mosul and Baghdad, blew up numerous Iraqi government vehicles, and attacked both the Baath Party and Iraqi Intelligence Service headquarters. Twenty thousand protestors turned out in Kirkuk to march on Baathist offices in that city. In addition, the expanded operations of the Northern Iraq Liaison Elements in northern Iraq resulted in the recruitment of 90 informants, one of whom provided the critical location of Saddam Hussein's Dora Farm complex southeast of Baghdad. Shortly after President Bush issued the Operation IRAQI FREEDOM execution order on 19 March, 31 additional Special Operations Forces teams infiltrated western and northern Iraq. The US-led Coalition ground offensive began the next day, followed by the "shock and awe" air campaign on 21 March.<sup>6</sup>

### **Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-North (CJ-SOTF-N)**

In support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, Colonel Charles Cleveland and several members of the 10th Special Forces Group's planning element deployed to Europe in November 2002. In January 2003, the Combined Special Operations-North staging area switched from Diyarbakir, Turkey to Constanta, Romania due to the Turkish government's refusal to allow the US military to base troops there or use Turkish air space. By early February, two battalions of the 10th Special Forces Group (*Task Force Viking*) arrived in Constanta and awaited further deployment to northern Iraq. Only one Special Forces company was able to infiltrate Iraq and make contact with the Kurds. The remainder of the 10th Special Forces Group (which was prevented from transiting through Turkey) flew from Constanta via a dangerous and circuitous route to Bashur and Sulaymaniyah airfields in northern Iraq. The 352d Special Operations

Wing flew the aircraft and the troop movement was nicknamed Operation UGLY BABY. The two 10th Special Forces Group battalions along with one company from the 3d Special Forces Group—19 twelve-man teams (Operational Detachment A) and four eleven-man command and control teams (Operational Detachment B)—then moved to the “Green Line” (the 1949 armistice line) and joined the Kurdish Peshmerga militia.<sup>7</sup>

By the last week of March 2003, Colonel Cleveland had repositioned Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-North to Arbil about 60 miles north of Kirkuk. Task Force Viking, which at this point had grown to 51 Operational Detachment A teams, undertook three distinct missions:

- Support the 60,000-strong Peshmerga militia in preventing Iraqi government forces from moving south toward Baghdad.
- Eliminate the local Ansar al-Islam extremist group that threatens Kurds in the region.
- Protect the Kirkuk oilfields.

Charlie Company, 3d Special Forces Group, along with 6,500 PUK fighters, initiated Operation VIKING HAMMER on 28 March to drive approximately 700 fighters from the terrorist group Ansar from the Halabja salient, which ran eastward into Iran from Halabja, the city Saddam attacked with chemical weapons in 1988. After two days of heavy fighting that included numerous special operations forces-directed US air strikes, the remaining Ansar fighters scattered across the Iranian border.<sup>8</sup>

Throughout early April 2003, special operations forces Soldiers and their Peshmerga allies moved southward toward Mosul and Kirkuk, clearing Iraqi forces from several villages along the way. Although Task Force Viking engaged in intense fighting at Ayn Sifni, on the main road north of Mosul, and at Debecka Pass 30 miles north of Kirkuk, the special operations forces leadership also had to muster significant persuasive powers to restrain the over-zealous Kurdish militia forces from closing too quickly on Kirkuk.<sup>9</sup> By 9 April Peshmerga fighters, accompanied by Task Force Viking Special Forces Soldiers, liberated Kirkuk after fierce fighting along the Koni Domlan ridge to the north, the Jabal Bur ridge on the east, and in the village of Tuz, 20 miles south of the city.<sup>10</sup>

Although Phase IV of the 1003V Central Command plan for Operation IRAQI FREEDOM clearly identified the likelihood that US Forces would become involved in stability and support operations, tactical commanders and staffs remained focused on the warfighting task. In the prelude to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM, few Soldiers were tactically trained adequately in either the governance or rule of law operations. Many mili-



tary commanders believed that, after removing the Saddam regime from power, civilian teams from other US Government agencies would assume responsibility for the long-term management of postwar Iraq. In this regard, Central Command commander, General Tommy Franks, told civilian officials prior to the invasion, “you pay attention to the day after and I’ll pay attention to the day of.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, the 10th Special Forces Group Soldiers improvised and then successfully implemented ad hoc governance plans for Kirkuk soon after their arrival in the city.

Almost immediately, Kirkuk residents of all ethnic groups looked to the American Soldiers to restore and maintain law and order in the city. As a result, Task Force Viking transitioned smoothly from combat to stability and support operations, established a Civil Military Operations Center in the center of the city, and made every effort to discourage Kurd-on-Arab ethnic violence. According to the Forward Operating Base 103 Operations Summary, commander Colonel Kenneth Tovo became Kirkuk’s acting mayor. In the short term, the city functioned peacefully as Tovo initiated a series of public meetings to address the competing interests of the various ethnic groups vying for power in Kirkuk.<sup>12</sup> By the time the 173d Airborne Brigade relieved the troops at Forward Operating Base 103 in mid-April, Kirkuk was, according to a US Army Special Forces history, the “most stable city in all of Iraq.”<sup>13</sup>

### **The 173d Airborne Brigade Combat Team in Kirkuk**

The 173d Airborne BCT assisted the 10th Special Forces Group in liberating Kirkuk. As part of Operation NORTHERN DELAY, on 26 March 2003 nearly 1,000 Soldiers from the 173d Airborne Brigade parachuted into the Bashur Drop Zone located northeast of Arbil between the villages of Salah ad Din and Rawandoz. The paratroopers then moved south, as a component force of Operation OPTION NORTH, to support the 10th Special Forces Group Soldiers and the Peshmerga militia in seizing Kirkuk and securing the northern Iraqi oilfields.<sup>14</sup> Although some looting and violence occurred as the Pesh took control of Kirkuk, Kurdish leaders, pressured by the US military presence, successfully prevented widespread mistreatment of Turkmen and Arabs by their militia, the majority of which had withdrawn from the city by 13 April. Kurds stepped in to fill the vacancies left by Baathist city administrators, who had fled south in fear of possible Kurdish reprisals. Turkmen and those Arabs remaining in the city attempted to block Kurd control of Kirkuk. Resolving disputes among these competing ethnic rivals, while simultaneously attempting to rebuild the city’s infrastructure, economy, and political processes, became



the central mission for the 173d Airborne Brigade Soldiers in Kirkuk during the spring of 2003.<sup>15</sup>

The experience of one young officer illustrates the earliest experience of the 173d BCT in Kirkuk. The cheering crowds of Kurds waved enthusiastically as Captain Eric Baus, A Company commander, 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment (2-503 IN), and 40 Soldiers drove through Kirkuk on their way to a compound that had previously been the Baathist center of municipal government. Although Baus' orders were to clear and occupy the compound, he backed off when he saw the large crowd assembled there for an appearance by PUK leader, Jalal Talabani. "I think right now, discretion is the order of the day," he said, observantly noting that armed Kurdish militia in attendance outnumbered him and his Soldiers three-to-one.<sup>16</sup> After Talabani's speech, Baus and his battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Caraccilo, successfully negotiated with Faridon Abdulkadir, PUK interior minister, for not only control of the compound, but for declaring Kirkuk a weapons-free zone and the establishment of checkpoints manned by PUK traffic police throughout the city. Captain Baus saw his unit's role as staying neutral and being an independent force looking out for all the citizens of Kirkuk. "This is just a power struggle, and we can't get in the middle of it," he explained.<sup>17</sup>

"Do you know you are in charge of a million people?" Colonel William Mayville's interpreter asked privately after a meeting with Kirkuk's community leaders.<sup>18</sup> Mayville was commander of the 173d Airborne Brigade and was responsible for Kirkuk as well as dozens of villages, hamlets, and the oilfields surrounding the city that comprised his area of operations. Having been so busy first with combat, then peacekeeping, Mayville had not given much thought to the total population in the region. Although the brigade's tactical operations center was at the Kirkuk airport north of the city, Colonel Mayville took an office at the former Baathist compound secured by Captain Baus. Mayville characterized the ethnic makeup of Kirkuk as a Rubik's cube in expressing his opinion that "everything is a power game...[everyone] is fighting for position...we are still feeling each other out."<sup>19</sup>

In early May 2003, during a meeting with leaders of the Kurdish Salhi tribe, the tribal elder, Sheik Qedar, thanked Mayville for liberating Kirkuk from the oppressive Saddam regime. The sheik described how regime enforcers had brutally cut out the tongues of the eloquent and effective Salhi spokespersons. Mayville diplomatically responded that he and his troops were honored to have been of assistance in securing freedom for all Iraqi

citizens, and he told Quedar “that all the tongues are returned today, and to let wise men speak and their children sing.”<sup>20</sup> Mayville negotiated a compromise with the tribe, allowing them to reclaim abandoned properties and urging them to be patient while awaiting official resolution of all pending land resettlement claims. Additionally, Colonel Mayville and his translator began broadcasting a live radio call-in show aimed at addressing and resolving ethnic tensions in Kirkuk. On his way to yet another official meeting, a bystander questioned Mayville if he was going to meet with the mayor. “I am the mayor,” he replied jokingly, later adding, “I’m making this up as I go along.”<sup>21</sup>

Soldiers from the 173d Airborne Brigade soon realized, however, that there was not overwhelming support for a western-style democracy among the citizens of Kirkuk. Each ethnic group seemed more interested in improving their own respective political and economic status in the city. Kurds and Turkmen wanted the Americans to help reverse the effects of the former regime’s Arabization policies and to remove all Baathists from power in Kirkuk. Kurds, in particular, were intent on reclaiming their homes, land, and other property rights. On 17 and 18 May 2003, Arabs and Kurds clashed in intense street fighting, because Arabs perceived that Kurds were moving back and resettling too quickly. “It’s tribal fights,” said Sergeant Christopher Choay of the 2-503 IN. “It’s hard for us to tell who is who...we can’t take anyone’s side...we’re like a messenger caught in the middle,” Choay continued.<sup>22</sup> Although the 2-503 IN Soldiers increased patrols, carefully assessed the situation, and occasionally interceded to prevent further ethnic violence, it became clear to them that the volatile Kurd versus Arab undercurrent in Kirkuk was an issue that required constant attention in order to achieve security and stability in the city.

Early on, Colonel Mayville and the 173d Airborne Brigade staff began to develop valuable insights into the social dynamics prevalent in Kirkuk. For example, Mayville realized that the predominant attitude among Kurds was since they had helped the US forces liberate Kirkuk, the Americans had a quid pro quo obligation to help them get their land back from the 10,000 squatting Arabs.<sup>23</sup> Patrick Clawson of the Middle East Quarterly, independently verified this Kurdish sentiment by writing:

Every Kurdish official we met told us these people must be encouraged to leave. Some hinted that the encouragement would be vigorous; others thought it would be sufficient to compensate Arabs, thereby allowing original Kurdish homeowners to return.<sup>24</sup>

Colonel Mayville undertook the long, tedious, process of attempting to change the minds of the Kurdish people and rebuilding a Kirkuk city

government that represented all communities, all ethnicities, and all the people. To accomplish this, he took the practical step of invoking and enforcing the rule of law and guaranteeing that the rights inherent therein extended to all ethnic groups. “You establish the rule of law first,” Mayville said. “Once we’ve established this rule of law, then we can go back and revisit and redress issues and problems of the past. But you can’t do that and have a forward-looking strategy if you don’t first establish that we are a community that is based on the rule of law,” he further explained.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Arab, Kurd, and Turkmen leaders in Kirkuk generally understood the concept of extending the rule of legal rights to everyone, average citizens preferred to follow tribal customs and had no understanding and no tradition of democracy whatsoever. The burden, according to Colonel Mayville, fell on Kirkuk’s leaders to begin the slow process of educating the population in the fundamentals of democratic governance.

Meanwhile, Special Operations Soldiers from the 96th and 404th Civil Affairs (CA) Battalions began managing the Civil Military Operations Center in Kirkuk city during the second week of April 2003. The center gave Kirkuk’s citizens a common place where they could all meet and discuss their respective issues with US military representatives. CA Soldiers restored water and electricity to Kirkuk, and a public health team supervised the distribution of perishable food throughout the city.

Civil Affairs Soldiers were trained to support existing indigenous governments. In the case of Kirkuk, however, they had to start from scratch when the Soldiers discovered that Kirkuk had no city government. They helped Kirkuk’s population install an emergency council comprised of Kurds, Turkmen, Arabs, and Assyrians. This group oversaw city functions until official interim City Council elections—organized by CA Soldiers—occurred on 26 May 2003. From among 300 delegates, six members from each of the four principal ethnic groups were elected to the 30 member council, along with six independents (five of the six were Kurds).<sup>26</sup>

“This is not full democracy...but it’s a first step,” stated US 4th Infantry Division commander, Major General Raymond Odierno, addressing assembled delegates prior to the election.<sup>27</sup> Two days after the council election, the new members elected Kurdish attorney, Abdul Rahman Mustafa, mayor of Kirkuk. “I cannot describe how I am glad...after so many years of dictatorship, we’ve chosen our own leader.” said Kemal Kerkuki, local KDP leader and new council member.<sup>28</sup> Resigned to the outcome of the election, but trying to make the best of a disappointing situation, newly-elected Arab city council member, Akar Nezal Altawil, said pragmatically, “We don’t have a choice...we must be happy...Kirkuk is not controlled by

Kurds but by Kirkuk residents.”<sup>29</sup> Altawil’s enlightened view would prove beneficial in keeping ethnic violence in Kirkuk to a minimum in the weeks and months ahead.

Mayville’s political participation with Kirkuk’s leaders increased during the summer of 2003, particularly after significant numbers of the 173d Airborne Brigade troops were withdrawn from Kirkuk and consolidated on small operating bases outside the city. Kirkuk police officers and Iraqi Soldiers that became part of the newly created Iraqi Civil Defense Corps assumed greater responsibility for security in the city. At the same time, the political environment was changing, as new city leaders, new political parties, and new special interest groups emerged, demanding inclusion in the political process. Mayville likened the landscape to a Venn diagram in which competing, overlapping groups added enormous complexity to the task of governing Kirkuk—a city that had been purposefully suppressed and neglected for 30 years by the Saddam regime.<sup>30</sup>

The paratroopers of the 173d Airborne Brigade assumed the lion’s share of responsibility for Kirkuk governance operations in 2003. To be sure, there were other entities in Kirkuk working to establish a new system of government. The brigade’s Soldiers partnered with contractors from the Research Training Institute (RTI), who had been hired by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to create a new blueprint for Kirkuk governmental structure. The US State Department and the United Nations had also established a presence in the city, but their numbers were insufficient to affect the situation in a meaningful way. When asked if the US military had been handed too much, Colonel Mayville responded:

Today, you cannot simply focus on traditional military operations to the exclusion of civil affairs, of social and political issues, of the mandate for economic development, or whatever this city needs...the challenge is to find the right balance and to make sure we got it right.<sup>31</sup>

Mayville stressed the adaptive nature of his force and noted with pride how his Brigade had transformed as an organization to meet the challenges of what was actually a very traditional military mission—that of establishing stability and security in Kirkuk.

In an interesting twist on the old counterinsurgency axiom—if you are not winning you are losing—Colonel Mayville observed, referring to Kirkuk, “that which is not success is failure.”<sup>32</sup> Defining success or failure in Kirkuk, however, was ultimately an issue for Iraqis to ponder. The 173d Airborne Brigade was in Kirkuk not to govern, but to facilitate the

governmental processes in which the city's citizens engaged. "Each one of my [Soldiers] is matched up with a local government official," said Major Brian Maddox, a tank officer who led what the brigade called Task Force Civil. "Our motto around here is to put an Iraqi between us and the problem," Maddox explained.<sup>33</sup> By late 2003, ethnic tensions, churning just below the surface in Kirkuk, threatened again to erupt into violence. "We have to break even," Mayville declared. "What I have to do every day is find the break-even point and get to it...and right now, break-even is just keeping [civil unrest in Kirkuk] below the surface," he said, assessing the situation in December 2003.<sup>34</sup>

### **Creation of the First Interagency Governance Teams**

The Coalition Provisional Authority representative in Kirkuk, Ms. Emma Sky, became a close political advisor to Colonel Mayville. The 173d Airborne Brigade gave Sky the resources and authority to initiate a new concept called "Team Government" which served as an early model for the governance sections of provincial reconstruction teams that eventually proliferated throughout Iraq. Experts in various disciplines from the civilian agencies in Kirkuk became partners with brigade military personnel to address specific problems or issues in the city. For example, Army lawyer, Major Laura Klein, became part of the Team Government property claims and resettlement section; an infantry captain became liaison officer to the Kirkuk police; and civil affairs officers with civilian public administration experience began advising Kirkuk's new city council and assisting the council in gaining access to US resources. Since there were insufficient numbers of both military civil affairs personnel and civilian subject matter experts in Kirkuk, "you just had to create these ad hoc liaison organizations [to get the job done]," Major Klein explained in a 2006 interview.<sup>35</sup>

Since neither the governing organizations nor laws yet existed in post-Saddam Iraq to decide property claims, Major Klein established her own claims and resettlement office in a local government building and attempted to negotiate temporary resolutions to the hundreds of contentious property disputes between primarily Kurds and Arabs. "We heard complaints and claims all day long," Klein said. "We gave them three options—decide among themselves, split the land 50/50, or prohibit use of the property completely," she explained.<sup>36</sup> Despite Klein's efforts, many Kurds forcibly removed Arabs from their property, while many Arabs actually agreed to leave, but only if the Americans gave them some place to go. Due to her property dispute resolution experience in Kirkuk, Major Klein helped officials in Baghdad draft legislation that eventually created the Iraq Property Claims Commission. Klein complimented her fellow brigade Soldiers for

their initiative in stepping up and performing the nation-building mission in Kirkuk. “We were the enablers with the bodies on the ground...it was just people saying, ‘hey, the next step is we need to stand up the government, so let’s have an election,’” Klein said in describing the brigade’s positive outlook toward improving the lot of Kirkuk’s citizens.<sup>37</sup>

The 173d Airborne Brigade assumed authority for Kirkuk from Joint Special Operations Task Force-North in mid-April 2003 and retained overall responsibility for the city until February 2004. Task Force 1-63 Armor, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Riddle, airlifted into Bashur airfield in April 2003 and conducted operations in Kirkuk city and the surrounding region until November 2003. In addition, the 2d Battalion, 503d Infantry Regiment (2-503 IN) (Task Force Rock), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dominic Caraccilo, had parachuted into the Bashur drop zone in late March 2003, moved into Kirkuk in April, and remained in the city until February 2004. Finally, the 1st Battalion, 508th Infantry Regiment (1-508 IN), Task Force Red Devil, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry Tunnell, airdropped into Bashur drop zone on 26 March 2003. The 1-508 IN conducted combat operations initially in Irbil, then, moved south into Kirkuk on 11 April. In July, Task Force Red Devil deployed to the area of operations West and established its tactical operations center at Hawija along the Kirkuk-Bayji highway. The 1-508 IN redeployed in September to Forward Operating Base Bernstein at Tuz in the area of operations South and remained there until relieved by the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, in February 2004.<sup>38</sup> To varying degrees, each unit was engaged in supporting the brigade’s governance line of operation in Kirkuk province for the duration of the 173d Airborne Brigade rotation.

### **The 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division in Kirkuk**

In early February 2004, US forces across Iraq began the first of what would become regular troop rotations. After a year in Iraq, units would depart by turning over their areas of operation to other US forces that had recently arrived. As the 173d Brigade was preparing to depart in February 2004, they were transitioning the authority for Kirkuk to a new unit, the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, which was a light infantry force that had established its headquarters at Kirkuk airbase. The 2d Brigade, commanded by Colonel Lloyd Miles, was comprised of the 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry (1-14 IN); 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry (1-21 IN); 1st Battalion, 27th Infantry (1-27 IN); 2d Battalion, 11th Field Artillery (2-11 FA); and Task Force 225th Forward Support Battalion. Task Force 1-21 assumed the mission of conducting full-spectrum—offensive, defensive, and stability—operations in Kirkuk in order to bring peace and security to the city.



In addition to providing indirect fire support for brigade combat operations, Task Force 2-11 Soldiers also performed traditional infantry missions throughout Sulaymaniyah and Kirkuk provinces.<sup>39</sup> The 2d Brigade initially reported to the 4th Infantry Division then subsequently reported to the 1st Infantry Division after the 4th Infantry Division redeployed in March 2004.

Task Force 1-21 quickly assumed responsibility for reconstruction activities, superintended hundreds of schools, issued small business loans, and recruited and trained Iraqi police in Kirkuk. By early February, there were six police stations, 2,200 regular police officers, and 1,200 traffic officers. Soldiers from Company C, 1-21, found that the new Al-Magdad police station in the largely Arab southwest sector of the city, was once the vacation home of Ali Hassan al-Majid—Saddam Hussein’s cousin, known as “Chemical Ali.”

C Company operated out of Kirkuk Air Base and, in addition to performing daily reconstruction activities, conducted raids and searches as the battalion’s quick reaction force. House searches for weapons or insurgents had become, at this point, the more friendly “knock, ask, invited in” variety as opposed to the “kick in the door” approach. First Lieutenant Walt Cartin encouraged his men to continue the searches, despite their occasional reluctance. “I know it’s weird to invade somebody’s private space,” Cartin explained. “But some of these people are killing American forces.”<sup>40</sup> Differentiating friend from foe in southwest Kirkuk remained a difficult, time-consuming problem for the American Soldiers. By addressing and resolving the problem, however, Task Force 1-21 Soldiers helped set conditions for improved governance in their area of operations.

“I think we are going to be very busy over the next year,” C Company commander, Captain Bill Venable, said in describing the situational environment in Kirkuk. “We have a large, complicated mission where responsibility for success, whether conducting a raid or coordinating [police activities], is taken on by junior officers and noncommissioned officers.”<sup>41</sup> Since US Forces in Iraq were drawing down from 130,000 to 110,000 Soldiers, those remaining had to assume increasingly greater responsibilities. In Kirkuk for example, lieutenants with approximately 30 Soldiers, took charge of entire subsections of the city. “If we didn’t empower these junior leaders to get it done, it wouldn’t work,” Colonel Miles explained in acknowledging the performance of his young Soldiers.<sup>42</sup>

A and B Companies of Task Force 1-21 also assumed similar mission responsibilities to those of C Company. Both worked from combat outposts, which were protected by sandbags and razor wire in central and

eastern Kirkuk. When Task Force 1-21 arrived nearly 5,000 formerly Arabized Kurds, who had returned to Kirkuk, were living in the soccer stadium while awaiting resolution of housing disputes. However, the mood of the population was positive as most Kirkuk citizens appreciated the American presence. “Conditions are improving in the city,” explained Dashity Taleb, a former Peshmerga militia member, now a Kirkuk police officer. Taleb was, “very happy because the US Army...helped the Iraqi people fight the Saddam regime.” “The country is good now and day by day the conditions will be better,” Taleb told C Company Soldiers at the Al-Magdad police station.<sup>43</sup>

With assistance from US Forces, the people of Kirkuk province completed more than 700 individual projects—public works, public safety, and schools—since the fall of Saddam’s regime a year earlier. The positive trickle-down effect of these projects boosted the local economy. For example, work that restored electrical power to the region resulted in increased output at the Kirkuk oil refinery. More gasoline in the local market forced prices down, thereby increasing overall transportation with more buses and taxis serving the community, and more produce trucks bringing goods into the city from nearby farms.

The 2d Brigade reconstruction projects planned for the remainder of 2004 consisted of paving roadways, renovating existing plumbing, creating fresh water storage facilities, and a new auditorium for the Kirkuk Police Academy. “Cooperation that developed during operations to secure Kirkuk carries on in governing...this is only the beginning,” Major General Raymond Odierno, commander, 4th Infantry Division, told Soldiers at Kirkuk Air Base. “Millions of dollars will be spent here in Kirkuk and surrounding cities in the next 12 months,” Odierno explained.<sup>44</sup> Unemployment remained a constant problem, particularly in the Arab section of Kirkuk, and not everyone was pleased with the seemingly substantial improvements completed thus far. “They (Americans) promised us a lot of things, but they don’t do it. They are too slow. We need many things. They did a lot of things, but not completed...the US controls our country,” Arab Mullah Shamal Jalal Azeez from the Kerdar Mosque in central Kirkuk told Captain Venable at a mid-February meeting with religious leaders.<sup>45</sup> Mullah Azeez was looking forward with anticipation to the planned transfer of power from the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi Interim Government scheduled for June 2004.

On 23 February 2004, a suicide car bomber attacked the Rahimawa Police Station in the northeast section of Kirkuk, killing ten Iraqis and wounding 45 more. This was only one of many recent attacks across



the country aimed at Iraqi security forces, Iraqi police, members of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, and politicians—anyone cooperating or collaborating with Coalition forces. Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for Combined Joint Task Force 7, noted during a subsequent press conference, “We remain concerned at what is clearly a program of intimidation and targeting of not only the Iraqi police service, but all government officials.”<sup>46</sup> Police officers in Kirkuk, however, were undeterred and remained dedicated to their mission after the Rahimawa bombing. “If you had a chance to talk with the ones [officers] who were injured...those individuals said they would not be scared off, that they do see it as their job to provide for the security of their people,” 2d Brigade commander, Colonel Lloyd Miles responded when questioned about the commitment of police in Kirkuk. “So I think if you can get that kind of attitude to spread among the ICDC [Iraqi Civil Defense Corps] and other police forces, then I think they’ll eventually work us out of a job,” Miles concluded.<sup>47</sup>

Four battalions—about 4,000 soldiers—of Iraqi Civil Defense Corps security forces were part of the plan to support 2d Brigade in their area of operations. This was only a small portion of the 45 battalions of more than 200,000 corps members anticipated for all of Iraq. While the Iraqi police operated within city limits, corps troops worked the countryside in Kirkuk province, performing traffic checks and personnel searches. Captain Victor Olshansky, Task Force 1-27, was one of the 2d Brigade’s liaison officers to the corps and was responsible for improving corps capabilities in the area of operations. Ten drill sergeants from the Infantry School at Fort Benning deployed to Kirkuk to work with Olshansky and others in training corps soldiers in the brigade’s area. Captain Olshansky explained:

We’ve started to work [Iraqi Civil Defense Corps] supply issues very deliberately. Right now...everything they use, from vehicles, office supplies, weapons and ammo, to food and bedding all comes from us. Long-term, we want...to get to the point where they can do it on their own without US Forces.<sup>48</sup>

The situational environment in and around Kirkuk continued to improve throughout 2004. For example, several high-ranking former Baath party members, including three generals from Saddam’s army, met with Task Force 1-27 commander, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Leith, to negotiate a peace settlement in the Arab-dominated region west of Kirkuk.<sup>49</sup> To the east, Task Force 2-11 worked with the newly established Iraqi Border Patrol to improve security along the border with Iran.<sup>50</sup> Within the city of Kirkuk, Kurdish citizens were particularly pleased with improvements

made by Task Force 1-21. By mid-2004, Kirkuk's local population was publishing more than 100 newspapers and magazines that circulated, free-of-charge, throughout the city. Teacher salaries increased dramatically under Kirkuk's new city government. "I can tell you that among the society now, you see democratic conduct spreading across the minds of the people...everyone can express their ideas and they are going to learn," said Yassin Osman Aziz, an interpreter for Task Force 1-21. "Now I see day after day, it will be better," the former Kirkuk teacher predicted.<sup>51</sup>

After the Interim Government of Iraq assumed sovereignty over the country in June 2004, the United States, Coalition, and Iraqi Security Forces, along with insurgents, terrorists, and other anti-Iraqi forces all began concentrating on the upcoming January 2005 Iraqi legislative elections. The Interim Government scheduled three separate elections to be conducted simultaneously on 30 January 2005:

- The national Iraqi parliamentary election which chooses representatives for the transitional 275-member Transitional National Assembly.
- Governorate Council elections.
- The Iraqi Kurdistan legislative election in which 111 members are chosen for the Kurdistan Regional parliament.

In a move designed to ensure the best possible security for Iraqis in and around Kirkuk leading up to and during the legislative elections, Multi-National Force-Iraq, the new senior Coalition command in Iraq, extended the 2d Brigade's deployment until February 2005.<sup>52</sup> As the number of insurgent attacks rose in December and early January, the Team's Soldiers, often accompanied by Special Forces, increased the number of patrols and raids conducted in Kirkuk.

In order to secure approximately 110 polling stations in Kirkuk, Task Force 1-21 planned and implemented Operation GIMLET HURIA in late December 2004.<sup>53</sup> The 2d Brigade augmented the 1-21 Infantry with additional mechanized and engineering capabilities, and two Iraqi Army companies.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, many others participated including Kirkuk police officers from all seven stations, police academy students, traffic police, a SWAT team, and members of the Emergency Services Unit. With more than 2,000 US and Iraqi Security Force soldiers involved, the operation locally promoted a joint nation-building stability and support effort with heavy emphasis on the role played by Iraqi security and Kirkuk government personnel. The Task Force commander, Lieutenant Colonel Mark

Dewhurst, made certain that everyone participating clearly understood the operation's objective—to secure the polling and registration sites in Kirkuk from insurgent attacks throughout the election period and to ensure that Kirkuk citizens felt safe enough to participate in the election. Dewhurst's message regarding the objective of Operation GIMLET HURIA was published in local newspapers and broadcast repeatedly over Kirkuk radio and televisions to further ensure that all residents of the city knew the plan.

On 27 January 2005, Task Force 1-21 stopped all traffic in Kirkuk to prevent the possibility of car or truck bombings. On the eve of the election, the same Soldiers conducted a series of intelligence-driven raids on suspected insurgent safe houses. On election day, Kirkuk's main police station served as a Joint Operations Center from which the various component leaders – Lieutenant Colonel Dewhurst, the Iraqi Army battalion commander, the police chief, and several civilian election officials – oversaw election operations. US forces, meanwhile, remained out of sight, but ready to react immediately to any threat of insurgent violence. Kirkuk police and Iraqi Security Force soldiers secured each polling station and searched voters for suicide bombing materials and other weapons. Although four voters were wounded in an enemy sniper attack at one of the polling sites, that was the only incident of violence during the election in Kirkuk. Task Force 1-21 Quick Reaction Force commander, Captain Jeremiah Cordovano, believed that the successful election was a key step toward Kirkuk's stability:

The Iraqi people in Kirkuk took their first step toward democracy, and the local government and ISF's[Iraqi Security Forces] confidence and citizen's trust in them were significantly strengthened due to this [GIMLET HURIA] operation.<sup>55</sup>

In anticipation of the 2005 Iraqi elections, Kurds formed the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, an unprecedented coalition formed between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the PUK. The Alliance won 90 percent of the 2005 Iraqi Kurdistan legislative election votes. After the Kurdish National Assembly—the Parliament of Iraqi Kurdistan—was officially seated in June 2005, members elected KDP leader Massoud Barzani, President of the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Nationally, the party won 75 seats in the new Iraqi Council of Representatives, enough to elect the PUK's Jalal Talabani President of Iraq. In the Iraqi governorate council elections, another Kurdish coalition, the Kirkuk Brotherhood List, won 26 of 41 seats in Kirkuk province and re-elected Abdul Rahman Mustafa as

governor. "All the major ethnicities of Iraq are located in this province," Colonel Miles said. "It's often said that if we get it right in Kirkuk, we can get it right in the rest of the country."<sup>56</sup>

Politically, the election for Kirkuk's population was all about their city, situated just outside of the Iraqi Kurdistan region. Many Kurds saw their overwhelming victory for seats on the Kurdish National Assembly as an opportunity to shift the Iraqi Kurdistan boundary legally in order to annex Kirkuk (the city). Kurds viewed the majority victory by Kurds in the Kirkuk governorate council election as an opportunity for the city to become part of Iraqi Kurdistan. "I am willing to die for Kirkuk," said Hoger Sabah Salih, a Kurdish student living in Arbil capital of Iraqi Kurdistan.<sup>57</sup> Kirkuk Arabs, however, preferred that Kirkuk remain in northern Iraq. The Sunni Arab political party, Iraqi Republican Gathering, promoted the slogan "Kirkuk for all Iraqis," during the election campaign, and party leader, Mohammad Khalil, proclaimed the city "is the only home his people have known."<sup>58</sup>

Arabs, however, were seriously outnumbered in the Kirkuk governorate council election voting. PUK official Ahmad Askari predicted, "Kurds would push hard to link Kirkuk to Kurdistan if they took control of the provincial council...a high turnout will show that Kirkuk is Kurdish."<sup>59</sup> The Iraqi Election Commission contributed to the lopsided Kurd victory by permitting more than 50,000 previously displaced, but recently returned, Kurdish refugees to vote in the January 2005 election. Sunni Arabs simply looked on in dismay at the likelihood of Kirkuk and all its riches "slipping out of Baghdad's control."<sup>60</sup>

Addressing Kirkuk's future immediately after the election was impossible because the Iraqi interim constitution called for completing a census and conducting a referendum vote to ratify the proposed new constitution later in the year. The continuing influx of formerly Arabized Kurds to both the city and the province enhanced Kurdish prospects for a favorable outcome to the constitutional referendum. Political leaders and military commanders in Turkey, concerned about their own restive Kurdish population, worried about the security ramifications of the massive movement of Kurds along its border and the possibility of incorporating Kirkuk city within Iraqi Kurdistan, a federal entity recognized by the United Nations. The ongoing migration of Kurds to Kirkuk, "could threaten territorial and political unity...and possibly set off a chain reaction leading to the breakup of Iraq," Turkish General Ilker Basbug told a press conference audience in Ankara.<sup>61</sup> Despite the success of Iraq's first free legislative elections in January 2005, arbitrating and keeping the peace between Kirkuk's his-

torically volatile ethnic populations would remain a full-time task for US Soldiers within the city.

On 17 February 2005, the 2d BCT transferred authority for the Kirkuk area of operations to the 116th Brigade Combat Team from the Idaho Army National Guard, which had deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2004. Commanded by Brigadier General Alan Gayhart, the 116th Cavalry (CAV) (Task Force Liberty) was comprised of additional Army National Guard units from Oregon, Montana, Utah, North Dakota, New Jersey, and Maryland. The 2d Battalion, 116th Cavalry, relieved the 1-21 Infantry in Kirkuk city, while the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry replaced the 1-27 Infantry at Hawija, and 3d Battalion, 116th BCT assumed responsibility from the 1-14 Infantry for the southern sector of the 116th BCT's area of operations.<sup>62</sup>

### **Regional Embassy Office and PRT in Kirkuk**

In May 2003, the Coalition Provisional Authority had established a Regional Headquarters in Kirkuk, which converted to a Regional Embassy Office in June 2004. At the same time, the Provisional Authority relinquished sovereignty to the interim Iraqi government and the United States opened its Baghdad Embassy in the Green Zone, a heavily fortified area in Baghdad. State Department staff, which included representatives from the United State Agency for International Development, the Department of Justice, and the Project and Contracting Office managed the Embassy office in Kirkuk, along with three others in Mosul, Hillah, and Basrah. The Agency for International Development was an independent federal government agency that promoted US foreign policy objectives by providing host nations with a variety of useful services addressing economic growth, agriculture, democracy and governance, healthcare, the environment, and humanitarian assistance.<sup>63</sup> The Kirkuk Project and Contracting Office provided program and financial management assistance to Iraqis concerning electricity and water, communications and transportation, security and justice, education, and oil issues.<sup>64</sup>

With Regional Embassy Office Kirkuk, the US Department of State had a diplomatic presence in the city that facilitated coordination with local Iraqi officials and was conducive to obtaining firsthand information regarding the local economic and political situation. Embassy staff worked closely with United States and Coalition Forces, initially the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. After the winter of 2005, the 116th BCT was assigned there to further US strategic objectives—stability, territorial integrity, broad-based governance—and to convey the message that America was there to help improve the quality of life for all Iraqis.<sup>65</sup> One prob-

lematic issue left unaddressed by embassy personnel was the inadequate experience levels of local Iraqi officials who had replaced Baathist appointees after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. The decentralized authority introduced by the Coalition Provisional Authority left many local governments in the hands of untrained administrators who struggled with delivering essential services to the people. The requirement to improve substantially the administrative skill levels of local and regional Iraqi officials had also been identified in National Security Presidential Directive 36, which outlined the policy and framework for a new, combined, civilian-military organization to implement nation-building programs in Iraq.<sup>66</sup>

To address the problem, the Embassy in Baghdad assembled Provincial Reconstruction Development Councils to oversee Iraqi and US reconstruction projects. This effort was short-lived however, as newly arrived US Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad argued for a more formidable provincial presence, one similar to that of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams already operational in Afghanistan.<sup>67</sup> When Khalilzad visited Kirkuk, he found that the 116th BCT had already set-up a successful provincial-reconstruction-team-like organization that would serve as a model for future governance and reconstruction teams in Iraq. Brigadier General Alan Gayhart's Soldiers had worked hand-in-hand with Regional Embassy Office Kirkuk staff members to train provincial Iraqi officials in the basics of good governance, such as conducting meetings, forming consensus, and following parliamentary procedures. Their civilian skills and qualifications enabled the Idaho Army National Guard's men and women to work cooperatively with State Department officials and the ethnically diverse provincial council, which significantly improved governance—lawyers mentored Iraqi judges, engineers worked at water treatment plants and sewage disposal facilities, and police officers assisted Iraqis in setting up Joint Coordination Centers.<sup>68</sup>

The provincial reconstruction team initiative in Iraq was officially established by Joint (US Embassy Iraq and Multi-National Force-Iraq) Baghdad Cable 4045 in October 2005. The mission called for teams to:

Assist Iraq's provincial governments in developing a transparent and sustained capability to govern; to promote reconciliation, increased security, the rule of law, and political and economic development; to support the Coalition counterinsurgency strategy; to encourage political moderates, and; to provide the provincial administration necessary to meet the basic needs of the population.<sup>69</sup>

Shortly thereafter, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice inaugurated Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Ninawa, the first in Iraq, at For-



ward Operating Base Courage outside the city of Mosul, during a surprise visit to that city on 11 November 2005.<sup>70</sup>

Ambassador Khalilzad then dedicated Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk on 27 November 2005. “I urge Iraqis to take advantage of this opportunity to be a part of rebuilding Iraq. The team can help build capacity and systems based on the rule of law and building effective security systems to deal with the problems of Iraq,” Khalilzad told those in attendance at the official ceremony. “The PRT can assist these programs and can help, but the ultimate success will come from the decisions Iraqis make for themselves,” the Ambassador added.<sup>71</sup> Just the week before in Al-Hillah, Khalilzad had expressed a slightly different point of view concerning the team initiative;

We regard Iraq’s success as our own. We are partners in building this new Iraq. The provincial reconstruction teams use all of the tools, military and civilian, to get behind the ideas the Iraqis feel are most important to build their national institutions to offer a better hope for the Iraqi people’s economic future.<sup>72</sup>

The notion that governance in Iraq would ultimately be an Iraqi responsibility, not a US responsibility, became a recurring Operation IRAQI FREEDOM theme throughout the country, which included the province of Kirkuk.

Whereas Coalition military officers led PRTs in Afghanistan, State Department officials assumed the leadership roles for the teams in Iraq. Although Baghdad Cable 4045 stipulated that the US Embassy would support teams at State Department sites and that Multi-National Forces-Iraq support those at military locations, there was no detailed doctrine describing how the Iraqi teams would function. As pointed out by United States Institute of Peace in an assessment of the Iraqi team effort, there were no “agreed upon objectives, delineation of authority and responsibility between civilian and military personnel plans, or job descriptions.”<sup>73</sup> In April 2006, Multi-National Corps-Iraq determined that the team mission was a State Department responsibility, therefore Defense Department funding could no longer be used to support the Provincial Reconstruction Team program.

The resulting interagency dispute was not resolved until the departments of State and Defense signed a memorandum of understanding in November 2006 clarifying security and infrastructure funding and operating cost issues.<sup>74</sup> Secretary Rice reemphasized the State Department commitment to the Provincial Reconstruction Team initiative by declaring,



“We’re very focused on the need to build capacity in the local and provincial governments and to be able to deliver economic and reconstruction assistance.”<sup>75</sup> Rice would add later, “We are long term partners in these efforts [to improve the quality of life for Iraqis] and the teams, Embassy, and US Government are all committed to helping Iraqis achieve these goals.”<sup>76</sup> The Embassy staff in Baghdad also stressed that the team program was in direct support of the political track described in President Bush’s National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, “to build stable, pluralistic, and effective national institutions that can protect the interests of all Iraqis, and facilitate integration into the international community.”<sup>77</sup> Despite this strong commitment to the team program in Iraq, challenges persisted related to the lack of skilled personnel, the integration of civilian and military resources, the sometimes-unclear chain of command, physical security and mobility, and the coordination of reconstruction and counterinsurgency efforts both within the Coalition and between the Coalition and the Iraqi government.<sup>78</sup>

With respect to the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Kirkuk, the staff divided two ways; some members worked from the Regional Embassy Office in the Kirkuk government building downtown and others worked from Forward Operating Base Warrior at the airbase. As of September 2006, the combined Kirkuk contingent numbered 25 people: 9 civilians and 16 military, approximately 70 percent of the 36 personnel authorized for the team.<sup>79</sup> The Kirkuk team mission statement called for “improving the livelihoods of Iraqi citizens in Kirkuk by promoting reconciliation, shaping the political environment, supporting economic development and building the capacity of provincial government to hasten self-sufficiency.”<sup>80</sup> Despite being shorthanded, Team Kirkuk initiated and sustained a significant number of governance, economic, and reconstruction activities. For example, team members met several times weekly with representatives of the Provincial Council and the governor’s office and established strong, one-on-one, working relationships with key Iraqi officials. Since a western style banking system did not exist in Kirkuk, the Iraq Al-Aman Micro Credit Center and the Kirkuk Business Center were both established and housed in the Kirkuk government building. Team personnel provided the required assistance to establish these basic banking facilities. In addition, the Kirkuk team oversaw the transactions of the Project Contracting Coordination Office by tracing and coordinating all of the funds distributed for province projects, including those financed with Commanders’ Emergency Response Program funding.<sup>81</sup>

Advancing the rule of law in Kirkuk was a strategic objective for the Provincial Reconstruction Team. To that end, the staff assisted Iraqis in

opening new courthouses, which included major crime units and trained prison guards, further emphasizing protecting human rights in the correction' system. Team members continued efforts to repair or replace the water system, sewage disposal system, and the electrical grid damaged by neglect during the Saddam regime. Kirkuk's citizens and the team staff developed plans for new businesses; these included a tire production facility, a sunflower seed processing plant, a vocational technical school, the Kirkuk Center for Business and Professional Women, and for the rehabilitation of an existing cotton gin and a sewing factory. The provincial Director General of Agriculture, Kirkuk University, and the agricultural team conducted dozens of training workshops for local farmers. The workshops comprised classes which included modern farming techniques, animal husbandry, disease prevention, irrigation, and fruit and olive grove management.<sup>82</sup> The entire Provincial Reconstruction Team staff consolidated operations at Forward Operating Base Warrior in early 2007, and the Regional Embassy Office Kirkuk closed shortly thereafter.<sup>83</sup>

### **The 116th Brigade Combat Team in Kirkuk**

Nearly all of the Soldiers from the 116th BCT had participated in the mission to assist Iraqi forces in providing security for the January 2005 Transitional National Assembly elections. The BCT's comprehensive mission included: rebuilding critical infrastructure, restoring essential services, assisting Iraq's new government, supporting economic development, enhancing communications, and improving security and stability in and around Kirkuk. However, the Brigade's primary focus for the remainder of 2005 was on the pending referendum vote to ratify Iraq's constitution and the Iraqi parliamentary election scheduled for October and December, respectively.

Keeping the peace in Kirkuk would not be so easy, however, for the 116th Cavalry BCT Soldiers. Technically, there was no enemy army and no forward edge of the battle area. The fundamental fight was to gain the support of the Iraqi people. United States and Coalition forces fought elusive insurgents and terrorists to gain the trust and confidence of Iraqi residents. Although the Brigade's stability and security mission in Kirkuk was simple in concept, it was also "devilishly tricky," because of the ever-present ethnic tensions between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen vying for control of the city.<sup>84</sup> The situation confronting the 116th BCT Soldiers in Kirkuk was further aggravated by the continuing influx of tens of thousands of repatriated Kurds, as well as the cunning efforts of insurgents to exploit smoldering ethnic differences and to turn Kirkukis against each other and against the Americans. US troops maintained a constant pres-

ence in the city and patrolled continuously, often with local police. “Our whole purpose is to make sure the city is secure,” said the 2-116 CAV commander, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Woods.<sup>85</sup> Still, the number of security incidents in all of Kirkuk province fluctuated and doubled from 30 reports per month in 2004 to 65 reports per month by late 2006.<sup>86</sup>

One troublesome issue facing the 116th Cavalry BCT was the continuing repatriation of Kurds to the region. New Kurdish settlements were popping up everywhere in and around Kirkuk. Newly arrived Kurds often clashed with Kirkuk Arabs, who were now the minority. “Our patience is about to end,” declared Sunni Arab tribal leader, Hussein Ali Hamdani.<sup>87</sup> While Mahammed Khalil, Kirkuk provincial council’s Arab bloc leader, added emphatically, “Arabs will not give up Kirkuk...if America really wants to help, it will try to stop the Kurds from gaining control of Kirkuk.”<sup>88</sup> Kurds, however, controlled both Kirkuk’s city and provincial governments and demonstrated their authority by changing the names of schools, streets, buildings, and villages from Arabic to Kurdish. Additionally, the Iraqi federal government was to have overseen the Kurd repatriation process according to the March 2004 Coalition Provisional Authority Transitional Administrative Law. However, Kurdish political leaders from both parties considered the federal effort insufficient and, of their own volition, began to control and finance the repatriation of Kurds to Kirkuk. “I can sit around with my hand out waiting for the federal government or I can spend the money myself...every last dollar in the till [helps] to bring Kurds back to Kirkuk,” said Rizgar Ali, the provincial council president and an official of the PUK. That party gave each returning Kurd family \$5,000 to build a new home and provided Arabs with financial incentives for vacating their premises.<sup>89</sup>

“Tens of thousands of Kurds have resettled in the city and surrounding villages, many with the help of the parties,” explained Lieutenant Colonel Donald Blunck, the 116th Cavalry BCT operations officer.<sup>90</sup> Turkmen council member, Tahseem Mohammed Ali added, “they are trying to change the demography of Kirkuk...I see no problem as long as there are negotiations between the various ethnicities and they go about it in a legitimate way.”<sup>91</sup> US military commanders and Embassy officials considered the Kurdish political parties’ usurpation of the Kurd repatriation process slightly underhanded and were concerned that the aggressive actions taken by the PUK and KDP might not only increase local ethnic tensions in Kirkuk, but also weaken Iraqi constitutional efforts nationally. Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Wickham, the 116th BCT’s officer in charge of Team Government and liaison officer to the Kirkuk provincial government, em-

phasized: “If you have everyone participating, it’ll be a clean affair and you can accomplish your goals, but don’t go behind people’s backs, which [Kurd leaders] have a bad habit of doing.” Hickman added, “does that bring greater stability to Kirkuk? No. It brings pandemonium.”<sup>92</sup>

Fortunately, pandemonium failed to materialize in Kirkuk, as the 116th BCT Soldiers, along with Iraqi police and security forces, successfully kept the lid on ethnic unrest and insurgent violence prior to and during the constitutional referendum vote and parliamentary elections by increasing patrolling and interacting extensively with Kirkuk political party leaders in late 2005. Team Government for the 116th Cavalry BCT was responsible for guiding and organizing Iraqi government officials, empowering legislative and executive branch officials in Kirkuk, and developing a functional local government capable of performing vital functions for all provincial citizens. As Team Government leader, Lieutenant Colonel Wickham also kept the 116th Cavalry BCT commander and staff apprised of increases in ethnic tensions, troublesome political issues, and favorable circumstances for advancing US policy in Kirkuk province. Along with US State Department and US Agency for International Development representatives, Team Government Soldiers, who were not themselves trained in public administration or governance, helped train Kirkuk provincial council officials in conflict resolution, parliamentary procedures, and organizational effectiveness.<sup>93</sup>

Throughout 2005, the 116th BCT initiated approximately 70 infrastructure reconstruction projects in Kirkuk under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel Steven Knutzen, leader of the team’s reconstruction and economic development program. The brigade’s intent was to enhance overall governance by making tangible quality of life improvements for all Iraqis within the city. The diverse list of projects ranged from roads, sewer treatment plants, water towers, and street lights to police and fire stations, mosques and churches, soccer fields, banks, clinics, and schools.<sup>94</sup> Faced daily with a myriad of reconstruction predicaments not normally encountered by a combat brigade, Colonel Knutzen commented wryly, “the Army has a lot of books on how to do things, but they forgot to write this one.”<sup>95</sup> With unemployment in Kirkuk exceeding 50 percent, Knutzen’s intermediate goal was to hire as many Iraqis as possible to work on the various projects. Iraqis participated in determining which projects to undertake and then in prioritizing the list. In addition, BCT Soldiers patrolling the streets of Kirkuk would solicit project suggestions from local citizens and send the recommendations up the chain of command. “The intent is not to just put stuff out there, it’s to build a system,” Knutzen clarified.<sup>96</sup>

Another reconstruction challenge for the 116th BCT involved convincing Iraqi contractors and project managers to embrace the concept of competitive bidding, a concept that was completely alien to them. In the Iraqi system, a local leader, such as a sheik, would recommend a certain project. The sheik would then communicate with a contractor friend who would submit a bid on the project and get the job. The contractor then often rewarded the sheik with a cut of the proceeds. “It’s the way they do business over here,” Colonel Knutzen explained.<sup>97</sup> Additionally, since Iraqi loyalties typically ran in descending order from family—the highest priority—to extended family, tribe, ethnic group, religious sect, then lastly, community and country, the 116th BCT Soldiers had to continuously encourage the citizens of Kirkuk to “believe in their [new] Government,” according to civil affairs projects officer, First Lieutenant James Philpott.<sup>98</sup> If Iraqis were to do so, they could begin conducting more of their own business and solving more of their own problems.

In another significant move, the 116th BCT transferred complete responsibility for security operations at Forward Operating Base Dibbis to the Iraqi Army’s 4th Division. “This proud day marks the first step in the transition of many military posts throughout Iraq from coalition control to Iraqi control...it signifies that the Iraqi Army is ready,” Brigadier General Gayhart said in his speech at the Forward Operating Base Dibbis ceremony.<sup>99</sup> Back in Kirkuk city, Task Force 2-116 representatives met regularly with the Iraqi Director General for Water and Sewer to ensure that critical projects were on schedule. Additionally, the Task Force organized Soldiers into specialized teams to assist Iraqis with a variety of initiatives. Team Police, for example, developed a standardized reporting format for weekly Kirkuk police chief briefings, and Team Economics established an Arab projects council to focus on issues peculiar to the Kirkuk Arab communities. Battalion Soldiers also assisted Iraqi department of health officials with a polio vaccination campaign and helped local hospitals develop security protocols. Finally, the Task Force 3-116 medical section, led by Battalion Surgeon Colonel Laurence Plumb, trained Iraqi Army soldiers in combat life saver techniques, while Task Force 1-163 Soldiers trained Iraqis in hand-to-hand combat and defensive tactics procedures, and the Brigade S-5 Civil Affairs section helped organize and train Iraqi oil protection forces.<sup>100</sup>

Company B, 451st Civil Affairs Battalion, assigned to the 116th BCT, assessed the status of essential services in Kirkuk province and helped improve the quality of life for Iraqi citizens. Captain Alexander Carter, leader of the Civil Affairs Team in support of 2-116, explained that civil affairs

team assessments often included recommendations for specific projects designed to address problems identified in the report:

Our main job is to provide the 2-116 commander with an accurate and detailed assessment of a city sector's condition in such areas as water, electricity, schools, sanitation, security, fuel, local leadership, medical care, etc. We try to speak to many types of Iraqis on the street, including religious or civic leaders, business owners, residents, and, of course, the children.<sup>101</sup> In some areas we were pleasantly surprised at the level of improvement...projects that were initiated in the early days of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM are starting to show results at the level that really counts—the Iraqi family.<sup>102</sup>

By the summer of 2005, the Kirkuk Business Center had its own staff of 10 local men and women. The 116th Cavalry Brigade economics team assumed a consultative relationship with the business center staff that was now responsible for the management of the center. The staff broadened the range of services provided by the center to include: providing educational courses in accounting, budgeting, human resources, and information technology; adding an expanded micro-loan program for start-up ventures; conducting business security assessments; maintaining a monthly business journal; establishing an electronic business center for international investors; producing a yellow pages directory for Kirkuk; adding a Kirkuk Business Center certification program; and administering an economic development network of representatives from government and nongovernment organizations.<sup>103</sup> Also during the summer, Soldiers from Fox Battery, 188th Air Defense Artillery, attached to the 116th BCT, conducted and completed the first ever train-the-trainer class for Iraqi army sergeants. Previously, Coalition trainers taught common task skills to Iraqi Army soldiers by Coalition trainers. Now, Iraqi noncommissioned officers were able to teach common tasks to their own soldiers. “It is one more step toward having a self sufficient Iraqi army,” Sergeant Luke Rodgers wrote in a 2005 article describing the 188th Air Defense Artillery's train-the-trainer program.<sup>104</sup> The design and implementation of all these programs and initiatives were to convince local citizens to participate in the upcoming legislative election by showing them that their government was working and making significant improvements across the board and throughout the region.

Brigadier General Gayhart considered the act of convincing the multi-ethnic Kirkuk provincial council to function as a legitimate and unified governing body on behalf of all the citizens of Kirkuk, to be the 116th



Cavalry BCT's greatest achievement during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 3. Repairing Kirkuk city's devastated infrastructure—water, power, sewers, schools—was also an important task for the brigade. Closely interacting with the local Iraqi populace, leaders and ordinary citizens alike, and working jointly with Iraqi security forces were all critical factors in the 116th BCT's successful efforts to keep the peace in Kirkuk, especially during the legislative elections and the constitutional referendum. The skilled civilian labor—nation-building skills such as medical, legal, business, construction, and more that the Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers brought to the fight—were invaluable in dealing with the myriad of unforeseen problems encountered by the team in Kirkuk.<sup>105</sup> Protecting the oil infrastructure, pipelines, and Iraqi oilfield workers was a major task for Brigadier General Gayhart and the BCT soldiers, as was balancing and counterbalancing the actions of the principal political parties in Kirkuk. The 116th BCT observed that most of the violence was ethnic, not sectarian in Kirkuk. The BCT Soldiers kept violence to a minimum by constantly interacting with the general populace and the political leaders of the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen.

Promoting even rudimentary cooperation between Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen was a fulltime job and a difficult one at best. "They hate each other...they have hated each other for centuries," Gayhart explained in a 2008 interview. "They take a different view of democracy than we do... they are not going to become friends at the flick of a switch," he added.<sup>106</sup> The situation remained peaceful as the citizens of Kirkuk cast their votes in the constitutional referendum, and the 116th BCT subsequently relinquished authority for operations in north-central Iraq to the 1st BCT of the 101st Airborne Division at Forward Operating Base Warrior on 31 October 2005.

From spring 2003 to the fall of 2005, US troops kept ethnic tensions in Kirkuk from spilling over into violence; they maintained the peace throughout their successive troop rotations. After liberating the city in April 2003, the 10th Special Forces Group and 173d Airborne Brigade Soldiers, along with Peshmerga forces, quickly invoked the rule of law and established a secure situational environment in Kirkuk. Soldiers immediately transitioned from combat to stability and support operations. They established a Civil Military Operations Center in the city center, met with local leaders of all ethnicities, held public meetings to address residents' concerns, and solicited Peshmerga support in preventing Kurd-on-Arab ethnic violence. As they had immersed themselves in the governance and rule of law issues in Kirkuk, Colonel Kenneth Tovo, commander of



Forward Operating Base 103 and the 173d Airborne Brigade commander, Colonel William Mayville both considered themselves the “Mayor of Kirkuk.” This attitude assisted the commanders to become more deeply involved in the social dynamics of the city all the while remaining neutral without taking sides.

Attached civil affairs Soldiers proved to be a significant asset to the 173d Airborne Brigade. Civil Affairs teams helped the Iraqis restore essential services to Kirkuk. They assisted with the installation of first an emergency, then an interim city council that consisted of an equal number of representatives from the four principal ethnic groups in the city. Colonel Mayville even attempted to match a brigade Soldier with each local Iraqi government official with qualitative success. He initiated a jobs program for Iraqis, effectively reducing unemployment. He further empowered junior officers and noncommissioned officers to manage and resolve Kirkuk governance issues at their platoon level. Finally, Mayville began an information operations campaign to educate the population both in the city and around the province so that the local citizens clearly understood what the brigade and the new government were doing upon their behalf.

The governance-oriented initiatives established in 2003 by the 173d Airborne Brigade were continued and refined by the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division and the 116th BCT during their respective troop rotations in Kirkuk. Governance of the population, rule of law application, economic development of the community, and reconciliation of the populace increased in importance with each successive US troop rotation. In 2005, two years after the beginning of the campaign, US Soldiers were gradually passing these obligations to Iraqi government officials to manage their own internal and external requirements of those operations. As the capabilities of Iraqi leaders improved and they gravitated toward their roles, Soldiers began to view governance in Kirkuk as an Iraqi, not a US, responsibility. Quelling chaos and preventing ethnic tensions from erupting into violence, however, remained an everyday job for Soldiers in the city.

## Notes

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59. Daragahi, 2.
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## Chapter 4. Instability and Progress in Kirkuk, 2006-2009

Beginning in 2006, Iraq entered a tumultuous period which threatened to undo much of the progress achieved since the overthrow of the Saddam regime. That period, however, began auspiciously as the political process that started in early 2005 when the first post-Baathist national elections saw fruition in late 2005 with the approval of a new constitution. Iraq then appeared to be entering a period of relative political stability. That promise was destroyed in March 2006 with the bombing of the Samarra Mosque, an important Shia shrine that had become target for Sunni terrorists intent on igniting a sectarian war in Iraq. Sunni-Shia violence spiked in the summer of 2006 as the newly-elected Iraqi parliament slowly formed a government dominated by Shia politicians. General George W. Casey, Jr., the senior Coalition commander in Iraq, described the unstable environment in Iraq as the coexistence of violence and progress.<sup>1</sup>

While Coalition officials rightfully emphasized that 14 of Iraq's 18 provinces were secure, the situation in Baghdad, however, was rapidly deteriorating as ethnic, political, and religious tensions in the capital rose dramatically. After the destruction of the Golden Mosque in Samarra, sectarian violence began to spread northward in Iraq. Even in relatively stable Kirkuk, five executed car and truck bomb attacks simultaneously hit both the PUK and KDP party headquarters buildings and a US-Iraqi convoy.<sup>2</sup> Colonel David Gray, commander of the 1st Brigade Combat Team (BCT), 101st Airborne Division, saw this upsurge in violence in Kirkuk firsthand when his unit deployed in and around the city in late 2005. In April 2006, Gray described the unique combination of a nascent insurgency and historical ethnic rivalries in Kirkuk as an "amalgamation of a knife fight, a gunfight, and three-dimensional chess," expressed his concern over these sluggish delays by Iraqi officials in getting their new national government up and running.<sup>3</sup> "The center of gravity for Americans and Iraqis right now is something hard to measure: Time...how much time and perseverance do we have?" Gray questioned.<sup>4</sup> In 2006 with sovereignty, international recognition, a new prime minister, and a duly elected council of representatives, governance in Iraq was now in the hands of the Iraqis. Major issues involving reconciliation, federalism, oil revenue sharing, sectarian militias, and the status of Kirkuk, would have to be addressed and acted upon by Iraqi government leaders, while Coalition officials assumed an increasingly advisory role. Concerned over the ability of Iraqis to rise to this sizeable challenge, General Casey observed, "We could do everything right and still lose."<sup>5</sup>

In Kirkuk, significant numbers of Kurds continued to migrate back to the city in what they now referred to as “normalization”—the antithesis of Arabization. Returning Kurds became officially known as “internally displaced persons.” As sectarian troubles brewed in Baghdad, Kurdish leaders in Kirkuk grew more confident in their ability to control both their province and their city. The new Iraq constitution reinforced Kurdistan’s autonomy. Moreover, two Peshmerga divisions defended the region and Kurds enjoyed a strong working relationship with the US Army, which extended back to Operation PROVIDE COMFORT in the early 1990s.<sup>6</sup> “Self-determination is their ultimate goal...independence, have no doubt,” Colonel Gray said, describing Kurd motivation.<sup>7</sup>

The only obstacle encountered by the Kurds involved their ongoing desire to have Kirkuk city annexed by Kurdistan. Article 140 of the new Iraqi constitution addressed this issue, stipulating a referendum vote on the future of Kirkuk for 2007. It was unclear in 2006 whether the referendum on Kirkuk would involve all Iraqis or only Kirkuk’s population. Kurds favored the latter option and were willing to resort to the use of force if necessary to control Kirkuk, according to Colonel Gray;

Do not think they [Kurds] won’t resort to arms. The public sentiment is that Kirkuk is something worth fighting for.<sup>8</sup> Our [the United States’] current strategic objective is one Iraq, not a loose affiliation of federal states.<sup>9</sup>

However, Gray also sounded a note of concern that Kurdish goals for Kirkuk might not match the Coalition’s plans for the city. Aggressive patrolling by 1st BCT Soldiers and their Iraqi army counterparts helped keep ethnic violence—intimidation, coercion, assassinations, and kidnappings—to a minimum in Kirkuk during 2006. The total number of security incidents for all of Kirkuk province in 2006 averaged approximately 65 per month.<sup>10</sup> Faced with multifaceted challenges in the province, 1st BCT troops kept their fingers tight on “the pulse of the diverse region and developed a keen sense for the potential flash points,” according to Colonel Gray.<sup>11</sup> Gray also reported that the Badr Organization, the armed wing of the Shia Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council, had opened offices in Kirkuk and that Jaysh al-Mahdi, the paramilitary force run by Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, also had plans to open offices.

By August 2006, the 1st Battalion, 2d Brigade, and the 18th Strategic Infrastructure Battalion, 4th Iraqi Army Division, assumed responsibility for security in Kirkuk Province from the 1st BCT, 101st Airborne Division. Only the city of Kirkuk and the predominantly Arab village of

Hawija remained under Coalition control. The transfer of authority was another positive indication that US Army-guided governance in Kirkuk was providing stability and served as an additional motivating factor for Kirkuk's citizens to continue placing their faith and trust in the new Iraqi government. Approximately one month after the transfer of authority to Iraq's Security forces, the 1st BCT 10th Airborne Division left Iraq. The coalition presence in Kirkuk would continue however.<sup>12</sup>

### **The 3d BCT, 25th ID, Takes Responsibility in Kirkuk**

In September 2006, the 3d BCT of the 25th Infantry Division arrived in Kirkuk. In retrospect, that autumn was a decisive moment in the coalition campaign in Iraq. In late summer 2006, retired Army General John Keane encouraged President Bush to "escalate in Iraq," while a special team of Pentagon planners, dubbed the "council of colonels," concluded that "the war was being lost and that a drastic change in strategy was urgently needed."<sup>13</sup> Sectarian violence continued to grow in magnitude and intensity during 2006, which prompted the National Security Council to conclude:

The situation in Iraq is unacceptable...our current strategy is not working. We did not have enough forces before...it requires additional troops to deal with sectarian violence and bring security to the people of Baghdad.<sup>14</sup> Force levels overall in Baghdad have been inadequate to stabilize a city of its size.<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, Iraqi civilians were becoming increasingly frustrated with Coalition efforts to protect them from violence, regardless of the source. National Security Council officials recommended an increase in United States' troop strength during an Iraq Strategy Review briefing. Robert Gates replaced Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense in November 2006 and began choosing new military commanders to implement the anticipated revised strategy.

"Shia and Sunni extremists are different faces of the same totalitarian threat," President Bush proclaimed in describing the enemy situation in Iraq during his January 2007 State of the Union Address. That address contained the momentous announcement of a troop surge of more than 20,000 additional US forces.<sup>16</sup> President Bush further encouraged US Forces to establish strategic partnerships with moderates in Iraq, be they Sunnis or Shias. He redefined the enemy as extremists of all sorts, noting in particular that Shia extremists were supported by Iran. In contrast Sunni extremists were assisted by AQI terrorists who were intent on forming

an Iraqi caliphate. By 2007, the conflict in Iraq had become one between moderates and extremists, rather than simply Sunnis against Shias. Despite heroic efforts, Coalition efforts were falling short of deterring the insurgency in Iraq. Continued progress on the Iraqi political front was also insufficient to restrain the ongoing violence. In the United States, the will of the American people to continue the fight in Iraq was waning. Additionally, training Iraqi forces had become a time-consuming, burdensome process, and those adequately trained Iraqi units could not, on their own, stem the violence. A change in strategy was believed to be necessary. A shift to an updated course of action placed the primary emphasis on ensuring long-term security for Iraqi citizens, particularly those in Baghdad. By April 2007, Department of Defense extended the rotations to 15 months for all US units in Iraq.

In Kirkuk and its vicinity, the 3d BCT had two organic infantry battalions, two support battalions, a field artillery battalion, a cavalry squadron, numerous embedded military and police transition teams, and civil affairs teams to assist in training and advising local government officials. The 3d BCT's mission entailed conducting partnered counterinsurgency operations, training and developing Iraqi security forces, improving safety and security, fostering Iraqi self-sufficiency, and creating greater stability throughout Kirkuk Province in conjunction with local governments. The key desired outcome for the mission was to enhance prosperity and improve the quality of life for the Iraqi people. Accordingly, 3d BCT worked closely with Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk to expand essential services, finance economic development, improve the legal system, help Iraqis learn to govern themselves, and ensure that Baghdad-initiated national programs actually filtered down to the citizens of Kirkuk. Colonel Patrick Stackpole, the brigade commander, credited much of 3d BCT's success to the governor of Kirkuk and the provincial council. During a briefing, Stackpole explained:

We continue to work with both and are impressed by the capacity and maturity of the political leadership in this province to put ethnic differences aside and place the long-term needs of communities above short-term ethnic gains.<sup>17</sup>

Although Kirkuk experienced security breaches every day—improvised explosion devices, car bombs, assassinations, kidnappings—Colonel Stackpole considered the level of ethnic and sectarian violence in Kirkuk to be less than that existing in other regions of Iraq. He attributed this comparative lack of violence to the long history of relatively peaceful coexistence among the resident Kurds, Arabs, Turkmen, and Assyrians,

but also to the “population [for] embracing its diversity and the overall resilience of the people of Kirkuk not to allow ethnic differences to divide them.”<sup>18</sup> Despite deep-seated distrust of each other, Kirkuk’s Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen had never fought among themselves in any sizeable military actions. Sectarian violence in Baghdad during 2006 and 2007, for example, was far greater than the limited amount of ethnic violence that occurred in Kirkuk.

Colonel Stackpole believed that the goal of those anti-Iraqi forces that were operating in Kirkuk—Islamic extremists, former regime members, Baath party loyalists—was to attack Coalition forces and Iraqi Security Forces in order to discredit the new Iraqi government and to create concern in the population as to whether or not they could be adequately protected. To counter this threat, Stackpole expanded 3d BCT’s presence in the province by opening several small patrol bases to integrate fully with local residents, facilitate relationship building, and to help extend the reach of Iraqi government officials. Colonel Stackpole explained:

It’s allowed us to really engage with the population, understand and get to know them, and for them to get to know us as well. From day one we were constantly talking to tribal leaders trying to get them involved in the political process...engagement with the tribes [was] an ongoing daily process from the squad level all the way up through myself.<sup>19</sup>

Squad-size patrols, for instance, met regularly with village and tribal representatives to encourage their participation in local governance and to gather intelligence regarding the whereabouts of local insurgent groups. The 3d BCT also increased patrols and checkpoints south of Kirkuk to prevent insurgents who had been pushed out of Baghdad, from taking refuge in the city.<sup>20</sup>

Early in their rotation, 3d BCT Soldiers understood the importance of integrating Iraq’s tribal culture into the newly elected national and provincial governments. “People in [Kirkuk] province have lived thousands of years within a tribal system,” Lieutenant Colonel Drew Meyerowich, the commander of 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry (2-27 IN) stated, “When you are trying to [create] a representative government in a society where tribal grand sheiks are the ones who historically provide for the people, [our effort] will not be successful unless the tribes are a part of the process,” Meyerowich explained.<sup>21</sup> On 20 September 2006, 2-27 held the first in a series of cooperative meetings between US military leaders and sheiks from each tribe in the Hawija district of Kirkuk province to address tribal desires for fair representation in the new Iraqi government. Captain Jeffrey

Fuller, the fire support officer for 2-27 IN, temporarily assigned to oversee the tribal meetings, described this first gathering as being “tremendously significant,” adding, “if the sheiks feel like they are being ignored by the government, they will communicate that to their people...by ignoring their interests, [we] would be crippling any effort to build a legitimate democratic government, and if we are not representing the tribal voice in the Iraqi government, then the government does not truly represent the people of this district.”<sup>22</sup> Eventually, Captain Roland Keller, commander of D Company, 2-27 IN, met with local sheiks on a weekly basis to discuss tribal concerns and to inform the sheiks of Coalition activities and motivations. “We talk to the people on a regular basis to see if our messages conveyed to the sheiks are getting out into the villages...the people are beginning to understand that we’re here to help them return to a normal life where war isn’t impacting them on a daily basis,” Keller said.<sup>23</sup> By meeting regularly with tribal leaders in Hawija, the 3d BCT helped foster legitimate representative governance in western Kirkuk province.

The 3d BCT considered rebuilding schools and other improvement projects in Kirkuk as critical components of their overall effort to enhance strong governance and encourage Iraqi self-reliance. Since the new Iraqi constitution guaranteed a free education for every citizen, assisting Iraqi government officials in improving education programs was clearly a worthwhile endeavor for the 3d BCT Soldiers. Under an additional program designed to improve the quality of life for Kirkuk’s population, the Soldiers of the 325th Brigade Support Battalion, with guidance from Chaplain (Captain) Martin Cho, began distributing school supplies and toys to orphans. In cooperation with a local children’s rights organization, support battalion Soldiers delivered the first of many shipments of supplies to 2,000 orphans in the Shorish, Chamchamal, and Kalar districts in November 2006.<sup>24</sup>

In February 2007, a team of the 3d BCT medical and Provincial Reconstruction Team Soldiers conducted an institutional assessment of Kirkuk’s only pediatric hospital. The purpose of the visit was to determine additional ways in which Coalition forces could provide medical assistance to the hospital staff. US Navy Lieutenant Daniel Grajeda, an environmental health officer attached to the 3d BCT and assigned to the team’s health and education section, emphasized that improving Iraq’s medical infrastructure was a critical component of the team mission to assist and facilitate the Iraqi government in becoming self-sustaining. At the assessment’s conclusion, Lieutenant Grajeda remarked, “basically, almost anything a child needs in terms of medical care can be provided here...the



level of care is very good.”<sup>25</sup> The 3d BCT surgeon, Captain Christopher Curtis, was similarly impressed with the hospital staff and facilities. “The standard of care is very high, and they manage to keep the hospital clean which is challenging in this [dusty] environment,” Curtis said, though he lamented the fact that there was just “one pediatric surgeon for the entire province.”<sup>26</sup>

Later in February, a Military Transition Team from the 3d Battalion, 7th Field Artillery (3-7 FA) initiated a first-of-its-kind meeting between the Iraqi Army’s 1st Strategic Infrastructure Brigade and 50 local village leaders at Forward Operating Base Gaines Mills southwest of Kirkuk. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit the cooperation of local Iraqi leaders and their respective communities in helping the Strategic Infrastructure Brigade protect the oil fields and infrastructure in the Yachi region. The meeting’s host, Iraqi Brigadier General Mamoud Safeen, commanding general, 1st Strategic Infrastructure Brigade, impressed upon the civilian leaders the importance to them and to their villages of preventing sabotage attacks on the critical oilfield infrastructure. “Oil is the future of Iraq,” Safeen said. “It is not mine and it is not yours...it’s ours, and it’s the wealth of the Iraqi people,” he emphasized. “We need continuous cooperation from your communities to keep the oil flowing,” Safeen said admonishing the local leaders.<sup>27</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Jack Pritchett, the commander of 3-7 FA, reinforced Brigadier General Safeen’s appeal for cooperation and explained the relationship between oil and effective governance in Kirkuk province. Since most local leaders agreed with the notion that the free flow of oil represented the future for Iraq, “they came to the meeting to see what part they can play in that future, not only in this province, but [throughout] the country,” Pritchett said. “It’s important for [local leaders] to understand that an attack on the oil pipeline is an attack on the future of their communities...if the oil is not flowing, they are not going to get the things they desperately need,” he explained.<sup>28</sup>

In yet another 3d BCT effort to support the governance line of operation in Kirkuk, Captain Christopher Degn, chaplain for the 3d Brigade Special Troops Battalion, began teaching an in-depth course on Islam to Soldiers interested in learning more about Iraqi life “outside-the-wire” at Forward Operating Base Warrior. Nicknamed “Qur’an 101,” classes met weekly to discuss, and help Soldiers better understand, Islamic history, culture, customs, and the Muslim religion. “I don’t want [3d BCT Soldiers] to spend a year out here and not connect with the people,” Degn said in describing his motivation for initiating the training.<sup>29</sup> “Attending the class every week helps me learn and get an understanding of the people and

their customs,” said Captain Matthew Greene, 2d Squadron, 6th Cavalry (2-6 CAV) intelligence officer, complimenting Degen’s program.<sup>30</sup> Enhancing their knowledge of the local culture helped 3d BCT Soldiers better interact with local Iraqi leaders and political officials, thereby furthering brigade efforts to nudge Kirkuk closer to self-sustaining governance.

In March 2007, the Soldiers of 2d Battalion, 27th Infantry hosted a mayoral luncheon event at Forward Operating Base McHenry in honor of those local Iraqi civic leaders and law enforcement officials who had been the most cooperative and supportive of Coalition efforts to improve governance and to rebuild the surrounding communities. Because of their cooperation, these particular leaders were now experiencing fewer problems and reaping greater benefits for their respective constituencies. Addressing the gathering, 2-27 Commander Lieutenant Colonel Meyerowich tied the local effort into the Coalition’s ultimate goal of helping Iraqis establish local governments that can protect themselves and also, a national government that treats all Iraqis equally, irrespective of their sect, religion, or ethnicity. Meyerowich told the crowd:

I certainly can’t take credit for our increased success. Our success is attributable to the day-to-day interactions of my Soldiers... when [local Iraqi citizens] see my Soldiers taking care of their communities, it makes building relationships easier and achieving success much more possible.<sup>31</sup>

One example of success in improving the capacity of Iraqi Sovereignty was enhancing the rule of law in Kirkuk Province. Years of neglect under the Baathist regime had left the Iraqi justice system’s reputation tarnished and its perception weakened in the eyes of the public. The 3d BCT Soldiers helped Iraqis partially remedy this situation by establishing a major crimes court on an Iraqi Army base that used judges from Baghdad to hear important cases. The brigade also built a new courthouse in the town of Dibbis about 25 miles northwest of Kirkuk city. Dozens of local and regional Iraqi government officials, along with several judges and attorneys, turned out for the grand opening of the Dibbis courthouse in May 2007. “This new building is symbolic. It conveys to the people that the rule of law is important,” Major Gary Johnson, 3d BCT command judge advocate, said at the opening ceremony.<sup>32</sup> Brigade Judge Advocate Captain Duane Kees explained the importance of legitimizing Iraq’s impaired legal system and further described the difficulties of dealing with Iraqi law;

Iraq has a codified judicial system, and a legislature and government based on that system...we’re trying to help Iraqi citizens

have faith again in their laws by improving a legal system that can be trusted...[now] citizens will see their system work.<sup>33</sup> Out here there are no books on how to bestow dignity to a people's legal system, a system that's foreign to me...out here at times it's like I'm playing chess in the dark."<sup>34</sup>

Building the new Dibbis courthouse is a prime example of 3d BCTs efforts to improve overall governance in Kirkuk province, and "legitimizing the rule of law in Iraq [became] a cornerstone of a better future for Iraq's citizens."<sup>35</sup>

In yet another indication that the rule of law was moving forward in Kirkuk, the police station in the Domies district of the city became the first officially validated station in Iraq to take the lead in comprehensive security operations within its district. According to Captain Ryan Nacin, fire support and assistant plans officer, 2d Battalion, 35th Infantry Regiment (2-35 IN):

Validation was the culmination of training credible and capable police forces through combined operations and partnerships to establish self-sustaining police stations throughout Iraq.<sup>36</sup> Receiving a validation status is the result of a tremendous amount of effort and dedication by the Iraqi police officers and the Coalition forces that partnered with them.<sup>37</sup>

Adding his congratulations, battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Browder acknowledged that:

Today is a great day to be a policeman in Kirkuk...because it marks the culmination of almost four years of hard work, [and] you are the first and the only police station in Iraq to be validated as trained and ready to take the lead in security operations. We are very proud of the police at Domies, and of your sacrifice, courage, and dedication to your country.<sup>38</sup>

Colonel Browder's congratulatory rhetoric was consistent with 3d BCT's broader information operations campaign intended to compliment Iraqis whenever possible for a job well done, to increase the confidence of local citizens in their government officials, and to give credit to Iraqi leaders for significant accomplishments.

Soldiers from the 3d BCT also assisted Kirkuk political leaders prepare for the eventual implementation of the principals spelled out in Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution. Although it was still unclear during the 2006-2007 timeframe exactly when these principles would be official,

the 3d BCT participated with city and provincial government officials in overseeing the normalization process, preparing for the census, and fine-tuning security in anticipation of a potential referendum vote.<sup>39</sup> Colonel Stackpole and members of his staff worked closely with the Article 140 Implementation Committee to ensure fairness in the process that involved repatriating Kurds displaced from their homes during the Baathist regime and relocating Arab settlers who had moved to Kirkuk in accordance with Saddam-era Arabization policies. As of spring 2007, Kurds and Arabs had submitted 3,600 applications for relocation funding. Stackpole, who anticipated receiving as many as 50,000 applications by the end of the year, continually emphasized to Kurds and Arabs alike to follow the established political process and move ahead rather than resort to violence. Newly displaced Arabs had the option of moving elsewhere in the province or returning to their traditional homes in southern Iraq. Colonel Stackpole credited the fully functional Kirkuk provincial council and the well-staffed Kirkuk team for the success of the normalization program in the 3rd BCTs area of operations.<sup>40</sup>

### **The 1st BCT, 10th Mtn Div Takes Over in Kirkuk**

In October 2007, Stackpole's brigade was relieved by 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division. This unit, commanded by Colonel David Paschal, included 4 maneuver battalions, a field artillery battalion, and numerous support units. Paschal also enjoyed the partnership with several Iraqi Army units stationed in Kirkuk Province. Like the units that operated in Kirkuk previously, the 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division conducted a variety of missions, including those focused on developing a stable form of governance in Kirkuk. Paschal's desired end state for Kirkuk was a province—and a city—that had a more equitable allocation of resources, strengthened government legitimacy, increased capital investment, decreased unemployment, improved economic stability, and a fair and transparent justice system.<sup>41</sup>

To achieve these goals the Soldiers of the 1st BCT continued the Iraqi police validation process and the six-step reconciliation program for former insurgents; hosted criminal justice councils and a conference for the Sons of Iraq local militia groups; established literacy training classes in Hawija; created a Civilian Service Corps that provided on-the-job training for Sons of Iraq members and released detainees; launched drought mitigation and emergency feed grain initiatives; and operated an Iraqi Media Network television call-in show to communicate Iraqi government success stories to the citizens of Kirkuk.<sup>42</sup> Colonel Paschal also expanded the

governance mentorship program by assigning team and company level advisors to 18 district and subdistrict councils. As a result, communication between districts and the provincial government improved, all districts completed and submitted their respective budgets on time, and councils became more self-sufficient as their focus shifted from security to improving provincial economics and infrastructure.<sup>43</sup>

The 1st BCT worked with representatives of RTI International's Local Governance Project (LGP), who, as noted earlier, were under contract with the US Agency for International Development to assist in strengthening municipal, district, and provincial governments in Iraq. RTI project contractors had been working in Kirkuk province since the summer of 2003. In 2005 the firm defined their mission in Iraq in the following way:

To improve the management and administration of governments; to provide technical assistance and training to local government-elected officials concerning [their] roles and the functions of local agencies; and to support the establishment of a legal framework for a democratic, representative, and participatory form of decentralized government in Iraq.<sup>44</sup>

A secondary objective of the RTI project involved assisting local Iraqi governments become transparent, accountable, and responsive to their constituents while defining the local government's role in the shifting Iraqi political structure. RTI personnel and 1st BCT Soldiers assisted Kirkuk government officials in preparing their five-year provincial development strategies. They further assisted local leaders with refining their budget execution processes by using a customized computer-based information system to automate financial accounting and project tracking.<sup>45</sup>

The 1st BCT staff developed lines of operation pertaining to governance in Kirkuk including:

- Self governance—elect district and provincial governments that are able to allocate resources which gain popular support and the population views as legitimate.
- Improve essential services—a government capable of meeting and maintaining population basic needs.
- Promote economic development—increase capital available in the area of responsibility, decrease unemployment, and improve economic stability.
- Promote the rule of law—provide a fair and transparent justice systems and counter the influence of anti-Iraqi forces.

Subsequently, the 1st BCT's operational framework for legitimate governance in Kirkuk described the numerous programs, projects, and initiatives designed to educate political leaders and improve the capabilities of local, district, and provincial institutions.<sup>46</sup>

The brigade operational framework identified another important component which involved the implementation of a 13-point agreement reached in December 2007 between the two leading political parties in Kirkuk—the Sunni Arab Iraqi Republican Gathering and the Kurdish Kirkuk brotherhood list. According to the agreement, Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen shared joint governance authority in Kirkuk at a ratio of 32 percent each and the remaining 4 percent is for the Chaldo-Assyrians. The Arab block discontinued its boycott and returned to the Kirkuk provincial council after the agreement was signed. By mid-2008, however, Iraqi Republican Gathering members were dissatisfied with the agreement's implementation and accused Kurds of blocking many of the agreed upon administrative powers. Kurds, on the other hand, continued to assert that power in Kirkuk was rightfully theirs, citing the 26 of 41 provincial council seats won by the Kurds in the 2005 elections.<sup>47</sup> According to the 1st BCT S-9, Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bennett, not all of the issues satisfied Kirkuk Arabs, but the 13-point agreement built transparency and legitimacy in local government and Arabs saw that they were truly represented.<sup>48</sup> Soldiers participated in discussions between Kurd and Arab political leaders, kept the dialogue going, and prevented disagreements from spilling over into violence. Assisting Iraqis to manage the unresolved issues inherent in the 13-point agreement was a critical task for the 1st BCT Soldiers and representatives of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk. Resolving conflict was especially critical because of the looming provincial elections planned for October 2008.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout 2008, unsettled questions involving Kirkuk caused problems for the Iraqi Parliament which was attempting to pass both the Provincial Powers Act and the Provincial Elections Law. In February, the parliament narrowly passed the Provincial Powers Act and then in July, Iraqi President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, vetoed the election law passed by the Council of Representatives. Talabani claimed that clauses requiring an equal division of powers in Kirkuk and the replacement of the Peshmerga with Iraqi security forces in the province were unacceptable. Kurdistan Alliance members had walked out of parliament over these issues. A further point of contention was whether the referendum to determine whether Kirkuk would join the Kurdistan Democratic Party region would be on the provincial elections ballot. After several weeks of additional negotia-

tions, Iraqi legislators reached a compromise that postponed the provincial elections in Kirkuk, Dahuk, Arbil, and Sulaymaniyah provinces, until a date to be determined. The compromise further postponed elections from 1 October 2008 until 31 January 2009 for the remaining 14 provinces, did not reduce Kurdish power on the existing Kirkuk provincial council, and approved the appointment of a special Council of Representatives committee to address the overall Kirkuk dispute. This modified version of the election law passed on 24 September and was ratified 7 October 2008 by the Iraqi Presidential Council.<sup>50</sup>

The 1st BCT's Civil Military Operations (CMO) section, consisting of the brigade S9 and 6 Soldiers, worked hand-in-hand with the 10-member Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk governance team during 2008 to identify, encourage, and develop moderate potential candidates for the Kirkuk city and provincial councils. The CMO operations section and team members urged Arab political parties to expand and to become more involved in the Kirkuk political process and prodded all eligible Kirkuk citizens to cast their votes in the forthcoming provincial elections. According to the brigade CMO operations section leader Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bennett, the 1st BCT changed its focus from security to governance in February 2008.<sup>51</sup>

Civil Military Operations Soldiers used a series of 30, 60, and 90-day milestones to track and evaluate the brigade's progress in attaining governance line of operation goals and objectives. They also assessed the performance of the city, district, and provincial councils in Kirkuk using a diversified set of criteria for measurement that included: code of conduct, council executive functions and relations, meeting and organizational procedures, citizen participation, project oversight, budgeting and auditing, and strategic planning. Periodic written evaluations described how councils were performing when measured against each criterion. For example, if a council was performing satisfactorily when measured against the code of conduct track, then the evaluation might read, "council is generally honest and works for the benefit of the community with personal gain for themselves lower in priority."<sup>52</sup> Finally, a comprehensive written assessment summarized the council's overall governance performance, recommended corrective actions if necessary, and identified resource requirements. These assessments assisted Iraqi officials in Kirkuk with reaching for their ultimate goal of self-sufficiency and simultaneously provided 1st BCT Soldiers greater insight into Iraqi politics.<sup>53</sup>

The 1st BCT Judge Advocate Section organized a rule of law working group in January 2008 which coordinated brigade and Provincial Recon-



struction Team legal assistance activities in Kirkuk Province. Members of the working group included the brigade deputy commanding officer, brigade command judge advocate, provincial reconstruction rule of law team, provincial and local police transition teams, and several US civilian advisors to the Iraqi police. The group developed a comprehensive rule of law strategy that emphasized improving legal systems and infrastructure, and building law enforcement and judicial capabilities, with the intent of creating fair and transparent adherence to the province rule of law. Because of the working group's effort, Colonel Paschal upgraded rule of law to a separate line of operation in the brigade campaign plan.<sup>54</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Roseanne Bennett, the brigade's Judge Advocate, credited improved security, better integration, extensive command involvement, cooperation between Iraqi judicial and police leaders, and the Provincial Reconstruction Team rule of law team for significant improvements to the legal system in Kirkuk. By 2008, training programs for police, correctional officers, station chiefs, and deputies were operational; four new district courthouses were built; and a major crimes unit facility was nearing completion. These successful efforts to upgrade the legal infrastructure in Kirkuk allowed the 1st BCT rule of law team to devote more time, energy, and money to improving various judicial processes, enhancing the capabilities of their Iraqi counterparts, and expanding public access to the court system.<sup>55</sup>

The 1st BCT Soldiers and Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk representatives also worked with several civilian organizations such as Save the Children, the Kirkuk Jurist Union, and the Kirkuk Net for Civil Society to both improve the Iraqi justice system and educate the public regarding their legal rights. These affiliations led to and resulted in Iraqis opening their own Iraqi legal information office and an Iraqi women's legal aid clinic in Kirkuk. As Lieutenant Colonel Bennett noted, these organizations were established to provide, "Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems."<sup>56</sup> In March 2008, the Iraqi judges moved the major crimes court from the K1 Iraqi army base to the Kirkuk courthouse in Kirkuk city to improve accessibility for defense attorneys, families, and the public. The 1st BCT rule of law team viewed the fact that Iraqi judges were beginning to actually convict criminals as a positive sign that the Soldiers' system-wide training efforts were paying off.<sup>57</sup> Finally and perhaps most importantly, in May, Iraqi judicial and police officials convened the first Criminal Justice Council at Forward Operating Base Warrior to discuss various criminal justice system issues. "Our efforts will have an enduring impact in Kirkuk...the CJC [Criminal Justice Council] is a testament to the improved

relationships and increase cooperation among our Iraqi counterparts...and the willingness of Iraqi leaders to assume complete responsibility for their legal system,” Lieutenant Colonel Roseanne Bennett said, adding later, “we got this right for our province at this time.”<sup>58</sup> Multi-National Force-Iraq commanding general, Raymond Odierno apparently agreed, having told Colonel Paschal during 1st BCTs out briefing in 2008, “your rule of law [in Kirkuk] is more advanced than we have in Baghdad.”<sup>59</sup>

Colonel Paschal emphasized the connection between security and good governance in Kirkuk. Attacks in the Kirkuk area of operations dropped from 350 per month in July 2007 to less than 100 incidents in October 2008.<sup>60</sup> Improved security set the conditions for expanded 1st BCT efforts along the governance, economic development, and rule of law lines of operation. Paschal also described how improvements in nonlethal lines helped weaken the insurgency. “I had to address the political, the social, and the economic needs [in Kirkuk] that were fueling the insurgency,” he explained.<sup>61</sup> After three months in Iraq, the 1st BCT reassessed their campaign plan priorities. As a result, their security operations and Iraqi forces training became part of the brigade’s nonlethal lines of operation. Large cordon and search operations gave way to direct action targeting of insurgent leaders, and the team opened five additional company-sized combat outposts and joint coordination centers, located in conjunction with Iraqi security forces. Adding these additional outposts helped extend the government and the team’s reach deeper into the province that complied with Multi-National Force-Iraq Commanding General David Petraeus’ intent to “get out and live among the people.”<sup>62</sup>

With respect to ethnic tensions in Kirkuk, average citizens interacted reasonably well, according to Paschal. It was the heightened rhetoric of the political leadership that stirred up ethnic discontent. Thus, helping local politicians deal with the contentious power sharing arrangement in Kirkuk consumed significant amounts of BCT and Provincial Reconstruction Team time and energy. “There were three key positions: governor, deputy governor, and provincial council chairman. Each of the ethnicities [Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen] was going to take one and that was pretty easy to figure out,” said Colonel Paschal.<sup>63</sup> The most significant challenge involved determining the makeup of the provincial council. Since Kurds enjoyed a majority in the province, they naturally demanded a majority of seats on the council. Arabs, on the other hand, consistently opposed granting majority status to the Kurds. “Coming up with [a power sharing agreement] was the biggest challenge I spent time on, both personally and in conjunction with the PRT,” Paschal noted.<sup>64</sup>

The 1st BCT also expanded the Sons of Iraq program, a program initiated in Kirkuk province by 3d BCT, 25th Infantry Division, during the previous rotation. The members were primarily from local Arab tribes and balked at the idea of being described as part of the “Awakening” movement. “We haven’t been asleep,” the recruits told the brigade Soldiers. “We are not going to use the Awakening...we want to be Isnad (support) forces”<sup>65</sup> Colonel Paschal willingly concurred with the request. “You guys are going to support the legitimate Iraqi security forces and not replace them,” he explained to the Arabs. “That was a great information operations theme for me,” Paschal said.<sup>66</sup> Eventually, the 1st BCT employed 12 contractors each of whom hired several hundred Sons of Iraq members, to perform security duty on main supply routes. The Sons, many who were unemployed former Saddam-era Iraqi army soldiers, used the money that they earned to support their families and to purchase goods from local markets throughout the province. The 1st BCT soldiers convened quarterly Sons of Iraq Unity Conferences and hired unemployed Iraqi teachers to teach the members how to read and write. The ability to read and write qualified the members to seek employment as liaison officers. The Sons of Iraq sent their liaison officers to work with Iraqi police and security forces. That was “a huge success story in my mind, exchanging LNOs [liaison officers], cooperating and working together,” Colonel Paschal pointed out.<sup>67</sup> Integrating Sons of Iraq members into Kirkuk society was another indication to local Arabs that government was working for Arabs too and that they should consider further increasing their participation in government activities.

The 1st BCT was also deeply involved in facilitating Iraq’s national reconciliation program to integrate former insurgents into the country’s new democratic society. Former insurgents began arriving at Forward Operating Base Warrior asking to join the program. When Colonel Paschal asked Multi-National Corps-Iraq Commander Lieutenant General Odierno for more guidance about reconciliation, the general told him bluntly to just “figure it out.”<sup>68</sup> Initially, Paschal was disappointed in the general’s response, but soon realized that reconciliation had to be figured out at the local level—one size did not fit all. The brigade began holding reconciliation days every month to accommodate screening those citizens who wanted to enlist in the national program. On reconciliation days, Soldiers thoroughly screened the applicants and then entered their personal data in the Biometrics Automated Toolset/Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment system. Those citizens who passed the screening were accepted into the program and signed a declaration of allegiance to the

government of Iraq. Reconciled former insurgents attended required training classes and eventually took positions with the Sons of Iraq Isnad forces or the Civil Service Corps in Kirkuk. By the time the 1st BCT redeployed in December 2008, 780 applicants were in various stages of the Kirkuk reconciliation program pipeline.<sup>69</sup>

The 1st BCT governance mentorship program was another important component of the brigade's governance line of operation. Iraqi leaders from 5 districts and 13 subdistricts in Kirkuk province participated in the training. The purpose of the mentorship program was to teach Iraqi government officials the fine points of conducting meetings. "You can't just go to the council meeting and say you are all jacked up...that was a terrible council meeting," explained Colonel Paschal.<sup>70</sup> Brigade and Provincial Reconstruction Team mentors assisted council members step-by-step through the meeting, planning, and execution process. They prodded by asking questions such as "What is the focus of this week's city council meeting? What are the inputs and outputs? Can I help you make some copies [of the agenda]?"<sup>71</sup> Soon, council meetings became more effective and efficient as the members focused on accomplishing the tasks in their respective agendas and started closely following parliamentary procedures.

Although economic development in Kirkuk province improved at a reasonable rate during 1st BCT's rotation, Colonel Paschal thought that unresolved issues involving political power-sharing and whether or not Kirkuk city would become part of the Kurdistan regional government constrained his ability to attract additional outside investment. "They [outside investors] weren't sure who they were going to be dealing with in the future because the outcome hadn't been decided...are they going to deal with the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] or an Iraqi province," Paschal stated in pointing out the nature of the dilemma.<sup>72</sup>

Colonel Paschal also lamented the difference between Kurds and Arabs in their respective approaches to the political process in Kirkuk. The two Kurdish political parties, KDP and the PUK, recognized the need to work together and to cooperate in local elections. As a result, Kurds nominated a compromise candidate acceptable to both parties, Mustafa Abdul-Rahman, who was eventually elected the governor of Kirkuk province. The Arabs, however, voted by tribe or by clan, each of which submitted their own candidates. Their failure to cooperate resulted in a diluted overall effort and they ultimately lost by a split vote. The 1st BCT and Provincial Reconstruction Team governance teams worked tirelessly with Kirkuk's Arabs, first to bring them to the table, and next to convince them

to consolidate their efforts and form a viable political party.<sup>73</sup> Otherwise, the political process would lead to governance that could be perceived as unfair, especially by Kirkuk's Arabs.

Colonel Paschal was similarly concerned with the flow of funding from Baghdad to Kirkuk. "The Minister of Education [in Baghdad] had money...I needed teachers, I needed school [supplies]...the link to get that money into Kirkuk was lacking," Paschal said.<sup>74</sup> He attributed this shortcoming to an inadequate Iraqi middle class bureaucracy, which had seriously diminished under the Baathist regime, and to an unwillingness of those Iraqis who were serving in bureaucratic positions to spend the money and to make things happen. Paschal also expressed his concern regarding continued one-year US unit rotations. He favored individual Soldier rotations, noting that "counterinsurgency in this environment is a relationship based game...I could go back in and at least know the key players, know how they think, know how they operate, and then potentially move them to the next level."<sup>75</sup>

### **The Role of the PRT in Governance Operations**

Clearly, Paschal and his Soldiers relied on the Kirkuk PRT for critical support in the campaign to foster good governance in Kirkuk. That team was led by Mr. Howard Keegan, US State Department; deputy team leader, Lieutenant Colonel David Menegon, US Army; US Agency for International Development senior representative, Dr. Jeffrey Ashley, and; attached brigade S9 liaison officer, Lieutenant Colonel Roland Bennett, US Army. Together the brigade and Provincial Reconstruction Team developed a joint campaign plan to ensure that working together complemented each other's efforts. Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk also provided a mentor to each of the BCT's battalions. In effect, the BCT became "a supporting effort to the PRT [provincial reconstruction team]" for nonlethal lines of the operation, according to Colonel Paschal.<sup>76</sup>

In February 2008, Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk began developing a comprehensive strategy and monitoring plan that covered the following critical pillars of operation: rule of law, economic development, governance, health and education, essential services, agriculture, and public diplomacy. The intent of the plan was to improve Team Kirkuk's assistance programs by establishing realistic objectives, benchmarks, and also metrics and measuring results, all of which contributed to a more self-reliant Iraq and was consistent with the team mission to "improve the livelihoods of Iraqi citizens in Kirkuk by promoting reconciliation, shaping the political environment, supporting economic development, and

building the capacity of provincial government to hasten self-sufficiency.”<sup>77</sup> The plan further intended to break the prevailing project-by-project approaches to building governance in Kirkuk by implementing overall, broad-based, strategies versus simply managing projects. To that end, planners developed the following five-part process to address each of the team’s pillars of operation: conceptualize, communicate, and concur; develop the strategic framework; prepare a performance monitoring plan; map and chart projects, and; report to stakeholders.<sup>78</sup>

The Kirkuk PRT strategic planning process also included a “value chain analysis” that specifically involved collaboration with 1st BCT regarding nonlethal projects and programs. According to team deputy leader, Lieutenant Colonel David Menegon, the “value chain” was a linked series of coordinated activities designed to maximize value and minimize costs by identifying project needs and pinpointing areas in which the team should focus its efforts.<sup>79</sup> Responsible individuals at the team and their BCT counterparts developed strategic objectives for each of the seven key pillars of operation. The governance pillar objective, for example, called for “provincial and district government entities to self-govern effectively and deliver government services to the people.”<sup>80</sup> Increased expenditures of Iraqi government funds and improvements in the effectiveness and legitimacy of provincial and district governments were indicators of success with respect to the governance objective, in which everyone in the province now had a stake. Additionally, each strategic objective had a series of expected intermediate results and performance measures. The increased capacity to execute budgets was one of the intermediate results associated with the governance objective and included budget preparation, budget execution, and improved funding of district and subdistrict projects as performance measures. The revised strategic planning process helped the 1st BCT develop a unity-of-command effort in Kirkuk that included specific objectives and a methodology for measuring results.<sup>81</sup> “There’s a growing feeling in the community for everyone to work together,” team leader Keegan observed, describing the Kirkuk environment in October 2008.<sup>82</sup>

Keegan also described several additional Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk accomplishments which were achieved in conjunction with the 1st BCT, including the introduction of civil rights into the corrections system, an electronic funds transfer program that allowed a few banks in Kirkuk to transact international business, establishing and opening the professional business women’s center, and the expanded Al-Aman micro-finance operations center. With help from the team, efforts by Kirkuk’s provincial governor convinced the Baghdad government to fund addi-



tional oil refining capacity which finally progressed by late 2008. “On the political side, I think we’ve made more progress as far as getting a true unity government back in place,” Keegan said. “We do have a seated government...it’s been meeting regularly...we still maintain a quorum in our provincial council...it’s been business pretty much as usual,” he added.<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately, although Arabs and Turkmen participated in most provincial government functions, both blocs boycotted official council meetings for several months during 2008 to protest the Kurdish-dominated council’s threat to support Kurdistan regional government efforts to annex Kirkuk.

About 30 US Army Reserve Soldiers from the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion were attached to PRT Kirkuk to provide security services and expertise in various disciplines. Soldiers from the battalion, who were members of the governance team, recorded and transcribed the proceedings of all weekly Kirkuk provincial council meetings in chambers at the Kirkuk government building. A report of one meeting, for example, noted that 30 members attended from the Kurdish Brotherhood List and the Turkmen bloc on 17 June 2008. Rizgar Ali, a PUK party Kurd and provincial council chairperson presided over the meeting in which Arab bloc members were conspicuously absent.

Provincial Reconstruction Team governance Soldiers also attended and recorded the proceedings of weekly western Kirkuk Arab group meetings. US Ambassador Thomas C. Krajesky, senior advisor on northern Iraq affairs at the US Embassy in Baghdad flew to Kirkuk and attended the 23 June 2008 Arab group meeting. Hawija district council chairperson, Abu Saddam, addressed the group, expressing his concern that the changing demographics in Kirkuk would affect the upcoming elections and that the current Kurdish migration would likely increase the number of Kurd seats on the provincial council. He took the opportunity to call for Arab unity in preparing for and participating in the approaching provincial elections. The 418th Civil Affairs Battalion Soldiers compiled the records from hundreds of such meetings during their rotation in Kirkuk.<sup>84</sup>

Thomas Keegan, the provincial reconstruction team leader, expressed concern that American citizens were losing patience with the Iraq war effort, but went on to point out and explain the importance of helping Iraqis develop smooth-running national, provincial, district, and city governments:

What we have asked the Iraqi people to do—basically go from a dictatorship to a full-blown democracy in just a few years—is exceptionally difficult for any group of people...most here had no background at all in democracy or true government...they’re mak-



ing great strides.<sup>85</sup> We [need] to make sure that what we're doing is not for us; we're doing it for them...we're training them to take over [and] the best thing that we can do is to leave a functioning structure in place at the end of our tenure. There's a real opportunity to help these people, and I think they deserve it.<sup>86</sup>

But in late 2008, the PRT's role in making that opportunity available came under threat as its military contingent was scheduled to decline from 30 Soldiers to 10 during the overall US troop reduction initiative in Iraq. Such a drastic cut would likely derail many of the delicate political and social advances made by the team during the past several years, according to Keegan. Lack of a security detail would hamper daily team movements to Kirkuk's downtown provincial government building and prevent team members from walking the streets and talking to local citizens—"a key to reconciliation," Keegan said. "If we don't get out, it's hard for us to know what the people are after...[the cuts] couldn't come at a worse time," he explained.<sup>87</sup> Iraqi team translator, Araz Ahmed, agreed, noting, "the American presence is the only thing keeping the fragile peace between Kirkuk's ethnic groups."<sup>88</sup>

Only two civil affairs teams, eight Soldiers total, replaced the 30-member company from the 418th Civil Affairs Battalion at Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk, when the company redeployed in December 2008. Additional team security was eventually provided by the 18th Engineer Brigade that replaced the 1st BCT in the same timeframe. Nine months later, Keegan finally left for another State Department assignment after serving more than two years in Kirkuk.

### **The 18th Engineer Brigade Moves to Kirkuk**

In November 2008, the 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division was relieved in Kirkuk Province by the 18th Engineer Brigade. Headquartered in Heidelberg, Germany, the 18th Engineer Brigade deployed initially to Tikrit, Iraq in May 2008. In November, the brigade relocated to Kirkuk, and was assigned to the 1st Armored division, which led Multi-National Force-North. The brigade's focus in Kirkuk was reconstruction and nonlethal engagements with the provincial government. The 1st Battalion, 67th Armor (1-67 AR) from the 2d Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, served as the 18th Engineer Brigade's only maneuver battalion. Colonel Matthew Russell, commander of the 18th Engineers, also spoke at the transfer of authority event in Kirkuk, pledging that, "his Soldiers would earn the respect of the people of Kirkuk and build on US Forces' successes there, just as the troops of the 1st BCT did."<sup>89</sup> In less than a month after the 18th Engineer's

arrival in Kirkuk, the United States and the Government of Iraq announced that they had successfully concluded negotiations on two historically significant agreements:

A Strategic Framework Agreement that covers our overall political, economic, and security relationship with Iraq, and a Security Agreement—otherwise known as the Status of Forces Agreement—that implements our security relationship.<sup>90</sup>

Bilateral negotiations had begun the previous March and the Iraqi cabinet and the Council of Representatives approved the Strategic Framework Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement agreements on 27 November 2008, with the Iraq Presidency Council endorsing the Council of Representatives vote on 4 December 2008. In an official letter to US troops in Iraq, Multi-National Force-Iraq Commanding General, Raymond Odierno announced that Status of Forces Agreement would become effective 1 January 2009 and noted that both agreements demonstrated the United States' commitment to Iraq, its people, and to good governance, security, and stability in the region.<sup>91</sup> Bush administration officials credited the success of the surge, increased security gains, and the expanded capacity and confidence of the Iraqi government with setting the proper conditions for harmonious negotiations with Iraqi officials.<sup>92</sup>

In Kirkuk, news of the Strategic Framework Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement agreements came just three weeks prior to the fourth Kirkuk Criminal Justice Council conference at the Iraqi Police Academy. At this conference, Kirkuk political leaders, provincial judges, Iraqi army commanders, provincial police chief Iraqi Major General Jamal Thakr Bakr, Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk representatives, and 18th Engineer Brigade Soldiers focused their discussions on how to implement the agreements locally and what the impact might be on the city and the province. “The event was significant because it took place on the eve of the effective date of the security agreement and the Iraqi army commanders from the province were in attendance,” explained Captain Jennifer Venghaus, command Judge Advocate for the 18th Engineer Brigade and rule of law expert for Kirkuk province.<sup>93</sup> Conference attendees also addressed potentially controversial rule of law issues posed by the new agreements, such as Iraqi jurisdiction over Coalition forces, arrest and search warrants, and the procedures for detaining Iraqi army soldiers by Iraqi police. Guest speaker at the conference, Lieutenant Colonel David Snodgrass, deputy commanding officer for the 3d BCT, 25th Infantry Division told those gathered, “the people of Iraq have come through a lot of adversity during the past five years, [but] it is the beginning of a new year...the dawning of

a new day for Iraq.” To reassure the Iraqi attendees of continued Coalition assistance, Snodgrass added, “The United States will recognize the sovereignty of Iraq...and the US remains committed to supporting the Iraqi security forces and the government of Iraq as they improve their capabilities.”<sup>94</sup>

Surprisingly, Multi-National Force-Iraq ordered the 18th Engineer Brigade to redeploy once again in February 2009, this time to Forward Operating Base Marez in Nineveh Province to oversee the Mosul Reconstruction Cell. During their short stay in Kirkuk, the 18th Engineer Soldiers worked to enhance governance and improve infrastructure in the province. “Our time in Kirkuk has prepared us perfectly for our new mission in Mosul,” Colonel Russell said, acknowledging that his unit was ready for its next assignment.<sup>95</sup> “We’ve conducted uncharacteristic lines of operation that a normal engineer brigade doesn’t do, but we took it on,” Russell later explained.<sup>96</sup>

### **The 2d BCT, 1st Cavalry Division Relieves 18th Engineer Brigade**

Colonel Ryan Gonsalves and the 2d BCT, 1st Cavalry Division, took control of the Kirkuk area of operations on 14 February 2009, “a pivotal moment in the ethnically diverse province, since Kirkuk was the only province...that did not hold provincial elections on 31 January 2009,” according to Major Robert Blackmon, brigade Judge Advocate.<sup>97</sup> The transfer of authority event, by this time referred to as a Provincial Partnership Ceremony that involved local Iraqi citizens and politicians, Iraqi police and soldiers, Provincial Reconstruction Team representatives, and Coalition forces. The 1st Battalion, 8th Cavalry (1-8 CAV), under Lieutenant Colonel David Lesperance, deployed to Hawija and the 4th Battalion, 9th Cavalry (4-9 CAV), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Shoffner, assumed responsibility for the Kirkuk city area. In his speech, Colonel Gonsalves praised the Iraqi security forces and the team for their progress and excellent work, and stressed the importance of the reconciliation program in Kirkuk. He also emphasized that the operational environment in Iraq was changing, and as such, although the security threat remained serious, reconstruction and helping Iraqi leaders solve Iraqi problems would be key priorities. While encouraging those in attendance to become stakeholders in the governance process and reconstruction efforts in the province, Gonsalves told the audience:

Kirkuk represents an opportunity for Iraq to prove its ability to resolve differences through meaningful discussion with all parties

represented. Each one of us believes the future of Iraq is bright, but we still have work to do...as partners we will share in the labor ahead of us, and each one of us will feel personal pride when that goal is reached.<sup>98</sup>

Early in the 2d BCT's rotation, Colonel Gonsalves reorganized the brigade staff into three working groups in order to build stronger relationships with the Iraqi leaders who would soon be assuming responsibility for security and governance in Kirkuk province. The Iraqi Security Force and Security Working Group focused on training Iraqi military and police units, coordinated insurgent targeting, and ensured that the brigade was still prepared to conduct contingency operations, if necessary. The 2d BCT's Economics and Governance Working Group concentrated on assisting Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk in developing civil capacity and initiating governance-oriented plans and programs in the province. The Investigative Task Force worked with provincial judges and other Kirkuk legal system officials to enhance the rule of law and to train Iraqi police in proper evidence collection procedures. The new staff configuration greatly enhanced information flow and significantly reduced the 2d BCT's response time in both identifying and then resolving problems.<sup>99</sup>

As US Forces throughout Iraq began to draw down and deploy from Iraq, the 2d BCT partnered in Kirkuk province with the 15th, 46th, 47th, and 49th Brigades of 12th Iraqi Army Division, commanded by Iraqi major general Abdul Amir Zaidi. The 10th Brigade (Peshmerga), Kurdish Army, under Brigadier General Sherko Fatah Al Shwani also operated in northern districts of the province. A significant component of 2d BCTs mission entailed turning over the security line of operation in Kirkuk to these Iraqi security forces. During a 2009 visit to Kirkuk, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullen, praised local political leaders and Iraqi military commanders for their significant achievements in improving both governance and security in the province, noting, "Iraqis are working their way through the rule of law and [learning] how to govern themselves."<sup>100</sup> Mullen, however, cautioned Kirkuk government officials and Iraqi Security Force commanders warning them of the challenges they faced now that Iraqi security would lead security operations and further pointed out that US military forces in Iraq would be drawing down from 125,000 to between 35,000 to 50,000 troops after the January 2010 Iraqi elections. "My message to [Kirkuk's population] today," Admiral Mullen explained, "was that we were leaving, and [they] better figure it out."<sup>101</sup>

Faced with the evolving security arrangements in Kirkuk and with the upcoming 2010 national parliamentary elections, Colonel Gonsalves

believed that the primary goal for the 2d BCT in Kirkuk was to strengthen community relations by enhancing ethnic interactions among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. In an earlier interview, Colonel Gonsalves provided a more detailed description of 2d BCTs mission in Kirkuk;

Building trust in all communities is [our] goal. This will improve the security environment and the political process greatly.<sup>102</sup> Our mission is through, with, and by our Iraqi partners, [2d BCT] builds trust in all communities to enable dialog by providing a secure environment for the political process to go forward, neutralize al-Qaeda in Iraq and violent extremists, set the conditions and transition security, governance, essential services, and economics in a representative manner in order to enhance Kurdish-Arab relations and protect the people of Kirkuk.<sup>103</sup>

The 2d BCT planners developed a list of specific tasks designed to address 13 critical drivers of instability in Kirkuk. Colonel Gonsalves explained:

Our efforts are currently focused on issues associated with the disputed status of Kirkuk, KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] boundaries, a perceived lack of legitimate representative governance, security forces, insurgents, oil, drought, SOI [Sons of Iraq] transition, public services, land-property disputes, the return and absorption of displaced people, and unemployment.<sup>104</sup>

The corresponding tasks intended by the brigade to help mitigate these causes of instability focused on protecting the people, enabling the political process, enhancing communications, building trust within the various Kirkuk communities, maintaining neutrality, maintaining liaison with the Peshmerga, and strengthening connections with the Iraqi Security Force throughout the province. As an example, Gonsalves noted that, having worked together successfully since 2003, the Kirkuk provincial council was proficient at solving its own problems. However, new national programs forced upon Kirkuk by the government of Iraq occasionally disrupted the council's ability to govern itself. Also, the Iraqi government's dispatching of additional Iraqi Army forces to Kirkuk, while insisting that Peshmerga troops redeploy elsewhere from Kirkuk, created resentment and instability between Kurd and Arab council members.<sup>105</sup>

Mediating disputes between the Shia Muslim-dominated Iraqi Army and Kurds or their Peshmerga forces became a full time occupation for the 2d BCT Soldiers in 2009. Defusing volatile situations and acting as local power brokers was an ongoing requirement for the brigade personnel. "In

the absence of political mediation, the situation may quickly deteriorate into violence, assassinations, and maybe [civil] war,” said Iraqi political analyst, Haider al Musawi.<sup>106</sup> Fearing a potential clash between the Iraqi army and the Peshmerga, US Army spokesperson in Kirkuk, Major Scott Rawlinson, later observed, “the greatest threat is that some minor incident could start a chain reaction that could lead to armed conflict.”<sup>107</sup> Since Kirkuk’s Arab leaders often complained that American mediators favored the Kurds, Colonel Gonsalves hosted a joint luncheon meeting in March 2009 for Arab general Zaidi and Kurdish general Al Shwani at Forward Operating Base Warrior in an attempt to resolve differences between the two military leaders and their respective ethnic groups. Kurds were particularly suspicious of Zaidi since he had served in Saddam’s army in the Kirkuk area during the Baathist regime. Although the generals resolved several minor issues at the meeting, Al Shwani insisted that Kurds had the right to field their own army.<sup>108</sup> Prior to the March 2010 Iraq national elections, Iraqi Security Force and Kurd army forces established combined coordination centers and joint checkpoints in Kirkuk province, under the supervision of US forces. According to a December 2009 Department of Defense report to Congress, “US force presence in the disputed areas continued to play a key moderating role between Pesh Megra and government of Iraq forces.”<sup>109</sup>

Colonel Gonsalves and the 2d BCT encountered two additional governance related issues in the spring of 2009. The first involved the release of a long-awaited United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq’s report on disputed internal boundaries in northern Iraq. UN special representative Stefan de Mistura personally presented copies of the report to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, President Jalal Talibani, and president of the autonomous Kurdish region, Massoud Barzani. This report, prepared by a team of diplomats and other experts, was analytical in nature and was intended to serve as a point of departure for future discussions, and therefore offered no concrete suggestions regarding the future of Kirkuk Governorate. Adding to the confusion, the report outlined four potential options for dealing with the future administrative status of Kirkuk:

- Remain as a standard Iraqi governorate.
- Become a governorate managed jointly by Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government.
- Become a governorate with special status and expanded self-rule.
- Step back and reformulate article 140.<sup>110</sup>

The United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq report went on to suggest that local government officials and political leaders resolve disputed internal boundary differences locally, using the constitution of Iraq for guidance, reaching a political agreement, and then validating the agreement through referendum.<sup>111</sup>

Ethnic tensions heightened in Kirkuk among Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen, since the United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq's report failed to offer specific solutions to provincial problems and simply recommended further dialogue. Kirkuk's officials were looking for someone higher up in the government of Iraq to help them resolve the boundaries problem, but United Nations and the Government of Iraq "basically kicked the can down the road," explained the 2d BCT deputy commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McNeely.<sup>112</sup> As a result, Colonel Gonsalves, Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Shoffner, and the 4-9 CAV Soldiers stepped up their interactions with political leaders in Kirkuk, offering suggestions, refereeing debates, and interceding in disputes when necessary. "As we get questions [about the United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq's report]," Gonsalves said, "our responsibility is...to ensure that we get [Kirkuk government officials] accurate and timely information."<sup>113</sup>

The second governance issue that affected 2d BCT operations in Kirkuk involved the Kurdistan Regional Government's presidential and national assembly elections. These elections would be the first for Iraqi Kurdistan's 2.5 million citizens since 2005. In February 2009, the Kurdistan Government announced plans for the elections scheduled originally for May, but postponed them until late July to allow more preparation time. Additionally, the existing Kurdistan national assembly passed a new constitution for the Kurdistan region in early summer 2009. This new Kurdistan constitution conflicted with the Iraqi national constitution on several points. For example, the Kurdistan Regional Government constitution claimed that all of Kirkuk province, including Kirkuk city, be the autonomous Kurdistan region. Iraqi national political leaders in Baghdad viewed the Kurdistan Government claim for Kirkuk as an attempt to splinter Iraq. "This lays the foundation for a separate state—it is not a constitution for a region," complained Osama al-Nujaifi, a Sunni Arab member of the national parliament. "It is a declaration of hostile intent and confrontation...of course it will lead to escalation," al-Nujaifi said, denouncing the Kurdistan Regional Government constitution.<sup>114</sup> By July 2009, the Kurdistan Government relented and postponed a constitutional referendum that was concurrently scheduled with the Government parliamentary and presidential elections.



“From a political perspective, we see Kurd-Arab tensions rising daily...all along the fault line now, [but] not to a level that we can’t control,” Colonel Gonsalves stated in May 2009 as Kurdistan Regional Government election campaigning got underway.<sup>115</sup> Despite rising ethnic tensions, however, Gonsalves did not expect any major difficulties requiring 2d BCT assistance before or during the Kurdistan elections. In April, Gonsalves had met with president Massoud Barzani regarding potential support for the elections by the 2d BCT, which eventually involved only information sharing and reliance on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance flights, rather than actual ground force participation in polling site security operations. As scheduled on 25 July 2009 Iraqi Kurdistan held peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections and Barzani was re-elected Kurdistan Regional Government president with 70 percent of the vote, as expected. The Kurdistan List, a PUK and KDP combined effort, and the Kurdish Movement for Change List (Gorran) won 59 and 25 of the 111 national assembly seats, respectively.<sup>116</sup>

In a continuing effort to communicate clearly and concisely with local Iraqis, the 2d BCT expanded information operations in Kirkuk; themes and messages reflected the newly combined Iraqi and Coalition approach to security and governance in the province. The brigade also convinced the 10th Peshmerga Brigade to assign a liaison officer to the Kirkuk Provincial Joint Coordination Center. This move improved the time required to resolve critical issues and helped prevent overreactions due to misunderstandings. To further improve relationships among the stakeholders in Kirkuk, Colonel Gonsalves began inviting provincial political leaders and government officials to weekly security meetings, which typically only involved the Iraqi army, Iraqi police, and Peshmerga. Political leaders were thus exposed to discussions involving insurgent targeting and the local implementation of the terms and conditions of the Strategic Framework Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement agreements. “We will probably see more involvement, both from the governor and the security chiefs in Kirkuk,” Gonsalves said in May 2009, then added, “the dialogue we have right now is working very well.”<sup>117</sup>

Further, the 2d BCT continued and improved governance-related projects initiated by previous US units. For example, the 2d BCT Soldiers acquired and delivered 250,000 books to 900 schools, renovated or constructed 25 schools, rewarded exemplary Iraqi police with US Army medals, granted hundreds of micro loans to small businesses using the Commander's Emergency Response Program funds, and organized grievance meetings to resolve community issues involving Iraqi citizens, po-

litical leaders, and local police. Brigade troops created a Kirkuk Chamber of Commerce database, which contained all of the city businesses, established an Iraqi military engineer facility at K-1, and organized the Kirkuk Women's Rights Conference. They also trained Iraqi police force investigators how to process evidence, educated judges and lawyers on criminal forensics, recommended procedures for developing agricultural cooperatives, expanded the Kirkuk grain silo, and improved waste removal services for the community.<sup>118</sup> The 2d BCT deputy commander, Lieutenant Colonel Hugh McNeely, proudly noted, "the partnership between the Government of Iraq, the civil affairs team, the [2d BCT] battalions, and Provincial Reconstruction Team was responsible for these projects coming together."<sup>119</sup>

In March 2009, the 2d BCT transferred the responsibility of paying the Sons of Iraq from US forces to Iraqi government officials. "This is a great step in the right direction...by taking over payments, Iraqi officials are showing us that they are truly taking over from Coalition forces and showing their citizens that they are taking the lead," said Sons of Iraq leader, Skeikh Farhan, after receiving his March monthly salary.<sup>120</sup> Later in the year, brigade Soldiers began installing placards that read: "Iraqi partnership provincial approved convoy, thank you for your patience and support" on all military vehicles in acknowledgement of the Status of Forces Agreement requirement for the all US combat forces to withdraw from Iraqi cities. Soldiers advising and assisting Iraqis still traveled within Kirkuk city to meet with their counterparts and other government officials. "These signs show that we are working with our partners and that we're abiding by the security agreement," said Major Frazier Epperson, the 2d BCT information officer.<sup>121</sup> Brigade engineering officer, Major Andrew Liffing, further explained, "that by adding the signs, the brigade is...showing that the US military is [now] in a supporting role rather than being directly involved in the day-to-day operations of the city."<sup>122</sup>

In September 2009, 2d BCT released 165 detainees from a Coalition detention facility at Forward Operating Base Warrior. Under the provisions of a new detainee release program, the Kirkuk provincial council members took responsibility for the released prisoners and began helping them reintegrate into local society. In explaining the significance of the detainee release program, Captain Erin Barrett, the 2d BCT provost marshal, said:

This program has been a unifying factor among the council members, because they are all eager to help detainees, no matter their

ethnicity...and this was huge because the GoI [government of Iraq] is taking ownership of the issue, which is what we wanted.”<sup>123</sup>

In December 2009, during the transition between the 2d BCT and the incoming Soldiers from the 1st BCT, 1st Armored Division, the 2d BCT Soldiers introduced their replacements to the provincial and district council members, Iraqi army and police commanders, political party representatives, Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk representatives, and several Sons of Iraq leaders. The intent of these meetings was to ensure a seamless transfer of authority with the 1st BCT and to reinforce the strong relationships established during 2d BCT’s rotation for endurance. “The partner relationship is the core of why we’re here,” Major Christopher Norrie, operations officer for 2d BCT, had explained in February 2009 when the brigade first arrived in Kirkuk.<sup>124</sup> Clearly the lasting relationships built by 2d BCT Soldiers with the Kirkuk community enabled them not only to comply with General Odierno’s objective of enhancing Kurd-Arab relations, but also assisted them in promoting good governance by keeping their fingers on the pulse of ethnic tensions in Kirkuk.

Between 2003 and 2009, each successive US Army unit that deployed to the Kirkuk area continued the governance line of operation programs. In many cases, Soldiers refined and improved earlier governance programs and introduced new ones. For example, during the 2005-2009 timeframe, civil affairs teams began to formally train Iraqi government officials and added the rule of law as a separate line of operation. As that period closed, a joint common campaign plan with Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk placed brigades in a supporting role to the team for nonlethal operations. Iraqi leaders in Kirkuk built new courthouses, established a criminal justice council, validated the city’s police force, expanded the repatriation and relocation program, and improved overall Kurd and Arab reconciliation efforts. By late 2009, as US Forces throughout Iraq prepared to draw down their troop strength, Iraqis in Kirkuk were trained and ready to accept the responsibility of governing themselves.

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## Chapter 5. Conclusion

After US and Coalition Forces liberated Iraq in 2003, Simzad Saeed, a formerly “Arabized” Kurd, returned to Kirkuk, staked a claim, and built a new house with money provided by the Government of Iraq. “I was forced to leave after the first Gulf war [in 1991],” Saeed said, “I feel at home [now].”<sup>1</sup> Over the next several years, approximately 200,000 displaced Kurds returned to Kirkuk, seriously disrupting the social dynamics of the city. For the vast majority of these repatriated Kurds, their loyalties lay with Kurdistan, not the new Iraqi government in Baghdad.

On the south side of Kirkuk in a rundown district built on reclaimed swampland, Faisal Mathor Mohammed, an Arab and former Iraqi army officer in the Baathist regime, resided in a small house provided by Saddam’s government in 1987 during the “Arabization” initiative. “They gave me land in Kirkuk and 10,000 dinars—enough to buy a house and furnish it fully—I have lived here ever since,” Mohammed said, implying his reluctance to leave as thousands of returning Kurds lay claim to the city.<sup>2</sup>

For centuries Kurds have viewed Kirkuk as their traditional home. Arabs, Turkmen, and Assyrians have also ruled Kirkuk at various times during the city’s history. These groups compete for control of Kirkuk and ethnic tensions continuously threaten to erupt into outright violence, particularly since the discovery of vast quantities of untapped oil in the region. According to Martin Chulov, Baghdad correspondent for the *Guardian*, “all along Kirkuk has had the feel of a boom-town-in-waiting, sitting on a subterranean lake of fabulous wealth that would one day create fortunes.”<sup>3</sup> “The real conflict [in Kirkuk] is about oil,” added Sharlet Yohana, an employee of the North Oil Company, owned by the Iraqi Ministry of Oil and headquartered in Kirkuk. “Oil may well provide our future wealth and comfort, but...we will never have peace until the political problems surrounding the oil are solved,” she explained.<sup>4</sup>

Heightened ethnic tensions, Kurds moving in, Arabs moving out, everyone jockeying for their share of oil revenues—this was the situation in Kirkuk after Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group and the 173d Airborne Brigade liberated the city in 2003. Not surprisingly, these same conditions still existed six years later in Kirkuk as 2d Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division completed its tour in Iraq in December 2009. According to a February 2010 Annual Threat Assessment by the US Intelligence Community:

Arab-Kurd tensions have potential to derail Iraq’s generally positive security trajectory, including triggering conflict among Iraq’s ethno-sectarian groups. Many of the drivers of Arab-Kurd ten-

sions—disputed territories, revenue sharing, control of oil resources, and integration of Peshmerga forces—still need to be worked out, and miscalculations or misperceptions on either side risk an inadvertent escalation of violence. US involvement—both diplomatic and military—will remain critical in defusing crises in this sphere.<sup>5</sup>

Governance related issues facing the successive rotations of US Soldiers to the Kirkuk area of operations were both numerous and complex. A rich history involving the rise and fall of empires and the various migrations of diverse groups of peoples to the region were instrumental in creating Kirkuk's present-day multiethnic society. Arab-dominated Iraqi government regimes in Baghdad had marginalized Kurdish and Turkmen claims to Kirkuk for nearly a century, as demonstrated by Arabization—the ethnic displacement initiative that increased dramatically in the early 1990s. Kurds regained political control by filling the majority of local Kirkuk government positions in 2003 after US and Peshmerga forces took the city. Subsequently, ongoing efforts by US Soldiers, members of Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk, and the new Iraqi government to normalize Kirkuk by reversing Arabization, which allowed substantial numbers of Kurds to return, proved both time-consuming and complicated. By 2009, internally displaced Kurds overcrowded Kirkuk. Although the normalization process was ongoing as of 2010, building new homes and creating new private sector jobs for returning Kurds rather than simply displacing Kirkuk Arabs helped stabilize ethnic tensions in the province.<sup>6</sup>

Another troublesome Kirkuk governance issue involved the referendum to decide the future administrative status and boundaries of the province as stipulated in Article 140 of the 2005 Iraqi constitution. Originally scheduled for December 2007, the Kirkuk referendum vote was postponed twice and in mid 2011 appears to be postponed indefinitely—which precludes disrupting nationwide governance progress in Iraq. As described in Chapter 4, United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq suggested four possible options for addressing the status of Kirkuk. These options were unofficial and meant only to serve as points of departure for further discussions among Kirkuk's stakeholders. Moreover, the United Nations' report failed to address the critical issues involving disputed boundaries and Kirkuk's annexation by Iraqi Kurdistan. Kurds naturally favored Kirkuk joining the autonomous Kurdistan region, while Kirkuk's Arabs and Turkmen opposed such a move. Since Kirkuk province did not participate in the January 2009 Iraqi provincial elections, the Kirkuk referendum was neither addressed, nor included on the March 2010 parliamentary election ballot.

In the first half of 2011, the tensions continued to rise between the ethnic groups regarding the future status of the city. From 2003 onward, US Forces in Kirkuk successfully dealt with the disputed boundaries issue by calming tensions along the so-called trigger line—the new de facto demarcation line separating Iraqi Kurdistan from Iraq proper.<sup>7</sup> In describing Arab-Kurd tensions on the trigger line to the House Armed Services Committee in September 2009, Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander, General Raymond Odierno, explained;

In Iraq, many of the struggles are about power, land, and resources that is reflective in the Arab-Kurd and Government of Iraq-Kurdish Regional Government tensions. The key issues include the pending hydrocarbon law, revenue sharing, and the disputed internal boundaries in...Kirkuk [province].<sup>8</sup>

Stalelated governance issues in Kirkuk, however, should not serve as an indictment of US Army efforts to stabilize both the city and the province. On the contrary, each successive Operation IRAQI FREEDOM troop rotation to Kirkuk dealt effectively and efficiently with the numerous, thorny, governance-oriented problems they encountered. Beginning in April 2003, for example, unit representatives met regularly with the Kirkuk provincial council to help members streamline processes and develop programs that met the needs of the people. The efforts of successive brigades in mentoring the council were highly successful as indicated in a 2009 United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq's District Analysis Summary, "overall, the KPC [Kirkuk Provincial Council] has been one of the more capable councils in Iraq. Living conditions, education, access to electricity, and employment indicators in Kirkuk are relatively good compared to other provinces, despite the Baath-era destruction."<sup>9</sup>

Although hampered briefly by a lack of extensive training and experience in governance operations, Soldiers that served in Kirkuk performed admirably as "honest brokers" in the region by remaining neutral, quickly resolving conflicts, mediating disputes, and deftly preventing ever-present ethnic tensions from boiling over into violence. Despite initial objections from the Kurd-dominated Kirkuk provincial council, Soldiers also developed and implemented the Sons of Iraq program in Kirkuk. Funded initially by the US and then by the Iraqi government, the initiative put previously unemployed Sunni Arab men to work. US soldiers screened, trained, and organized Sons of Iraq recruits into military-style units that successfully integrated with traditional Iraqi security force organizations.<sup>10</sup>



Another example of the substantive role US brigades played in Kirkuk governance was the significant grassroots support Soldiers provided to the Iraqi national reconciliation program. Success of the reconciliation initiative in Kirkuk is directly attributable to the US Forces' willingness to publicize and explain the project, establish checkpoints, conduct extensive screening, process thousands of bits of biometric data, and train approved applicants. Additional examples of US Military efforts to improve governance in the city and larger province include strengthening the rule of law and establishing a criminal prosecution court; training, mentoring, and validating the Kurdish-led police force; and using Commander's Emergency Response Program funds to spur economic development and create new businesses therefore providing jobs for the unemployed citizens of Kirkuk.

Each successive US Army unit assigned to Kirkuk during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM built governance successes on its predecessor. Each unit left an enduring and positive impact on Iraqi governance in the province. From this experience six specific insights can be drawn which may prove useful to Soldiers involved in future stability and support operations: understanding overarching considerations, filling vacuums of authority and government, dealing directly with rule of law issues, mounting aggressive information operations, controlling ethnic violence and partnering with local security and government officials.

The first insight addresses general considerations. Military commanders should make every effort to ensure that their Soldiers understand the entire campaign plan. Some historians have suggested the US military units that liberated Iraq in 2003 may not have been very aware of, nor completely trained for, Phase IV operations requirements, including the governance line.<sup>11</sup> Although Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group and the 96th and the 404th Civil Affairs Battalions may not have considered stability and support operations a core mission, they nevertheless initiated a series of successful governance-oriented activities in Kirkuk immediately after they freed the city. In fact, in Kirkuk, Phase IV began before Phase III officially ended. Thus, although the adage—effective security sets the conditions for good governance—is correct for most situations, there may be instances in which combat and governance operations overlap, the later beginning before the former ends. For this reason, if campaigns call for full spectrum operations, all units should have some preparation for governance operations. As the first US Soldiers establishing a presence in Kirkuk demonstrated, initiating governance operations as early as possible is a successful, abiding, and rewarding endeavor. There

are several additional general observations that apply to all US Army rotations in Kirkuk. For example, as they collected more information about the political, social, economic, and ethnic dynamics of the city, Soldiers realized the importance of remaining neutral so that they could play the role of “honest broker.” In addition, brigade commanders empowered junior officers and noncommissioned officers to deal with local governance issues at grass root levels. Soldiers understood that everything they were doing in Kirkuk was not for themselves, but for the Iraqis. However, they further understood that governance in Kirkuk was clearly an Iraqi responsibility. As a result, Soldiers slowly and continuously assumed a more supporting, secondary, role in Kirkuk governance, as they increasingly turned over responsibilities to Iraqi government officials.

The second insight is that any vacuum in government must be filled as soon as possible. Shortly after liberating the city in April 2003, the 10th Special Forces Group Soldiers contacted several key local government officials in Kirkuk. The 96th and 404th Civil Affairs Battalion Soldiers established a centrally located Civil Military Operations Center in Kirkuk where citizens could hold public meetings and voice their complaints. Opening the Center quickly demonstrated to the Kirkuk population that the Americans were there to help. Soldiers met with local Iraqi leaders, then assembled them together to identify and address critical issues. Soldiers also asked the leaders of competing groups in Kirkuk to be patient, convincing them to honor a temporary peace agreement while their leaders identified and sorted out the critical issues. These local Kirkuk leaders then explained the city’s evolving situation to the general population. The commanders of the 10th Special Forces Group and the 173d Airborne Brigade filled the governmental vacuum in Kirkuk by serving as acting mayors of the city, while Civil Military Operations Center Soldiers established a representative emergency governing council and then organized official elections, all in less than 30 days. Although not all Iraqis in Kirkuk appreciated the advantages offered by western-style democracy, moving quickly to establish a governing council by holding local elections proved invaluable to get the city rapidly back up and running. During the summer of 2003, the 173d Airborne Brigade further enhanced governance in Kirkuk by introducing the “Team Government” concept that served as the prelude to provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq. This program partnered Soldiers with civilian experts in various disciplines to assist Iraqis in addressing the problematic issues of Kirkuk. Eventually, US Soldiers in subsequent rotations included outlying tribal and village leaders in the governance process, so that everyone in the Kirkuk province could reap the benefits of working together and cooperating with each other. Brigade

commanders also assigned liaison officers to the various Iraqi governmental agencies with whom they dealt, while Civil Affairs teams trained, mentored, evaluated, and critiqued members of the Kirkuk provincial council. By 2009, the 2d Brigade, 1st CAV began inviting Kirkuk government and political leaders to sensitive security meetings to broaden the situational perspectives of these local officials. Brigade Soldiers prepared the Kirkuk population for nationwide Iraqi elections and helped them understand the local ramifications of Iraqi government initiatives, such as the Strategic Framework and Status of Forces Agreements. Throughout their respective rotations, the US Army brigades in Kirkuk continued to identify and address the causes of instability in the region, while helping local citizens understand that their new government was working on their behalf.

The third insight is that rule of law issues were critical to good governance in Kirkuk. After liberating Kirkuk in 2003, Soldiers from the 10th Special Forces Group immediately recognized that Iraqi citizens of all ethnicities looked to the Americans to restore law and order in the city. With only limited resources of their own, the 10th Special Forces Group solicited assistance from Peshmerga forces in controlling the city until troops from the 173d Airborne Brigade arrived and established a temporary Iraqi police force. Early efforts by US Soldiers to establish and enforce the rule of law in Kirkuk were instrumental in maintaining stability in the city while local officials attended to the task of installing a new representative government. US Soldiers in Kirkuk helped Iraqis refurbish old courthouses and build new ones; they also provided guidance and security for the Iraqi judges who began traveling to the city to adjudicate legal cases. Rule of law issues gained added significance in 2008 when the 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division, upgraded the rule of law issues to its own separate line of operation in the brigade campaign plan. This helped pave the way for moving the prosecution of major crime cases to a courthouse located in downtown Kirkuk; that same courthouse provided a legal information office and a women's legal aid clinic within the city. Finally, the brigade's Soldiers assisted Iraqis in organizing an unprecedented criminal justice council meeting that brought judges, judicial officials, and Iraqi police leaders together for the first time to discuss Kirkuk criminal justice system issues. These rule of law initiatives, nurtured by the US brigades in Kirkuk, provided Iraqi solutions to Iraqi problems and helped the average citizen of Kirkuk to understand that their new government would treat them in a fair and unprejudiced manner.

The fourth insight is the importance of information operations. In April 2003, shortly after their arrival in Kirkuk, US Soldiers initiated aggressive information operations to inform citizens of US intentions and

to solicit the local population's cooperation in keeping the city peaceful. The US operations message also asked Iraqis to be patient as their new local government transitioned and assumed responsibility in the city. Soldiers organized public meetings, broadcast live radio and television call-in programs, and addressed citizen complaints. Later, Soldiers used various information methods to educate the general Iraqi public regarding the features and benefits of representative democracy. During fall 2004, the 2d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, successfully employed operations in a "get out the vote" campaign, convincing the Kirkuk population that they would be safe during the January 2005 national and governorate elections. Eventually, US brigades in Kirkuk used information operations to selectively praise and publicize the accomplishments of cooperative Iraqi government officials, and, thereby, boost the image of those officials in the eyes of the citizenry. Finally, Soldiers effectively used information operations to publicize successes with the Sons of Iraq program and to explain the ramifications of national level Iraqi initiatives, such as Strategic Framework Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement.

The fifth insight is that effectively controlling ethnic violence was a key component of the Army's governance line of operation for both the city and province of Kirkuk. Aside from basic security operations, successive US Army brigades in Kirkuk introduced a number of initiatives designed to reduce ethnic tensions among the Kurds, Arabs, and Turkmen. Although Arab and Turkmen representatives periodically boycotted provincial council meetings, they regularly cooperated and maintained a dialogue with the dominant Kurds at the prodding of US Civil Affairs Soldiers. Brigade efforts to minimize ethnic tensions in Kirkuk included Team Government's significant participation in helping Iraqis resolve repatriation, relocation, resettlement, and both property claims issues and disputes. Soldiers also helped Iraqis reconcile with nearly 1,000 Sunni Arabs, many of whom, after qualifying through screening and training, found employment with the Iraqi Civil Service Corps or the Sons of Iraq. This was another successful program that integrated disenfranchised Arabs into Kirkuk society and demonstrated to all Arabs that the government could work in their favor. Civil Military Operations section Soldiers from the 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division, worked tirelessly with the principal Kurdish and Arab political parties in Kirkuk to resolve problems encountered while implementing the December 2007 13-point provincial power sharing agreement for the region. The government of Iraq dispatched additional Iraqi Army troops to Kirkuk in 2009, because mediating disputes between these predominantly Shia Muslim Iraqi Army forces and the Kurdish Peshmerga units in the area had become an additional fulltime

responsibility for the 2d BCT, 1st CAV Soldiers. Brigade efforts to reconcile Kurd and Arab disputes kept ethnic violence to a minimum, thus enabling local Iraqi governments to run smoothly and without interruption in Kirkuk.

The final insight is the requirement for US Soldiers to work alongside the host nation government officials such as the police, local leaders, and bureaucrats. US brigades deployed to Kirkuk where they trained, mentored, and validated Iraqi police forces in the city. A stronger and more competent police force emerged—another sign for the Kirkuk population that their government was looking out for them, regardless of their ethnicity. Soldiers assisted the Iraqi police in establishing a joint coordination center (JCC), then assigned liaison officers to that headquarters, and further encouraged Peshmerga, Iraqi Army forces, and Provincial Reconstruction Team Kirkuk to provide their own staff to the center. The JCC in Kirkuk focused on protecting urban areas, but more importantly, the center provided a shortened reaction time for incidents, which de-escalated the situations and prevented simple overreactions and misunderstandings from becoming violent acts. Soldiers further assisted Iraqi political officials and bureaucrats to manage business affairs, prepare budgets, computerize operations, and attract international investments. Establishing and funding the Kirkuk micro loan program and assisting Iraqis in opening the Kirkuk Business Center, provided much-needed employment opportunities for returning Kurdish citizens and reconciled Sunni Arabs. In 2008, the 1st BCT, 10th Mountain Division, and PRT Kirkuk developed a joint common campaign plan under which the BCT became the supporting effort to the team for nonlethal lines of operations, such as governance. Additionally, since successful counterinsurgency operations rely heavily on building relationships with local populations, Colonel Paschal pointed out that future US missions requiring a governance component might favor individual Soldier rotations rather than unit rotations to maintain the continuity with host nation officials. Finally, to better address governance and other critical issues in Kirkuk, the 2d BCT, 1st CAV reorganized the brigade staff into three working groups: Iraqi Security Forces and security, economics and governance, and an investigative task force. This innovation further strengthened relationships with Iraqi officials who assumed increased governance and security responsibilities in Kirkuk.

These six insights offer guidance for US Soldiers who, in future campaigns, find themselves responsible for fostering new governments or assisting existing governments in improving their operations. As the Soldiers who served in Kirkuk discovered, however, even the most efficient

and well-resourced governance operations would not lead to inevitable success. In Kirkuk, some of the differences between the ethnic groups proved to be almost insurmountable. As of mid-2011, Iraqi government officials had not yet reached a durable settlement regarding disputed internal boundaries, power sharing, and revenue sharing in Kirkuk. Ethnic tensions will likely continue indefinitely in Kirkuk until these perplexing and contentious concerns are appropriately resolved. Despite these very real obstacles, the Soldiers who conducted governance operations in the city greatly assisted Kirkukis in establishing rule of law and a new political system in post-Saddam Iraq. Moreover, the efforts of the US Army have placed the city in a position where a peaceful settlement is at least a possibility in the near future.

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## **APPENDIX-Order of Battle**

### **American Units in Kirkuk 2003-2010**

This Order of Battle includes only “ground-owning” infantry and cavalry units. Estimates of areas of operation are generally rough, same as dates of transfer for authority between units.<sup>1</sup>

#### **The 173d ABN BDE—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 1**

- Commanded by Colonel Bill Mayville, the 173d Airborne Brigade (ABN BDE) assumed control of the Kirkuk province in mid-April 2003 from Joint Special Operations Task Force-North, elements of which had been the first U.S. forces to enter Kirkuk city. The 173d ABN BDE remained there until February 2004.
- Task Force 1-63 Armor commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ken Riddle, was airlifted into Bashur Airfield in mid-April 2003, then operated in and around Kirkuk city through October 2003.
- The 2-503 Infantry (2-503 IN) (Task Force Rock) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dom Caraccilo, airdropped onto Bashur Airfield in late March 2003. The unit moved into Kirkuk on April 10 and remained responsible for the city through January 2004, except for a few days in June when 2-503 supported 4th Infantry Division operations in Salahuddin.
- The 1-508 Infantry (1-508 IN) (Task Force Red Devil) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harry Tunnell, airdropped into Bashur Airfield in late March 2003. In early April the unit operated in the Irbil area, and in mid-April moved with the rest of the brigade to Kirkuk. From July through August, the 1-508 IN was responsible for area of operations West, the area along the highway from Kirkuk toward Bayji, with its tactical operations center in Hawija. From September through January, the 1-508 IN was responsible for area of operations South, with its tactical operations center in Tuz.

#### **The 2d BCT, 25th INF DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 2**

- Commanded by Colonel Lloyd Miles, the 2/25 Infantry Division (2/25 ID) deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior (Kirkuk Airbase) in January 2004, thereby maintaining responsibility for the province until February 2005.
- The 1-14 Infantry (1-14 IN) (Task Force Golden Dragon) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel David Miller, deployed to Forward Operating Base Bernstein, Tuz, in January 2004, where the unit

fell in on the 1-508 IN. In early April 2004, the 1-14 IN moved to Tel Afar, then in mid-April to Najaf, before returning to Forward Operating Base Bernstein in early May. In June the battalion relocated to Kirkuk Airbase (the 1-120 Armor assumed responsibility for Tuz as brigade boundaries shifted), sharing Kirkuk city with the 1-21 Infantry. In October the Infantry battalion operated out of sector in Samarra for a month. In late December the 1-14 IN left Kirkuk behind for good and relocated to Mosul.

- The 1-21 Infantry (1-21 IN) (Task Force Gimlet) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mark Dewhurst, deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in January 2004, and maintained responsibility for Kirkuk city through January 2005.
- The 1-27 Infantry (1-27 IN) (Task Force Wolfhound) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Leith, deployed to Forward Operating Base McHenry in January 2004 and maintained responsibility for the Hawija-Zaab area west of Kirkuk through January 2005.

### **The 116th CAV BCT, Idaho ARNG—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 3**

- Commanded by Brigadier General Al Gayhart, the 116th (116 CAV) deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2004, and relieved the 2/25 ID in February 2005. The brigade maintained responsibility for the city and most of the province through September 2005.
- The 1-163 Infantry (1-163 IN) (Montana Army National Guard) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Walsh, deployed to Forward Operating Base McHenry in December 2004, relieving the 1-27 IN in January. The 1-163 IN maintained responsibility for the Hawija region through October 2005.
- The 2/116 Cavalry (2/116 CAV) deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2004, relieving 1-21 IN. The 2/116 CAV maintained responsibility for Kirkuk city through October 2005.
- The 3/116 Cavalry (3/116 CAV) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dan McCabe, deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2004, then relieved the 1-14 IN of their responsibility for the region south of Kirkuk city in late December.



**The 1st BCT, 101st ABN DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM  
4-/05-07**

- The 1/101 Airborne Division (1/101 ABD) commanded by Colonel David Gray, deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in October 2005, thereby relieving the 116th BCT. The 1/101 ABD maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk brigade area of operations through August 2006.
- The 1-327 Infantry (1-327 IN) Commander Lieutenant Colonel Marc Hutton, deployed to Forward Operating Base McHenry October 2005, relieving the 1-163 IN. The 1-327 IN maintained responsibility for the Hawija area through August 2006.
- The 2-327 Infantry (2-327 IN) deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior October 2005, thereby relieving the 2/116 CAV (and possibly 3/116 CAV). The 2-327 IN maintained responsibility for Kirkuk city through August 2006.

**The 3d BCT, 25th INF DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 06-  
08**

- The 3/25 (3/25 ID) commanded by Colonel Patrick Stackpole, deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in September 2006, thereby relieving 1/101 ABN DIV. The 3/25 IN maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk brigade area of operations through early October 2007.
- The 2-27 Infantry (2-27 IN) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Drew Meyerowich, thereby relieved 1-327 IN at Forward Operating Base McHenry in September 2006; 2-27 IN maintained responsibility for the Hawija area through September 2007.
- The 2-35 Infantry (2-35 IN) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Michael Browder, thereby relieved 2-327 IN at Forward Operating Base Warrior in September 2006; they maintained responsibility for Kirkuk city through September 2007.

**The 1st BCT, 10th MTN DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM  
07-09**

- The 1/10 (1/10 MTN) commanded by Colonel David Paschal, deployed to Forward Operating Base Warrior in September 2007,

thereby relieving the 3/25 ID in October. The 1/10 MTN maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk brigade area of operations through early November 2008. (In explanation, the 1/10 MTN was scheduled to be relieved by 2/4 Infantry Division [2/4 ID], however, the 2/4 ID was assigned elsewhere in Iraq because the situation in Kirkuk was downgraded from a BCT headquarters to an “engagement brigade headquarters “ by Multi-National Corps-Iraq .)

- The 1-87 Infantry (1-87 IN) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Chris Vanek, relieved the 2-27 IN at Forward Operating Base McHenry in October 2007, then maintained responsibility for the Hawija area through September 2008.
- The 2-22 Infantry (2-22 IN) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Dennis Sullivan, relieved 2-35 IN at Forward Operating Base Warrior in October 2007, then maintained responsibility for Kirkuk city through September 2008.
- The 1-71 Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Darin Ricketts, deployed to Forward Operating Base Bernstein in October 2007, then maintained responsibility for the Tuz area through December 2007, when the squadron moved to Tikrit.

#### **The 18th ENG BDE—Gap Between BCTs**

- Commanded by Colonel Matthew Russell, the 18th Engineer Brigade deployed to Tikrit in May 2008, then relocated to Kirkuk in October thereby assuming provincial-level reconstruction and engagement responsibilities from 1/10 as an “engagement brigade headquarters.” During this time, the brigade relied on 3/25 Infantry Division in Salahuddin for direct support. The 18th Engineers remained in Kirkuk through January 2009, when Multi-National Corps-Iraq again deployed a BCT headquarters to the province.
- The 1-67 Armor (1-67 AR) (from 2/4 Infantry Division) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth Casey, deployed to Iraq in September 2008, and was attached to the 18th Engineer Brigade in Mosul as the brigade’s one maneuver battalion. The unit operated in the Kirkuk area of operations until February 2009, when it moved to Mosul.

## **The 2d BCT, 1st CAV DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 08-10**

- Colonel Ryan Gonsalves of 2/1 Cavalry Division (2/1 CAV) relieved the 18th Engineer Brigade at Forward Operating Base Warrior in February 2009. His unit maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk brigade area of operations until December 2009.
- The 1-8 Cavalry (1-8 CAV) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel David Lesperance, deployed to the Hawija region in February 2009, and maintained responsibility for the area until December 2009.
- The 4-9 Cavalry (4-9 CAV) commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Andy Shoffner, relieved the 1-67 AR at Forward Operating Base Warrior in February 2009, then they maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk region through November 2009.

## **The 1st BCT, 1st ARMD DIV—Operation IRAQI FREEDOM 09-11**

- Commanded by Colonel Larry Swift, the 1/1 Armored Division (1/1 AD) relieved the 2/1 Cavalry Division at Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2009. One of the last BCTs (rather than Advisory and Assistance Brigades) to deploy to Iraq, his unit maintained responsibility for the Kirkuk brigade area of operations.
- The 1-30 Infantry (1-30 IN) (from the 2/3 Infantry Division), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Cormier, relieved the 4-9 CAV at Forward Operating Base Warrior in December 2009, thereby maintaining responsibility for the Kirkuk region.
- The 1-37 Armor (1-37 AR), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Geoffrey Catlett, relieved the 1-8 CAV in the Hawija region in December 2009.

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### **Notes**

1. Wesley Morgan, “American Units in Kirkuk, 2003-2010,” Institute for the Study of War, 2 January 2010, 1-2; John McGrath, “US Forces in Kirkuk,” US Army Combat Studies Institute, 19 January 2010, 1.







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