



Iraqi Security Forces.

AN IRAQ CENTER FOR THE

Professional Military Ethic

By COL (Ret.) Michael E. Haith '75

In January 2005, after serving on LTG Petraeus' staff in Baghdad as Senior Coalition Military Advisor to the Iraqi Assistant Chief of Staff for Training, I mentioned that if he ever needed me again, to call. I assumed he would forget. He did not. On 13 May 2005, while still Commanding General of the Multinational Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I), LTG Petraeus '74 called me at home shortly after my retirement from the Army. I was scheduled to start my civilian job with Whitney, Bradley, and Brown, Inc. (WBB) in two days, but he asked me to consider returning to active duty to establish an Iraqi ethics and leadership center.

Long before the Iraqi Study Group began its examination of our involvement in Iraq, LTG Petraeus believed that ultimate success depended on professionalizing the ISF, instilling a sense of professionalism and developing values-based leaders.



LTG Martin Dempsey '74, CG, Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq, in December 2005 with the author, COL (Ret.) Michael E. Haith '75.



LTC Ken McCreary, initial Deputy Director, Iraqi Center for Military Values, Principles, and Leadership.



LTG Daham Radhi al-Asal speaks to a local media representative about the center's mission. Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Lucia Newman.

Professionalizing the Iraqi security forces required they be:

- **dedicated to the peaceful transition of power within the framework of the Iraqi Constitution.**
- **committed to Human Rights and the Rule of Law.**
- **representative of the rich and diverse ethnic and religious fabric of the nation.**
- **commanded by leaders of character and integrity who place the interests of Iraq first and reject political and sectarian influences in their decision-making.**

LTG Petraeus asked me to return because I had served as Director of the William E. Simon Center for the Professional Military Ethic (SCPME) at West Point from 1999–2004. His instructions to me were clear and direct: He wanted me to establish an Iraqi CPME. The enormity of this task was intimidating. It was more than simply establishing an ethics and leadership center or developing curricula. The task required transforming the Iraqi military. Preparations for this project therefore required a thorough review of the current research into the concept of professions and organizational transformation. The Simon Center, participated in two projects relevant to the mission; the Army Chief of Staff-directed task to define Officership and integrate this concept into leadership doctrine at all levels of the Officer Education System, and the Joint Staff sponsored tri-Service Academy project to rewrite the S.L.A. Marshal's classic *The Armed Forces Officer* (led by the Simon Center's Professor of Officership, Dr. Richard Swain).

Success on this enormous task also required knowledge of the dimensions of national culture, and specifically, Arabic, Iraqi, and

Islamic culture. Selected sections of Geert Hofstede's work on cross-cultural comparison, value analysis, work motivations, and organizational dynamics were invaluable as was work by U.S. scholars on Arab and Islamic concepts of leadership, *Just War* and *Jihad*, including Sohail Hashmi of Mt. Holyoke College and John Kelsay at Florida State University. These preparations hardly qualified me to take on this important work, but the mission would not wait for me to get smarter. My primary qualification was that I was willing to go. As a civilian contractor, I arrived in Baghdad's Green Zone in late October 2005 for my second tour in Iraq in less than a year.

By then, LTG Martin Dempsey '74 was in command of MNSTC-I, but he concurred with LTG Petraeus on the need to professionalize the ISF; "In the beginning . . . we concentrated on the quantity of the Iraqi Army; now we must focus on its quality." Adding this emphasis to his supporting campaign plan, he included the line of operations "Develop Professional Iraqi Security Forces" to differentiate this effort from "Develop Competent Iraqi Security Forces."

He tasked me to:

- assess the Iraqi professional military ethos.
- make recommendations on establishing an Iraqi leadership and ethics center.
- develop values-based ethics leadership curriculum for Iraqi trainers to deliver to Iraqi officers and NCOs from division to battalion level.
- integrate this curricula into all levels of the officer and NCO education system.

Assessing the professional military ethos of the Iraq Joint Forces required administering surveys to Iraqi and Coalition leaders, conducting interviews with senior Iraqi military and civilian leaders, and talking with Iraqi and Coalition officer and NCO focus groups. A profession develops standards of competency and ethical behavior that guide members of the profession in the conduct of their duties. Competency and ethical standards of conduct are interrelated and dependent elements that cannot be separated if the profession is to maintain its integrity. Similarly, an organization's professional ethic consists of those technical (and tactical) competency standards and the shared values, attitudes, and beliefs that form the standards that guide the ethical conduct of its members. The objective of the assessment was to determine the existing Iraqi Professional Military Ethic, the extent to which Iraqi leaders know and understand the standards of the profession, and, finally, determine if they believe in and adhere to these standards.

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two values: loyalty and obedience to the rule of Saddam. Such an environment produced a survivalist and self-serving culture.

There were a number of practical obstacles: Administering a survey to a representative and statistically significant sample of Iraqi military and civilian leaders and their Coalition advisors was problematic in a time of war. More importantly, basing an assessment on the values and standards common to most Western military organizations would not produce useful results. The ethical practices and values of the Iraqi culture, influenced heavily by the Islamic religion, and further complicated by the Shia and Sunni division, all wrapped within the complex nature of the Arabic language, required assessment instruments that accurately translated and conveyed complicated concepts.

At this critical stage, I developed a close relationship with MG Mohammed Nqshbande, the commanding general designee of the Iraqi Training and Doctrine Command. A Kurd who mastered Arabic and English in addition

to his native language, he is a soldier-scholar in the classic sense, having earned a Ph.D. in strategic studies. He somehow survived in Saddam's regime to serve as both a division and corps chief of staff and commandant of the Iraqi War College before retiring, disillusioned by the rule of Saddam. Nqshbande embraced the importance of this effort and eagerly read many English language sources. He was especially enamored with the U.S. Army concept of Officership that establishes a framework for the officer's four interrelated identities (warrior, servant of the nation, member of a profession, and leader of character). This framework serves as the foundation of the current Cadet Leader Development Program at West Point and also is integrated into the latest version of the Army's FM 6-22, *Army Leadership*.¹

We met frequently to discuss first how best to conduct the assessment and later to introduce and integrate the concept of the professional military ethic into the training and education of the officer and NCO Corps

and conducted extensive discussions on the project with senior Iraqi officials including then Minister of Defense Sa'doun Al-Dulaimi and current Commanding General of the IJF, GEN Babakir Zebari, who signed a directive to his subordinate commanders to assist my efforts. Before conducting the assessment, I also conducted pilot tests, used double translations, and spoke with Iraqi officers and NCOs to ensure language accuracy and eliminate cultural biases.

After administering nearly a thousand surveys, and conducting scores of interviews and focus groups, I analyzed the data using unique on-line assessment tools developed by my employer, Whitney, Bradley and Brown, Inc. The assessment effort profiled Iraqi core values and beliefs; accountability and responsibility, trust, information sharing, just war theory, loyalties, officer and NCO relationships, and ethical climate. The results will not surprise anyone who follows the problems plaguing Iraq's government and security forces.

While Iraqi officers and NCOs basically understand professional military values:

- **the IJF professional military ethos is not documented, understood, or internalized.**
- **officers and NCOs profess belief in a values-based military, but adherence is uneven.**
- **the IJF is built more on rigid discipline rather than on mutual trust.**
- **the IJF is not organizationally or individually reflective or self critical.**
- **The IJF officer corps is skeptical of Western models of officer-NCO relationships.**
- **the IJF distrusts the Ministry of Defense civilian leadership and does not civil military-relations or the role of the military in a democracy.**
- **understanding of, and compliance with, Human Rights/Law of War is uneven across all ranks.**

The current military culture and ethical climate within the IJF serve as barriers to establishing and internalizing a strong and vibrant professional military ethos and could diminish the competence and effectiveness of the IJF. The results support the conclusions of others who observed the limited military effectiveness of Arab armies in general after 1945.² It also supports one of the key findings

of a long-forgotten 1970 U.S. Army War College professionalism study of our own officer corps directed by then Chief of Staff, GEN Creighton Abrams:

"Ethical behavior and military competence . . . are closely interrelated and inadequate performance in one area contributes to inadequate performance in the other. This demonstrates the importance of professional ethics to long-range mission accomplishment."

LTG Dempsey approved the recommendations and said, "OK, Mike. Do it." As a one-man contractor team, I controlled nothing nor could I direct anyone to help me "do it." Fortunately, he provided a planning team, and within a week we developed the center's mission and tasks, assigned staff responsibilities, and allocated resources. After several site visits, we selected Ar Rustamiyah in southeast Baghdad as the temporary location for the center, collo-

cated with the principle Iraqi Military Academy and Joint Staff College.

Because the word “ethics” does not

translate well into Arabic, the Iraqis officially named it the Center for Professional Military Values, Principles, and Leadership (CMVPL) with the following mission:

Develop, implement, monitor, and assess training and education systems and programs within the armed forces in order to assist in developing a professional Iraqi Joint Force that is ethically based, competently led, loyal to the principles of the constitution, and accountable to the civilian leadership and people of Iraq.

Within a few weeks, LTC Ken McCreary (USAR) joined me as Coalition Deputy Director. The center’s organization included several temporary coalition “mentors” (a total of 14 mostly civilian contractors) to assist the Iraqi director and staff in establishing and operating the center and developing doctrine and curricula. More than anyone, LTC McCreary deserves the credit for resourcing and establishing the center’s facilities and supporting staff. By the end of April 2006, the center was ready to receive the Iraqi and Coalition contractor staff.

In my remaining weeks in Iraq, I concentrated on developing and integrating curricula into the officer and NCO education systems. This effort required more than simply teaching ethics. It required teaching a range of topics necessary to transform the organizational culture and professional ethos of the IJF, including Military Leadership, Profession of Arms, Officership/The Professional NCO, Professional Military Ethics, the Law of Armed Conflict, and the Role of the Military in a Democratic Iraq. We developed these broad subject areas into blocks of instruction tailored to the specific officer and NCO audience. The Experiential Learning Model, currently used by the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (CGSC), prepared the faculty and drove curriculum design. CGSC’s Center for Army Leadership also provided a mobile training team in late May 2006 to certify our contractor staff as instructors and provide leadership instruction and lesson materials.

The operational concept tasked the Iraqi CMVPL to develop curricula for export to IJF units as well as to schools and training centers

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and other Iraqi faculty and cadre to present the material to Iraqi students. To jump-start transformation, LTG Dempsey directed we take the program out to Iraqi units and include Coalition MiTTs. More presentation than seminar and small group discussion, it was an important first step in planting seeds of professionalism in the IJF.

Because the leadership example provided by Coalition MiTTs and Coalition partner units was the strongest influence on the IJF, the CMVPL staff presented the instruction to them as well, emphasizing their responsibility for professionally developing their Iraqi counterparts beyond mere technical and tactical training. This effort, currently conducted at the Phoenix Academy at the Tadj training base north of Baghdad, is among the most popular, indicating that MiTT members want to discuss how best to bring a sense of professionalism and selfless service to the units they advise. There are plans to introduce similar instruction to Iraqi and coalition unit commanders who attend the coalition-run Counterinsurgency (COIN) Academy, also in Tadj.

CMVPL teams delivered instruction to and conducted instructor development for the faculty and cadre at the Iraqi military academies at Rustamayah, Qualachlon, and Zahko, and the regional training centers at Kirkush and Tadj. The center also delivered instruction to the Iraqi Military Inspector General School and developed a three-week module entitled Military Professionalism and Leadership for the junior staff course. Reaction was so positive that there are plans to develop a similar course tailored to the senior staff college. Other requests for assistance arrive weekly.

Progress also came with disappointments. It took some time for Iraqi staff to arrive, and the center still is understaffed. While the operational concept tasks the Iraqi staff to develop the faculty and cadre at schools and training centers, the contractor staff assumed that role, as well as the curriculum and doctrine development effort, while awaiting the arrival of more Iraqi staff members. Publicly, senior leaders express enthusiastic support, but privately they express a preference for more tactical training and

better equipment. Finally, an official opening ceremony occurred in July 2006, and the Minister of

Defense approved the center’s official charter in August. Only recently did the Minister of Defense identify a permanent Iraqi director.

Today, CMVPL is collocated in the International Zone with its parent headquarters, the Iraqi Training and Doctrine Command, to facilitate assignment of an Iraqi Staff, but its future remains in doubt. NATO is to assume mentorship of the center from MNSTC-I in mid-2007. If no more Iraqi staff members materialize, the center likely will cease operation. This effort is a snapshot of the larger effort to achieve U.S. objectives in the region, marked by good intentions; brave and dedicated service; and the slow, frustrating pace of progress common when two different cultures work along parallel, but not necessarily identical, paths. In 2007, as the U.S. enters perhaps the most critical phase of our efforts in Iraq, a small but dedicated team of U.S. military personnel and contractors continues its attempt to establish the Iraqi CPME as a positive force for change in Iraq. Success will depend as much on the IJF embracing a common sense of purpose and profession as it does on improved tactical competence. ■

Notes:

1. *MGNqshbande adopted the USMA concept of Officership as a proposed statement of the Iraqi Professional Military Ethic for integration into the doctrine and education of Iraqi officers. This statement is an adapted version of a 2004 U. S. Officership Concept Paper written by members of the USMA staff and faculty. This adaptation appeared as an article in both the May-June 2006 English and Arabic editions of Military Review, pp. 52–58 (English) and can be found at <<http://usac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview.index.asp>>.*
2. *Norvell B. DeAkine, “Why Arabs Lose Wars.” The Middle East Forum (December 1999). Available at <<http://www.meforum.org/article441>>. Kenneth M. Pollack, “The Influence of Arab Culture on Arab Military Effectiveness” (PhD. dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1996).*