

Dispatch 6 : For the Love of Country
Thursday, March 23, 2006



Transitioning - turning things over to the Iraqis - is a focus point of coalition forces in-country. It's their country, and if democracy is ever going to firmly take root here, then it's up to the Iraqis to determine their own fate.

Establishing and maintaining law and order is necessary in any organized society, and accomplishing that in Iraq is vital. It's a monumental task, but slowly and surely it is happening across the board. Within the 3/320 FA area of operations (AO), and with the assistance and patient guidance of the battalion's cadre of dedicated soldiers, the Iraqi Police (IP) are hard at it.

Being on the job - being a cop - isn't easy. It's a risky business at best. And being a member of the IP is an open invitation to personal danger and retribution. The police department in Al Sequor is typical of many of the nation's law enforcement departments. They're short on manpower and resources. The ministry that oversees the IP assigns resources to large urban areas first. Smaller towns and villages in outlying areas get whatever is left.

Al Sequor is a small and squalid area located near Tikrit. Tikrit is the hub for many of the ministry offices. It houses 4th IA (Iraqi Army) Division Headquarters and various other bureaucratic entities. Universal to bloated bureaucrats all over the world is the need to keep their individual fiefdoms afloat. That takes cash. Bureaucrats need office furniture, computers, copiers and other accoutrements to maintain appearances of actually getting something done. While the bureaucrats wring their hands, dawdle over coffee and sometimes manage to make a decision, the legitimate needs of critical departments and personnel take second place. Dollars are diverted to the fat cats instead of going where they should. (Sound familiar?)

Like I said, being on the job in Iraq isn't easy. Members of the Al Sequor PD try and do their job without adequate armament. They are outnumbered and outgunned by the bad guys. Unlike our cops back home, they're unable to be proactive in their communities. That's because more often than not, they don't have enough money to purchase fuel for their vehicles. So they're forced to react instead of being able to get out in front of things. That must really suck.

Despite all that, a few good men try to do their best for their community and their country. Al

Sequor police officers try to keep their ears to the ground, being as vigilant as possible through their connections with tribal leaders and members about the arrival and movement of strangers in the area.

They don't buy it when someone claims to be part of the Jihad. They flat-out call them liars, maintaining it isn't a Jihad when violence isn't directed against coalition forces or the IA, but against innocent civilians instead.

Unlike three years ago when the invasion began, jobs are starting to become available. And citizens are starting to have the means to actually purchase basic necessities. Food is more available than it was before. The cops in Al Sequor understand that foreign investment is ultimately the lifeblood of the new Iraq and they understand how squeamish those investors are. Recurring violence will scare them, keep them away. If that happens, Iraqis will be right back where they started.

Iraqis don't want to live like that again.

So even though police officers and their families are often targeted, they do the job. Cops in Al Sequor are concerned about their community. They love their country. Like police officers in the U.S., they want to protect their families ... and do what they can to help bring peace to Iraq.

They're grateful for the assistance they receive from the 3/320 FA, and they're appreciative of the U.S. and its citizens for contributing to the demise of Saddam and his crew of henchmen. But like cops everywhere, they are pragmatic. They know that in the long run it's really up to them.

In the face of it all, they do what they do, the best they can. With that kind of determination, I believe they'll make it.

