
Genesis of the New Iraqi Air Force: Security Assistance in Action

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Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF) continue to be the front lines in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). As the Commander in Chief and senior Department of Defense (DoD) officials have stated on numerous occasions, the GWOT is unlike any other war we have fought in the past, providing new challenges virtually daily against a cunning and ruthless enemy. One of these challenges is how, in the absence of a permanent Iraqi government and an established security assistance relationship, to begin rebuilding Iraq's Air Force.

The answer to that challenge began to emerge in January 2005, when the USAF transferred three C-130 aircraft to Iraq. This historic transfer was executed with extraordinary speed and met vital U.S. government goals. It demonstrated how security assistance has, and under the right circumstances can, meet the time-critical needs of our partners around the globe. The success of this transfer appears likely to form the basis for the expansion of traditional security assistance programs in Iraq, programs that could pay even greater dividends.

Background

Following the success of OIF in April 2003, it seemed as though the obvious demands for creating Iraqi police, border, and security forces, largely a U.S. Army and Marine Corps responsibility, were to dominate the agenda for some time. As often happens in a dynamic and changing environment, politico-military challenges can rapidly turn into opportunities that demand immediate action.

The rebirth of Iraq's airlift squadron emerged from the Iraqi political situation in the summer and fall of 2004. The Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), under the leadership of Ambassador Paul Bremer stood down on 29 June 2004, handing sovereignty to the new Iraqi Interim Government (IIG) led by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, who became the first Iraqi head of government since Saddam Hussein became president in 1979. The new government was on a timeline to hold the nation's first free elections on 30 January 2005, with the eyes of the world closely monitoring events, particularly the violent insurgency fueled by native and foreign extremist elements. The elections were to be a historic moment in the history of Iraq and a critical metric of coalition progress toward a more stable and peaceful Middle East.

In mid-October 2004, the IIG made a request to senior U.S. government leaders for air transport assets, preferably C-130 aircraft, to be used as executive transport for Mr. Allawi. The U.S. and its coalition partners had provided airlift support to the IIG head-of-state in the prior months, but the real desire was for an Iraqi-owned aircraft marked with Iraqi colors. The IIG was struggling to establish its legitimacy to the Iraqi people and needed to demonstrate a measure of independence from the coalition, especially leading up to the most important elections in the nation's history. The timeline was ambitious; Iraq wanted the aircraft as soon as possible, preferably early in January 2005. The request made its way through the Office of the Secretary of Defense channels to the Joint Staff and then to the Deputy Under Secretary of the Air Force for International Affairs (SAF/IA) for action.

The mission was to provide the IIG with fully operational C-130 aircraft, properly configured for operations in a combat environment and equipped with the appropriate spare parts, support, maintenance, and training package to sustain operations, all in less than ninety days. It became immediately apparent to SAF/IA and other key U.S. Air Force (USAF) and Department of Defense agencies and offices that this challenge could not be met with a normal foreign military sales (FMS) case. There was no time for the "business as usual" approach, no time for paradigm paralysis, this program required a full-court-press by all interagency stakeholders to deliver aircraft quickly and in

the proper configuration, and it had to move rapidly from planning to implementation. How do you stand up a C-130 mission for a new and emerging Air Force that has never flown the aircraft, in a country struggling to get on its feet battling a rampant insurgency, with no formal security assistance relationship or recent history or knowledge of foreign military sales?

SAF/IA formed a working group in early November 2004 comprising key USAF agencies to tackle the task. Early members of the C-130 transfer team included the following representatives:

- AF/XOOC;
- Logistics, Legal, Training, Programming, and Plans Communities; and
- Air Force Security Assistance Center (AFSAC).

Quickly joining the effort were C-130 experts from the:

- Air Mobility Command (AMC);
- Warner Robins Air Logistics Center (WR-ALC);
- Air Force Security Assistance Training Squadron (AFSAT); and
- Air Education and Training Command's International Affairs Office.

The team worked closely with U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and CENTAF leadership, particularly the deployed Director of Mobility Forces (DIRMOBFOR) in the CENTCOM AOR and the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq (MNSTC-I).

SAF/IA quickly determined that communication among all stakeholders was vital to success. Early in the planning process, SAF/IA staff members initiated weekly teleconferences to help maintain program focus, adjust to changing scenarios, and answer non-stop questions. Myriad questions covering a broad spectrum of issues were raised, researched, answered, crosschecked, and then readdressed. Most significant of the challenges were sourcing the aircraft, funding and sustaining the mission, building the FMS case for a customer with no C-130 infrastructure or experience, training of both aircrews and maintainers, English language training, in-country support of the mission, and oversight until such time as the Iraqis were able to completely run the operation. Interagency cooperation amongst key stakeholders, particularly Defense Security Cooperation Agency's Country Program Director for Iraq, representatives from Joint Staff J-4; and officials from Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) (Policy) and the Department of State was absolutely critical to ensure that the multiplicity of details were addressed.

Sourcing and Delivering the Aircraft

The USAF determined that three C-130E aircraft could be provided to Iraq via the excess defense articles (EDA) program. These aircraft, older 1962 and 1963 models, were made available for transfer to Iraq as part of the planned drawdown of the USAF's C-130E fleet. All aircraft were in serviceable condition and equipped with appropriate defensive systems for operating in a combat environment. HQ AMC coordinated preparation of the aircraft for delivery to Iraq, and the aircraft were flown into the AOR on an AMC directed operational mission.

Funding

One of the biggest challenges was supporting and sustaining the three C-130s once they were delivered to Iraq. Although EDA C-130s were available, the USAF had virtually no EDA spare parts or support equipment for C-130s available. Neither the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MOD) nor the Iraqi Air Force had the resources necessary to facilitate purchasing the spare parts, support, and training packages required to ensure mission success. In addition, executing and funding a traditional FMS support case was not feasible in the short time available, especially when neither Iraqi national funds nor foreign military financing (FMF) were available to fund it.

Resolving these dilemmas, which otherwise would have jeopardized the C-130 transfer, required extensive USAF and interagency coordination. The solution was to find an available U.S. funding source to pay for interim mission support, covering a ninety-day period beginning when the aircraft were delivered and ending when the USAF completed, and Iraq accepted, a follow-on FMS support

case. MNSTC-I leadership agreed to provide the funding bridge necessary to train and equip Iraqi armed forces needed to facilitate the stand up of the C-130 mission. The government of Iraq (GOI) was then expected to fund a two-year FMS sustainment case, beginning in April 2005, to ensure long-term mission success.

Case Development

AFSAC, AFSAT, and the C-130 systems program office at WR-ALC worked tirelessly to design and rapidly build both the pseudo FMS case and follow-on two-year FMS sustainment case. Representatives from AFSAC, AFSAT, and WR-ALC determined what the cases should contain, line values, provisos, and other details. Processes that normally take four months or longer were accomplished in two to three weeks.

Classified Equipment Disclosure Issues

The transfer of C-130 aircraft to Iraq required a disclosure of U.S. classified military information (CMI) to support an integrated infrared defensive self-protection system. Authority to release U.S. CMI must be authorized or delegated by *National Disclosure Policy* to a respective military service. If the USAF, or any military service, does not possess the necessary disclosure authority, it must engage the inter-agency process for an *Exception to National Disclosure Policy* (ENDP).

To obtain the necessary release authority, the USAF, led by SAF/IA as the Air Force principle disclosure authority, petitioned the National Disclosure Policy process for an ENDP to provide U.S. CMI to the IIG. This step was a critical path to ensure that the newly transferred Iraqi C-130 aircraft met the requirements for combined U.S. and Iraqi operations in a combat environment.

A number of conditions must be satisfied before a representative of the U.S. government can release classified military information to a foreign government. First, any transfer of U.S. CMI must be accomplished via government-to-government channels. Second, the recipient government must afford U.S. CMI the same degree of security protection given to it by the U.S., to include no third-party transfer of the information without U.S. government approval. Due to the interim nature of the Iraqi government and other challenges in January 2005, applicable safe-guards were created to protect U.S. CMI while Iraq builds the governmental institutions necessary to meet the required conditions over the long term.

The process for obtaining exceptions to *National Disclosure Policy* is very deliberate, but remains responsive to special requirements similar to those generated to support the transfer of C-130 aircraft to Iraq. Disclosure of U.S. CMI is an essential component to increasing inter-operability with our allies and partners throughout the world, and in the case of Iraq, provided a unique opportunity to establish a special military-to-military relationship with the new Iraqi Air Force.

Training

The C-130 aircraft had never been a part of the Iraqi Air Force inventory, so no Iraqi aviators or maintainers had any prior C-130 experience. No training infrastructure (classrooms, aircrew training devices, training materials) existed in Iraq, and no Iraqi students were programmed into any USAF C-130 training programs. Fortunately, the Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) had reached an earlier agreement during the CPA's tenure to provide some initial qualification training to a small number of Iraqi aircrews and maintenance personnel. The RJAF flies the C-130H model and did a superb job training the initial Iraqi Air Force aircrews and maintainers in the C-130. This provided the Iraqi Air Force the critical jump start they needed for familiarization with the aircraft.

The AFSAT C-130 program manager took on the enormous task of building an Iraqi training program from scratch in a matter of a few short weeks. Working with headquarters AMC Operations and Training Division, as well as with Lockheed Martin Simulation Training and Support, the team rapidly designed a unique C-130H to C-130E differences course to train eight Iraqi Air Force crews. Additionally, this team put all training support contracts in place and helped to arrange the transportation and support of the Iraqi students to Little Rock Air Force Base for two weeks of aircrew simulator and classroom training that began in February 2005. A USAF maintenance training team

was also identified and established at the final C-130 beddown location in Iraq to provide Iraqi Air Force maintenance personnel these critical skills.

English language proficiency among the Iraqis has proven to be one of the biggest challenges the training community faces and will continue to be a challenge for years to come. Under Saddam Hussein's regime, English was not emphasized in Iraqi schools. Although many Iraqi aircrews had reasonable English abilities, Iraqi Air Force maintainers often had little or no English language knowledge. Consequently AFSAT worked with the Defense Language Institute (DLI) to send a team to Iraq to teach the C-130 maintenance personnel English, and this training is proving to be quite valuable. These English instructors designed a course for the Iraqis tailored to their individual comprehension levels and coordinated with their daily C-130 maintenance training schedules.

Concept of Operations

While activity was underway stateside to stand up the mission in short order, the Director of Mobility Forces, Brigadier General Mark Zamzow, USAF was leading efforts in the AOR to ensure success when the aircraft arrived. Working with U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and CENTAF senior leadership, a bed down location for the Iraqi C-130E aircraft was identified and a USAF C-130E unit was deployed there as part of a previously determined requirement. Co-locating USAF and Iraqi C-130 units would prove essential in providing the USAF oversight and expertise needed to ensure safe operations. To augment the deployed USAF C-130 unit, CENTAF requested a group of instructor-qualified USAF C-130 aircrew and maintenance personnel to deploy to Iraq in support of the C-130E transfer mission. The group, dubbed the Advisory Support Team (AST), assists the Iraqis in honing their operational skills. They coach and mentor the Iraqi C-130 personnel daily while striving to grow our very young military-to-military relationship with the new Iraqi Air Force. It is important to note that all USAF members of the AST were volunteers to deploy into Iraq and serve in this unique, historic capacity. This is a great credit to the culture of the U.S. Air Force.

Challenges Ahead

Transfer of C-130s to Iraq represented only the beginning of what we hope will be a long and cooperative USAF-Iraqi Air Force relationship. As the U.S. government helps Iraq to take responsibility for its own security, the same expectation applies for Iraqi support of its C-130s. Accordingly, Iraq's acceptance of a \$109M follow-on, Iraq-funded C-130 support case in April 2005, the first FMS case ever accepted by Iraq—was cause for optimism. Unfortunately, as the Iraqi insurgency has reduced Iraqi oil exports and economic activity, the Iraqi government has been unable to fund the new case, leaving the case as the only funding source supporting the mission. This unforeseen situation is requiring the USAF to stretch the case, originally designed for ninety days of support, to last as long as possible. Additionally, logistics support for these three aircraft is placing a burden on the USAF's C-130 supply system as Iraq's delay in funding the sustainment case continues. These are just some examples of the issues continuing to challenge the USAF security assistance community, and the community has so far responded with the same skill and speed with which it addressed the original Iraqi case.

Despite these funding challenges, MNSTC-I and the Iraqis have been so impressed by the full-spectrum support the USAF has provided to the C-130 program via the FMS process that they have expressed interest in opening more FMS cases supporting other Iraqi Air Force aircraft. By responsively supporting all aspects of aircraft operations and sustainment, FMS has proven itself superior in Iraq to commercial alternatives. Aside from the tremendous professional and personal relationships that grew between Iraqi and USAF personnel, encouraging the Iraqi Air Force to open more FMS cases in the future is one of the most important benefits of the C-130 transfer.

Lessons Learned

Although many aspects of the Iraq C-130 transfer were unique, this case still provides lessons that may be applied to future cases.

- The value of top-level support: Once the Joint Staff asked the USAF to do whatever it took to support Iraq's request for airlifters, senior USAF leaders gave the project top priority, freeing people and resources to do the mission and meet the suspense. Support from the combatant command and the interagency group was equally strong, enabling the rapid identification of funds for spares, support, and training. When time is short and problems are unique, there is no substitute for being the top priority on everyone's list.

- Division of labor: Meeting numerous challenges on a tight timeline required simultaneous efforts by multiple USAF organizations. AF/XP led the sourcing of aircraft; AF/IL led the sourcing of spares; AFSAC and AFSAT put the pseudo FMS case together; AMC prepared and moved the aircraft; CENTAF deployed the needed personnel and developed the CONOPS; and many others contributed to the project. The parallel efforts of a USAF-wide team of experts combined to make the C-130 transfer successful.

- Open two-way communications: Many times during this project, problems were identified that put the timeline at risk. By allowing all concerned organizations to identify issues, freely proposing and vetting a variety of solutions, and clearly disseminating approved responses, the team did not allow difficulties to derail its efforts.

- SAF/IA as orchestrator: It took efforts across the USAF to make the C-130 transfer work, but only SAF/IA was in a position to coordinate those efforts. No other USAF organization combined the advantages of access to the interagency and USAF senior leaders, experience coordinating security assistance programs, contacts within the combatant command and MAJCOMs, politico-military expertise, and in-house know-how with respect to weapon systems, policy, and foreign disclosure. Additionally, no other USAF organization was in a position to coordinate the numerous parallel planning efforts described already.

Summary

On 14 January 2005, the USAF successfully transferred three C-130E aircraft to the IIG one day after implementing the accompanying FMS support case, and one day prior to the Joint Staff's deadline. The transfer ceremony culminated an intense three months of hard work by a group of USAF and interagency professionals who maintained focus on the task and were committed to mission success. This transfer is a vivid example of the intersection of political and military affairs and the role of security assistance in support of U.S. national objectives. When called upon to respond, the defense security cooperation community can achieve superb results that will reap dividends for years to come.

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