

## **Conducting Information Dissemination Operations in an Advise and Assist Brigade**

The days of United States Forces disseminating a message via radio, loudspeaker, face to face, TV or handbill are slowly coming to an end in Iraq. The requirement to win the trust and confidence of the local populace, however, still exists. To this end, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) have increasingly incorporated non-lethal activities, which are designed to positively influence the population, into their planning and execution of daily operations.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Advise and Assist Brigade (AAB) of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division began its deployment to Ninewa province in October 2009. During the brigade's first six months of the deployment, the unit had a Tactical Psychological Operations detachment (now known as a Tactical Military Information Support Detachment) and one Tactical Military Information Support Team (TMIST) with each of the brigade's five maneuver units. With the reduction of forces in May 2010, the brigade was reduced to one four-man TMIST for its entire area of operations (AO). In Ninewa province, this remaining TMIST was located at the brigade headquarters with its primary focus on developing the ISF Information Dissemination Operations (IDO) program throughout the province.

The TMIST developed and conducted a regular series of IDO classes for our ISF partners. This two-week course focused on training selected Iraqi Army, Federal Police, and Iraqi Police Officers in IDO. The course produced officers trained on how to effectively influence local nationals through print, audio, and visual products in accordance with their commander's intent. The first phase of the course introduced the ISF Officers to the concept of IO and the process to analyze target-audience conditions and vulnerabilities. The IDO students then learned how to effectively choose the right message and medium to influence or inform the target audience to commit desired actions in accordance with IO objectives. The second phase of the course taught the students how to design the product, conduct pre-testing, gather measures of effectiveness, and disseminate the finished product. Phase three of the course explained how to conduct face to face interaction with local nationals, IDO planning tools and process, and proper troop-leading procedures. Phase four included advance product designing tools, how to maintain IO situational awareness in the operational environment (OE), and how to provide an IDO capabilities brief to a commander.

Implementing a relatively new concept created drawbacks. In order to prevent or mitigate potential actions from the local populace or to counter potential propaganda from the enemy, it was sometimes necessary to "strike while the iron was hot." Proactive IO was not something that the ISF had historically conducted in Ninewa. Advising and assisting the ISF IDO to "strike" with non-lethal effort during this critical period in order to limit impacts on the OE from potential verbal or physical backlash from the local populace or violent extremist networks required significant interaction and oversight by the U.S. military IO/Military

Information Support Operations (MISO). Another drawback was the need for additional or refresher training based on the turnover of ISF IDO graduates or the lack of utilization of IDO skills by some of our ISF partners. Our solution to mitigate the drawbacks was for the U.S. Battalion Tactical IOs to maintain biweekly contact with the ISF IDO graduates in their respective AOs and to confirm if and how they were applying IDO to their ISF Commander's lethal fight.

With the loss of separate TMISTs throughout the brigade AO, battalion level tactical IOs were required to have a good understanding of the curriculum and concepts taught in the brigade ISF IDO program in order to continue the sustainment of ISF IDO skills after graduation. This was a new concept for the tactical IOs due to the fact that IDO training is not part of the curriculum for the Tactical IO course. Our brigade (BDE) MISO ensured that the tactical IOs were armed with the information required to effectively advise and assist the IDOs in their respective AO. The tactical IOs at the battalion level were required to make regular contact with the ISF IDOs within their AO and offer advice on how to complement their ISF commander's operational plans with IDO. Since IDO was a relatively new concept in Ninewa province, key leader engagements (KLEs) between local U.S. Commanders and their ISF counterparts stressed the merits and effectiveness of how IDO was essential in ensuring that non-lethal means were considered in ISF operational plans.

Simultaneously the TMIST, under the direction of the MISO planner and BDE IO (S7), continued to develop a limited amount of U.S. military products for dissemination to the local populace based on the Brigade Commander's priorities and direction. With the decrease in TMISTs throughout Ninewa province, it was essential to have this backup to the ISF IDO program to ensure that critical messages and products were disseminated in a timely manner. Handbills and posters were developed and disseminated through maneuver battalions to their ISF counterparts. The BDE IO also utilized the Ninewa Operations Center media cell to disseminate media releases to TV and radio within the brigade's OE, based on significant activities (SIGACTs) the BDE received. The media releases focused on ISF success and SIGACTs that described continued failures of Violent Extremist Groups (VEG). The BDE IO's efforts were to show to the Iraqi citizens the successes of the ISF and highlight the failures of VEG. The BDE IO and MISO also utilized commercial TV and radio to disseminate positive messages and TV shows that highlighted the positive aspects of Iraqi culture, the improvements in everyday life, and the success of the ISF. The BDE IO and MISO also updated a television commercial called Ninewa's Most Wanted (NMW). This TV show highlighted wanted criminals in Ninewa province. NMW was well received by the local populace and sought after by the brigade's division headquarters and other brigades in U.S. Division-North. As an indirect result of these actions, confidence in ISF greatly increased in Ninewa province and tips to the ISF by local citizens steadily went up each month of 2AAB's deployment.

Whenever possible, the BDE IO/MISO also utilized deception that capitalized on intelligence reports. One particular report referenced the surveillance balloons positioned at forward operating bases in Ninewa province. The intelligence reports referenced the VEG stating, "Shoot down the crusader balloons because they are watching our operations." Based on the intelligence, the BDE IO created messages to inform the local populace that the balloons were watching for criminal activity in specific areas of Mosul in order further decrease the likelihood of future violent activity in those targeted areas.

As the IDO program grows and becomes more widely accepted by our ISF partners, the need for U.S. intervention with non-lethal assistance will continue to decrease. With the change in mission to "Operation New Dawn" in September 2010, it is encouraging to know that the BDE is departing Ninewa province with an established IDO program that enables an ISF commander to seek alternative means to accomplish mission objectives, influence or inform the local populace, and to deny safe havens for VEG.

*"To change someone by force is only a temporary solution to a problem, but to convince them to change for reasons that are personal to them will have a greater long term effect" (Sun Tzu).*

Major Paul Green (BDE S7) recently finished a tour with 2AAB 3 ID in Ninewa province from OCT 2009 – OCT 2010. This is his first deployment as an Information Operations Officer. He has previously deployed to Iraq as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal officer.



**ISF members from the IP, IA and FP receive instruction on IDO from the Tactical Military Information Support Team in Ninewa Province Iraq.**



**ISF members disseminate handbills created by IDO officers in Ninewa province, Iraq.**



**An ISF IDO graduate conducts atmospheric gathering on Iraq citizens in Ninewa province, Iraq.**