

# THE POST SADDAM HUSSEIN IRAQ A SECURITY OUTLOOK

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*The stabilization and reconstruction efforts of Iraq are part of a broad strategy of the international community. The latter's focus is on countering the asymmetrical threats stemming from the new challenges, vulnerabilities and risks at play within the international security environment. At regional level, namely in Iraq, such aspects are even more pressing due to the disappearance of a repressive government that left room for airing out ethnic and religious divergences. However, despite the overall insecurity climate characterizing the post Saddam Hussein Iraq, some progress has been made towards the post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction of this country. Hence, the focus of this paper is on outlining these efforts and their results, as well as on describing the Romanian contribution to such endeavours.*

**Key words:** stabilization, reconstruction, Iraqi Governing Council, lessons learned, interoperability

## **1. THE STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION PROCESS: AN OVERVIEW**

In the spring of 2003 the post Saddam Hussein Iraq became the subject theater of ceaseless armed confrontations, whereas the international community was doing its best to ensure the country's stability and reconstruction. As a result, the United Nations Organization was called upon to play a vital role in providing humanitarian assistance and supporting economic reconstruction and institutional development. Through the unanimously voted Resolution number 1511 dated 16 October 2003 the UN Security Council legitimized the stabilization and reconstruction activities of the USA led Coalition.

The initially optimistic forecasts made after the removal of the

Saddam Hussein regime did not match the realities in the field. The military intervention in Iraq was considered a necessity due to the danger posed by this country's mass destruction weapons. Even though the US militaries could not find foolproof evidence of these weapons, their support in removing the dictatorial regime was greeted by almost 80% of the Iraqi population, especially by the Kurds and Shiite Arabs. However, what the American authorities could not forecast was that, once a repressive regime is removed, the ethnic and religious tensions boom with unprecedented violence. Although these tensions dated back to the beginnings of modern Iraq, the chaos created after the invasion, the frustrations accumulated during the Saddam Hussein regime, as well as the influx of Jihadis from neighbouring countries led to their exacerbation.

The Sunni Arabs who, by tradition, had been part of the state ruling elite since the British mandate, felt alienated from the new political framework. In this respect, a govern led by a Shiite majority meant a loss of privileges obtained during and before the Saddam Hussein regime. Moreover, the alliance forged between the formerly oppressed groups of Shiites and Kurds did nothing but to fuel such fears. Thus, all this added to a clear geographical separation of the ethnic and religious groups contributed to the flood of violence that seized Iraq. Its intensity made many of the observers notice that the country was on the verge of a civil war.

Despite the insecurity climate some progress towards the post conflict reconstruction and stabilization was made. On April 21 2003, a few days later after the USA-led coalition entered Baghdad, the Coalition's Provisional Authority was funded and Paul Bremer, a former official in the State Department, was appointed as its head. The establishment was invested with legislative, executive and judicial powers and its role was to act as a transition government by ensuring the set up of institutional elements and supervising the reconstruction efforts until an Iraqi government was to be invested. It consisted of three semiautonomous branches divided by regional criteria: the North branch located in Mosul, the Center branch located in Baghdad and the South branch in Basra. On July 13 2003, in an attempt towards joining various groupings within the Iraqi society the Provisional Authority establishes as a

subordinate body the Iraqi Governing Council – IGC. The latter's role was to advise the Authority. However, in reality, the ICG acted as a real govern by training the Iraqi representatives to assume country governance. The Council brought together 25 tribal, religious and political leaders selected by representativeness criteria. Thus, the ratio of these leaders complied with the ethnic and religious divisions characteristic of Iraq. Hence, the Council was made of 13 Shiite representatives, 5 Sunnis, 5 Kurds and two representatives for the Turkish, respectively Assyrian minorities.

On June 28 2004, during the NATO Summit held in Istanbul, the Coalition transferred the political authority to the first Iraqi government ever established after the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime. The role of that interim government led by Iyad Allawi was to prepare the elections, as well as to address some of the most current problems such as the security climate and the economic recovery. Between September 20-23 the Iraqi problem was again discussed as part of the NATO work agenda.

In the absence of a permanent Constitution, the actions of the interim government were regulated by an interim Constitution known by the name of Law of Administration for the State of Iraq adopted on March 8 2004 by the Iraqi Governing Council and effective as of June 28 2004 upon the transfer of sovereignty. On the same date the Iraq elected its first president, Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawer, after the fall of Saddam Hussein. The date of the first elections was established for January 30 2005.

In accordance with the Iraqi interim Constitution, the country became a Parliament Republic with a legislative body - the National Gathering - of 275 seats. The electoral system was based on lists made up by parties, except for the independent candidates. These lists could include between 12 and 275 candidates. The minimum age for a person to be listed as a candidate was 30. Moreover, concerning the candidates on the lists, 25% of them had to be females and all of them were supposed to present moral guarantees that they had never been members of the Baas party or, otherwise, to sign a document by which they disavowed any connection to this organization. The unicameral Parliament was tasked to elect a president and two deputies who formed the Presidential Council. The latter's role was to unanimously appoint a prime minister, who, in his turn, nominated the council of ministers. The first legislative body also served as a group adunare constituantă whose task was to elaborate a permanent Constitution by the end of August 15 2005.

May and June 2004 were dominated by the efforts to transfer the authority towards a local govern that, supported by UN, NATO and EU and by the Islamic community, was to prepare the general elections of 2005 and to continue the Iraq stabilization, democratization and post-conflict reconstruction process. Through the authority transfer plan adopted on April 27 2004 the UN Security Council approved of the transfer for June 30.

The deadline for the American forces presence on Iraqi territory was an issue long debated among

high ranking Iraqi officials and representatives of the Washington administration. In the end, the USA political media and decision makers agreed with the arguments proposed by the former commandant of the American forces in Iraq, General David Petraeus. According to him, suggesting 2011 as a deadline for American troops withdrawal was to be evaluated and decided upon after the USA presidential elections of 2008.

The international efforts towards the stabilization and reconstruction of Iraq were part of a general strategy aimed at dealing with the evolving challenges, vulnerabilities and risks underlying such a process and characteristic of the international security environment. As a result, strategies of countering the asymmetrical threats posed by all of the above were adopted in order to tackle them on differentiated levels.

## **2. THE ROMANIAN CONTRIBUTION**

As of July 2003 Romania contributed to the Iraq's stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction efforts as part of the "Iraqi Freedom" Operation. Thus, in the fourth stage of the reconstruction and stabilization process in Iraq, Romania deployed infantry, mountain, engineer and police troops, military instructors, General Staff personnel, medical personnel who undertook various tasks in different locations. For example, in Ad Diwaniyah, in the Multinational Division Center-South (MND-CS) under Polish command, Romania deployed General Staff

COs and NCOSs, as well as a detachment of engineers who were tasked to undertake operations in Al Hillah – Camp Charlie, Ad Diwaniyah – Camp Echo and in Al Kut. Some of the missions of the 96 Battallion consisted of repairing and building new roads and access ways, building and maintaining heliports, maintaining the bridges connecting different locations from Iraq, executing engineer related missions to ensure an increased level of protection for the Coalition forces, as well as for the benefit of the civil population and of the newly established Iraqi military.

In Basra the Romanian contribution consisted of General Staff officers deployed within the Multinational Division South-East headquarters under British command. In An Nassiriyah – Camp Mittica, within the same division under the operative command and directly subordinated to an Italian brigade General Staff officers and an infantry battalion were deployed. The tasks of the battalion were to support humanitarian missions, to escort convoys, to ensure unit security, to patrol the main roads day and night, to undertake recce and CIMIC missions, as well as to train the Iraqi newly established military forces.

The military police company deployed in Iraq as part of the Romanian contingent escorted military and civil convoy, ensured VIP protection, controlled and supervised traffic, did recce and surveillance missions and also trained the Iraqi police members. In addition, a group of General Staff officers was deployed in Baghdad within the multinational

force headquarters. Moreover, a medical team was deployed in the same location.

An infantry company was deployed in the spring of 2005 in Basra, South of Iraq as part of the UNAMI and its role was to ensure the protection and security of dignitaries and of the UN General Headquarters.

The first Romanian unit deployed in the operations theater from Iraq was the 811 Infantry Battalion. The latter was stationed in Camp White Horse, near An Nassiriyah between July 2003- January 2004. Between January-July 2004, this battalion was replaced by the 26 Infantry Battalion and between July 2004- February 2005 by the 812 Infantry Battalion. As of September 2004, the Romanian troops were deployed in Camp Mittica, Tallil, near An Nassiriyah. Later, the Romanian armed forces stationed at Tail air force base were moved to Camp Dracula.

On February 24, 2005 an engineering detachment was deployed in Al Hillah. The detachment consisted of a command structure, three engineering platoons commissioned to build bridges and roads and three support subunits tasked to do recce missions, ensure communications and logistic support. The overall mission was a complex and dangerous one. Thus, once deployed to Iraq, the Romanian detachment's main missions consisted of building and repairing bridges, roads, building heliport patforms, building infrastructure and military bases, as well as of undertaking demining missions. The Romanians acted in the area of responsibility of the Multinational Division Center-South,

under Polish command and the nature of their missions not only allowed them to have direct contact with the Iraqi population, but also to support it within available means.

Since they were first deployed to Iraq, the Romanian armed forces participated in the stabilization and reconstruction process of this country alongside with Coalition forces. Thus, the Red Scorpions Task Force stationed in Camp White Horse made an important contribution to the overall mission of the Coalition given the unit's experience gained in Angola, Albania, Kosovo and Afghanistan. In this respect, in the conditions of an increasing volatility of the domestic security environment, one of their most important missions in Iraq consisted in ensuring the security and stability of the area of responsibility. As a result of a continuous training process, the Romanian militaries were able to fulfill their objectives by adopting and putting into practice new methods aimed at countering the threats characteristic of their deployment area. Moreover, they applied the lessons learned during the Enduring Freedom Operation undertaken alongside the American forces and proved their capacity to react promptly to unforeseen circumstances by also showing respect to the local population. A good example of their professionalism and of the payoffs of their considered attitude towards the locals was the friendly reaction of the latter whenever the vehicles displaying the Romanian flag crossed the Iraqi villages and towns.

All this considered, the CIMIC missions played an important role

within the stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction process in Iraq. By implementing programs aimed at renovating schools from Suqash-Shuyukh, Al Fuhud and Al Fudliyah, the Iraqi children were provided with a better future. In this respect, the Romanian CIMIC teams made an important contribution to these efforts by supervising the renovation activities and by undertaking other projects such as supplying medical equipment and medicine to hospitals or water purification and bottling systems so that the Iraqis could efficiently manage their country's transition to democracy. The cooperation between the Iraqi authorities and the Romanian militaries was an essential step in developing relations that ensured a stable security environment. Thus, in Camp Mittica, near Camp White Horse a Romanian military police detachment was deployed to undertake patrolling missions and to maintain order alongside with Italian and Portuguese police.

Dr. Derrin Ray Smith, a professor and expert in international security problems at Graduate School of International Studies, from Denver University visited Camp Mittica and concluded: *"(...) to ensure the efficiency of their activities they spend most of their time patrolling in the vehicles, but most often they walk making contact with the locals. The result is a relationship based on good will. As a result, there has been an improvement of the situation in the areas patrolled by the Romanian militaries who are greeted every time they appear in the street. However, there are also important difficulties,*



sensitive issues and dangers lurking everywhere. However, wherever they go, the militaries are welcomed with good will by the locals. The personnel undertook intensive training in international humanitarian law, UN standards for peace support operations and environmental protection of their area of operations. The Romanian militaries have adopted the Belgian model to investigate road accidents, but they also integrate the Italian, Portuguese and American experience. Many of the Romanian military police members are veterans of missions like those from Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo. At about 300 km North of Camp Mittica in Al Hillah there is an engineering detachment stationed in Camp Charlie. The Romanian military engineers made a good impression due to their mission dedication and their constant adaptation to the needs of the locals in terms of activities like building and repairing houses, schools, bridges, etc. In this respect, the efforts of the Romanians to build a school of arts for the children from Al Hillah are significant. Moreover, the Romanian militaries have done a great amount of engineering work to ensure the protection of the Coalition forces, as well as established numerous check points for the local police. Most of their time is spent inspecting the bridges and the length of their missions can sometimes reach even five days in a row on itineraries exceeding 200 km. Checking the resistance and stability of bridges, ensuring road traffic flow, undertaking EOD missions aimed at neutralizing UXO have been top priority for them in Iraq. Also, it is important to mention that twice

a day teams are sent in the area of responsibility to distribute water, food and materials as part of the humanitarian missions. Given the harsh environment and the poverty of most of the Shiite population there is a long way to go to improve the living conditions. However, all Romanian military personnel who have actively been involved in their missions are fully aware of the importance of their mission to protect and ensure better conditions for all Iraqis”.

On December 11, 2005 the Romanian militaries from the 20<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion in cooperation with the Italian militaries finished a training course for 100 Iraqi instructors. The activity lasted from September until December 2005, unfolded on a military base near An Nassiriyah and consisted of four training series. In each of the series 25 Iraqi militaries were trained. The course was taught in English, benefited from the support of Iraqi translators and consisted of theoretical and practical modules, each of them of a 5 day length. The Romanian infantrymen trained the Iraqi militaries to correctly use and maintain individual armament, and they also provided knowledge related to security rules to be respected during fire drills in accordance with NATO standards. By the end of their mission, the Romanian military trained over 50 Iraqi instructors from a battalion that represented the only operational Iraqi force from the Dhi Qar province that was in the area of responsibility of the Romanian forces.

On December 12, 2005, the engineering Romanian detachment from the Iraq V mission handed over two shooting ranges near

Ad Diwaniyah. These were then employed by the Iraqi troops in training their forces in fire drills with light infantry armament. The platoon responsible for this project consisted of 35 militaries who for six weeks worked in a 6200 square meters area preparing it for the training activities. The Polish Major General Piotr Czerwinski, commandant of the Multinational Division Center South, participated in the inauguration ceremony and congratulated the Romanian militaries for accomplishing their mission one month earlier than planned. The Iraqi General Othman Ali Ferhood, Commandant of the 8<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division that was the direct beneficiary of these efforts also acknowledged the efforts of the Romanian militaries.

In the post-Saddam Iraq the parliamentary elections were an essential stage in the unfolding of the stabilization and democratization process. In this respect, the Romanian troops alongside with the Coalition forces supported the Iraqi efforts to ensure domestic security during elections. The latter were a test for the new Iraqi army, as well as for the security and police forces. While the main task of the Iraqi troops was to secure voting centers, the Romanian forces deployed in Irak had to ensure the stability all along the elections period. Upon request, small rapid reaction subunits equipped with armored vehicles were trained to intervene to support the Iraqi security forces. The Romanian militaries in cooperation with the local authorities and with the Iraqi armed forces supervised the installation of

security forces in the voting centers from the villages and towns East of An Nassiriyah. A platoon of the Romanian military police company supported a unit of the Italian police. During 2006, the efforts of Romania were directed both towards making an increased contribution to the training of the Iraqi security forces on Iraqi territory, and towards initiating the development of specific training programs in Romania.

Between July 15, 2003- December 2006 a parte of the Romanian forces deployed in Iraq participated in the Antica Babilonia operation under Italian command. The aims of this operation revolved around the establishment and maintenance of a stable domestic environment, ensuring the necessary conditions for security and stability in order to allow for a smooth distribution of humanitarian aid, providing medical support to the local population, reestablishing the infrastructure and the support of the stabilization and reconstruction process in the post-conflict Iraq.

Through its involvement, NATO made an important contribution to the multinational effort of ensuring stability and of reconstructing Iraq. In this respect, the NATO Training Mission – Iraq/NTM-I was established and approved by the North Atlantic Council on November 17, 2004. Thus, on December 16, 2004, SACEUR issued the Operational Order that set up the aforementioned mission. The initial NATO Training Implementation Mission was started in Iraq on August 14 as a result of the request made by the interim Iraqi govern on June 22. The request was

based on the NATO decision made at the Istanbul Summit to support Iraq by implementing a training program in this country. The mission objectives set out the identification of training alternatives for the Iraqi security forces, the training of certain General Staff personnel and the identification of liaison means between the interim government and Coalition forces.

The NTM-I focused on the following cooperation fields: training offers and counseling for certain categories of personnel in the General Staff, providing assistance for the establishment of a military academy and of a training, education and doctrine center, coordinating national contributions in military equipment and training offers, providing assistance for establishing an Iraqi Training Command – ITC.

All these initiatives were implemented and developed in tight cooperation with the Iraqi authorities and the Coalition forces. The principle underlying them separated very clearly the roles: the Iraqis were the decision makers, whereas NATO provided counseling and support. The training mission benefitted from the involvement of both ACT and ACO. Moreover, the mission underlined NATO's new capabilities employed as a security instrument at the beginning of the XXIst century and as a means of providing support in establishing, developing and training the security structures from Iraq. As a result of these missions, in August 2005 the Romanian officers were employed as instructors in the NTM-I under the command of NATO in Camp Victory near Baghdad with the mission of training the the Iraqi army.

In March 2007 in a speech delivered at the Ministry of National Defense headquarters by the Romanian president, Traian Băsescu, it was highlighted the achievement of the objectives undertaken by the Romanian military in Iraq and, hence, the necessity to reduce the Romanian presence in this country by 100 militaries during that year. However, the president highlighted that increasing or diminishing Romanian contribution to multinational missions is based on allies' requirements in this respect and upon their prior consultation. On March 29, 2007 the agenda of the Romanian Council of National Defense included the future strategy of Romanian militaries' employment in missions outside Romanian borders, as well as a follow-up on the withdrawal procedures of the Romanian contingent from Basra ensuring the UNAMI personnel security. Upon mission completion, at the beginning of May 2007, the Romanian contingent was finally withdrawn.

On June 7, 2007 the Romanian militaries were visited by the commandant of the Multinational Division South East, the British Major General Jonathan Shaw. On this occasion, in acknowledgement of the Romanian contribution to the theater of operations, the British general wrote in the Book of Honour of the battalion the following: "Romania should be proud of its militaries". In July 2008, the deputy for operations of the Multinational Division South East, the British Brigade General Julian Free visited the 151 Infantry Battalion deployed in Tallil, Camp Dracula. During the ceremony that



unfolded with this occasion five of the Romanian militaries were awarded medals for valor and courage in undertaking their missions.

On January 20, 2009 the Romanian Council of National Defense approved the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between Romania and the Republic of Iraq. The latter regulated the types of operations and non-combatant activities to be further carried out by the Romanians as agreed with the Iraqi authorities. Some of these activities included humanitarian and medical support in Tallil and Baghdad, as well as training and counseling activities for the members of the Iraqi security forces. Even though the mandate of the Multinational Coalition set up in accordance with UN resolutions expired on December 31, 2008, as a result of the bilateral agreements and upon the request of the Iraqi authorities the Romanian Parliament approved the continuation of the Romanian militaries' mission until July 31, 2009.

As of July 2003, Romania contributed for 6 years (2190 days) to the international efforts aimed at stabilizing and reconstructing Iraq both as part of MNF-I, and within the NATO training mission- NTM-I. On the whole, more than 8,400 Romanian militaries participated in Iraq missions under American, British, Italian or Polish operational command and undertook more than 1,200 missions. Thus, the structures deployed for the Iraqi Freedom operation (July 2003-December 2008) consisted of an infantry battalion (12 rotations), General Staff and liaison personnel, military intelligence structures, an

engineering detachment, a medical detachment and a military police detachment. The amount of money spent from the Romanian defense budget until December 31, 2008 totalled 334 million LEI.

Between 2003-2009, in the Iraq theater of operations 12 militaries were injured and two died: sublieutenant Bogdan Valerian Hâncu – April 27, 2006 and sublieutenant Ioan Grosaru – September 21, 2007.

High ranking civil and military officials such as Generals David Petraeus, William Casey, Ray Odierno, commandants of the multinational force from Iraq, Robert Gates, USA Defense Secretary, Emma Nicholson, special representative of the EU in Iraq, Major General Mark Kellz, commandant of the Australian land forces praised the activity of the Romanian militaries in Iraq. As recognition of its contribution and efforts, starting November, 2006, Romania filled out the the deputy position for Coalition operations of the General Staff head in charge of the the Iraqi multinational force. As a result, from this position, Romania coordinated the actions and activities of the countries contributing to the Coalition, other than the USA.

On July 29, 2009 upon the completion of the mission of the Romanian armed forces in Iraq, a military ceremony gathering all militaries who had participated in Irak was organized in Bucharest.

In conclusion, the enlarged spectrum of military actions undertaken by the Romanian troops in Iraq (e.g. providing humanitarian support, stabilization and construction activities) has directly contributed

to ensuring the implementation of NATO interoperability standards in accordance with the lessons learned during the activities undertaken during the multinational mission. The involvement of these forces in stabilization and reconstruction activities is a direct consequence of Romania's new strategic outlook that highlights its active role in ensuring international security.

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