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## Training Skills of U.S. General Sought After Poor Performance by Some Iraqi Forces

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**W**ASHINGTON, April 14 — The Pentagon is rushing one of the Army's most highly regarded generals, Maj. Gen. David H. Petraeus, back to Iraq this weekend to help step up the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, many of whom abandoned their posts or refused to fight in the recent violence there, military officials said Wednesday.

General Petraeus, who spent most of the past year in Iraq commanding the 101st Airborne Division, is to leave Fort Campbell, Ky., with a 14-member team and initially spend about three weeks helping American trainers in Iraq. After he steps down as commander of the 101st next month, he will lead the training of all Iraqi security and military forces, Pentagon officials said.

Based on his division's success in training 18,000 Iraqis for security forces in northern Iraq in the past year, he is expected to recommend changes in screening, organizing and equipping Iraqi forces, Defense Department officials said.

Dispatching General Petraeus to Iraq just eight weeks after he returned underscores the urgency the Pentagon attaches to revamping the training program. After a poor showing last week by many Iraqi forces, some questioned whether they were forced into combat prematurely to meet Washington's goal to return more security duties to Iraqis as part of handing over sovereignty on June 30.

"My gut tells me that that many of these Iraqi units were not ready yet," said Senator Jack Reed, a Rhode Island Democrat on the Armed Services Committee, who served in the 82nd Airborne Division and toured Iraq shortly before the recent surge in violence.

The United States has trained and fielded more than 200,000 Iraqis to serve in police and civil defense units, a border patrol, a new national army and facility-protection squads. But senior military commanders and even President Bush now acknowledge serious flaws in the performance of those forces.

"I was disappointed in the performance of some of the troops," Mr. Bush said at his news conference on Tuesday. "Some of the units performed brilliantly. Some of them didn't. And we need to find out why. If they're lacking in equipment, we'll get them equipment. If there needs to be more intense training, we'll get more intense training. But eventually Iraq security is going to be handled by the Iraqi people themselves."

Gen. John P. Abizaid, the top American commander in the Middle East, said this week that major changes were in the works. He said that American officials were seeking greater involvement from former senior Iraqi military officials. Until now, they had been largely excluded from aiding the new security forces because of their ties to Saddam Hussein's government.

In a videoconference with reporters at the Pentagon on Monday, General Abizaid ticked off the challenges confronting American officials charged with producing effective, reliable Iraqi forces. "Some of it has to do with leadership," he said. "Some of it has to do with vetting. Some of it has to do with training. But most of it has to do with time and confidence, which is what we're going to have to work on the most."

Gen. Richard B. Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in Bahrain on Tuesday that "the Iraqis have to have their own chain of command and know who they're working for and know that they're working for a greater Iraq."

In the next several weeks, General Petraeus, who is close to General Abizaid, will assist the head of training for the Iraq army, Maj. Gen. Paul D. Eaton, military officials said. "We are focused on the moral component," said General Eaton, who previously served as commander of all infantry training for the United States Army. "We are focused on leadership."

Military officers in Iraq describe the abilities of the new domestic police, civil defense and army forces as ranging from horrible to heroic.

In the recent violence, police units melted away under rebel assaults, and a new Iraqi Army battalion refused to fight against Iraqi insurgents in Falluja. But the 36th Battalion of the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, working with Marine Corps units in Falluja, performed admirably, commanders say.

In an effort to accelerate the training of the Iraqi Army, the Americans decided that rather than having Americans or coalition partners train every new Iraqi soldier, they would "train the trainers." The emphasis now is on training senior noncommissioned officers — Iraqi sergeants and warrant officers — who then will prepare the recruits at a rapid pace.

That process is under way at the Kirkush training base in the eastern Iraqi desert near the Iranian border, where freshly minted sergeants and warrant officers march on a dusty parade ground under a harsh sun that shoots the temperature toward 100 degrees. Their formations are

disciplined, their desert-colored berets at smart angles, their marching cadence the snappy English tradition taught by teams from Australia, Britain and Jordan.

"One year ago, I was fighting Americans, and now I'm being trained by them," Sgt. Maj. Awad Tamaw Ali, from a small village near Tikrit, Saddam Hussein's ancestral home, said in a recent interview. "We have all been amazed by the respect they have shown us."

The first of those Iraqis who now will be responsible for training Iraqi recruits voiced pride in their new mission — but also continuing debate over pay, housing, health care and, for some, divided loyalties.

Sergeant Major Ali, who deserted from Saddam Hussein's army last year, made it clear that there were limits to his affection for the United States. "After the Americans assist us in establishing the army and establishing a democratic government," he said, "I would like for them to go home and be with their families."

In recent weeks, the Pentagon quietly decided to increase the size of the civil defense force to 40,000 men. The Iraqi Civil Defense Corps, which patrols the streets but also is charged with gathering intelligence and searching sensitive sites, like as mosques, has been fielded quickly, rushed into service with much on-the-job training side-by-side with American forces.

About 31,000 civil defense troops are on duty; about 4,000 members of a new Iraqi Army are trained and on duty. As of March 8, about 77,000 Iraqi police officers were on duty, but half were former policemen who had not undergone new training.

"To create a true Western-style or even a Middle Eastern-style civilized police force is going to take some time, especially to weed out corruption and instill professional attributes and give it skills from criminal intelligence to forensics," said one senior military officer in Iraq.

"The military, we believe, can be more easily built up," the officer said. "It has a history here. There are many 'good' Iraqis who served their country in basic military jobs and will help form the cadres."