

# Anaconda Strategy vs. AQI





**HEADQUARTERS**  
MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE – IRAQ  
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**Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance**

- **Secure and serve the population.** The Iraqi people are the decisive “terrain.” Together with our Iraqi partners, work to provide the people security, to give them respect, to gain their support, and to facilitate establishment of local governance, restoration of basic services, and revival of local economies.
- **Live among the people.** You can't commute to this fight. Position Joint Security Stations, Combat Outposts, and Patrol Bases in the neighborhoods we intend to secure. Living among the people is essential to securing them and defeating the insurgents.
- **Hold areas that have been secured.** Once we clear an area, we must retain it. Develop the plan for holding an area before starting to clear it. The people need to know that we and our Iraqi partners will not abandon them. When reducing forces, gradually thin our presence rather than handing off or withdrawing completely. Ensure situational awareness even after transfer of responsibility to Iraqi forces.
- **Pursue the enemy relentlessly.** Identify and pursue Al Qaeda-Iraq and other extremist elements tenaciously. Do not let them retain support areas or sanctuaries. Force the enemy to respond to us. Deny the enemy the ability to plan and conduct deliberate operations.
- **Employ all assets to isolate and defeat the terrorists and insurgents.** Counter-terrorist forces alone cannot defeat Al-Qaeda and the other extremists. Success requires a comprehensive approach that employs all forces and all means at our disposal—non-kinetic as well as kinetic. Employ Coalition and Iraqi conventional and special operations forces, Sons of Iraq, and all other available non-military multipliers in accordance with the attached “Anaconda Strategy.”
- **Generate unity of effort.** Coordinate operations and initiatives with our embassy and interagency partners, our Iraqi counterparts, local governmental leaders, and non-governmental organizations to ensure all are working to achieve a common purpose.
- **Promote reconciliation.** We cannot kill our way out of this endeavor. We and our Iraqi partners must identify and separate the “irreconcilables” from the “reconcilables” through thorough intelligence work, population control measures, information operations, kinetic operations, and political initiatives. We must strive to make the reconcilables part of the solution, even as we identify, pursue, and kill, capture, or drive out the irreconcilables.
- **Defeat the network, not just the attack.** Focus to the “left” of the explosion. Employ intelligence assets to identify the network behind an attack, and go after its leaders, explosives experts, financiers, suppliers, and operators.
- **Foster Iraqi legitimacy.** Encourage Iraqi leadership and initiative; recognize that their success is our success. Partner in all that we do and support local involvement in security, governance, economic revival, and provision of basic services. Find the right balance between Coalition Forces leading and the Iraqis exercising their leadership and initiative,

and encourage the latter. Legitimacy of Iraqi actions in the eyes of the Iraqi people is essential to overall success.

- **Punch above your weight class.** Strive to be “bigger than you actually are.” Partner in operations with Iraqi units and police, and employ “Sons of Iraq,” contractors, and local Iraqis to perform routine tasks in and around Forward Operating Bases, Patrol Bases, and Joint Security Stations, thereby freeing up our troopers to focus on tasks “outside the wire.”
- **Employ money as a weapon system.** Money can be “ammunition” as the security situation improves. Use a targeting board process to ensure the greatest effect for each “round” expended and to ensure that each engagement using money contributes to the achievement of the unit’s overall objectives. Ensure contracting activities support the security effort, employing locals wherever possible. Employ a “matching fund” concept when feasible in order to ensure Iraqi involvement and commitment.
- **Fight for intelligence.** A nuanced understanding of the situation is everything. Analyze the intelligence that is gathered, share it, and fight for more. Every patrol should have tasks designed to augment understanding of the area of operations and the enemy. Operate on a “need to share” rather than a “need to know” basis. Disseminate intelligence as soon as possible to all who can benefit from it.
- **Walk.** Move mounted, work dismounted. Stop by, don’t drive by. Patrol on foot and engage the population. Situational awareness can only be gained by interacting with the people face-to-face, not separated by ballistic glass.
- **Understand the neighborhood.** Map the human terrain and study it in detail. Understand the local culture and history. Learn about the tribes, formal and informal leaders, governmental structures, religious elements, and local security forces. Understand how local systems and structures—including governance, provision of basic services, maintenance of infrastructure, and economic elements—are supposed to function and how they really function.
- **Build relationships.** Relationships are a critical component of counterinsurgency operations. Together with our Iraqi counterparts, strive to establish productive links with local leaders, tribal sheikhs, governmental officials, religious leaders, and interagency partners.
- **Look for Sustainable Solutions.** Build mechanisms by which the Iraqi Security Forces, Iraqi community leaders, and local Iraqis under the control of governmental institutions can continue to secure local areas and sustain governance and economic gains in their communities as the Coalition Force presence is reduced. Figure out the Iraqi systems and help Iraqis make them work.
- **Maintain continuity and tempo through transitions.** Start to build the information you’ll provide to your successors on the day you take over. Allow those who will follow you to “virtually look over your shoulder” while they’re still at home station by giving them access to your daily updates and other items on SIPRNET. Deploy planners and intel analysts ahead of time. Encourage extra time on the ground during transition periods, and strive to maintain operational tempo and local relationships to avoid giving the enemy respite.
- **Manage expectations.** Be cautious and measured in announcing progress. Note what has been accomplished, but also acknowledge what still needs to be done. Avoid premature declarations of success. Ensure our troopers and our partners are aware of our assessments and recognize that any counterinsurgency operation has innumerable challenges, that enemies get a vote, and that progress is likely to be slow.

- **Be first with the truth.** Get accurate information of significant activities to the chain of command, to Iraqi leaders, and to the press as soon as is possible. Beat the insurgents, extremists, and criminals to the headlines, and pre-empt rumors. Integrity is critical to this fight. Don't put lipstick on pigs. Acknowledge setbacks and failures, and then state what we've learned and how we'll respond. Hold the press (and ourselves) accountable for accuracy, characterization, and context. Avoid spin and let facts speak for themselves. Challenge enemy disinformation. Turn our enemies' bankrupt messages, extremist ideologies, oppressive practices, and indiscriminate violence against them.
- **Fight the information war relentlessly.** Realize that we are in a struggle for legitimacy that will be won or lost in the perception of the Iraqi people. Every action taken by the enemy and our forces has implications in the public arena. Develop and sustain a narrative that works and continually drive the themes home through all forms of media.
- **Live our values.** Do not hesitate to kill or capture the enemy, but stay true to the values we hold dear. Living our values distinguishes us from our enemies. There is no tougher endeavor than the one in which we are engaged. It is often brutal, physically demanding, and frustrating. All of us experience moments of anger, but we can neither give in to dark impulses nor tolerate unacceptable actions by others.
- **Exercise initiative.** In the absence of guidance or orders, determine what they should be and execute aggressively. Higher level leaders will provide a broad vision and paint "white lines on the road," but it will be up to those at tactical levels to turn "big ideas" into specific actions.
- **Empower subordinates.** Resource to enable decentralized action. Push assets and authorities down to those who most need them and can actually use them. Flatten reporting chains. Identify the level to which you would naturally plan and resource, and go one further—generally looking three levels down, vice the two levels down that is traditional in major combat operations.
- **Prepare for and exploit opportunities.** "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity" (Seneca the Younger). Develop concepts (such as that of "reconcilables" and "irreconcilables") in anticipation of possible opportunities, and be prepared to take risk as necessary to take advantage of them.
- **Learn and adapt.** Continually assess the situation and adjust tactics, policies, and programs as required. Share good ideas. Avoid mental or physical complacency. Never forget that what works in an area today may not work there tomorrow, and that what works in one area may not work in another. Strive to ensure that our units are learning organizations. In counterinsurgency, the side that learns and adapts the fastest gains important advantages.

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