



# The 16th Sustainment Brigade in Iraq: Supporting the Drawdown

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The “Knight Warriors” faced the challenge of supporting operations in the transition from the surge to the drawdown.

**A**s the surge of U.S. forces in Iraq that had begun in 2007 was winding down during the latter half of 2008, the “Knight Warriors” of the Bamberg, Germany-based 16th Sustainment Brigade began assuming responsibility for sustainment operations in Multi-National Division-North from their counterparts of the 3d Sustainment Brigade. These operations were conducted at Contingency Operating Base (COB) Qayyarah West (Q-West) and other forward operating bases stretching from the Iraq-Turkey border at Habur Gate to Joint Base Balad (formerly Logistics Support Area Anaconda).

Although the surge proved to be a clear success in Baghdad and Al Anbar Province, the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk remained hot spots for enemy activity. Providing sustainment to coalition forces in and around Mosul and Kirkuk required well-trained, disciplined, and tactically patient leaders and convoy escort teams at all levels.

## Share the Road

The end of the surge brought with it major changes in how sustainment forces accomplished their missions. One of these changes was the “Share the Road” concept for executing convoys, which was introduced at this time by Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I). (See related article on page 23.) This initiative was an effort to bring a sense of normal operations back to the roads of Iraq. Coalition forces convoys were instructed not to “own the road,” which meant that they had to cease some of the convoy practices they had used in the past, such as driving down the center of the road and making oncoming traffic move to the side of the road and stop.

Other tactics, techniques, and procedures that coalition forces convoys had implemented over the years and ceased during the drawdown included setting up hasty traffic control points whenever convoys had to turn onto a different route, operating convoys in a “bubble” by not allowing civilian traffic within 500 feet of a coalition forces convoy, and hanging “Stay Back; Deadly Force Authorized” signs on gun trucks.

Under the Share the Road initiative, the signs were removed, civilian vehicles were allowed to mingle with coalition forces convoys, and convoys began operating predominantly at night to avoid adding to congested civilian traffic. The 16th Sustainment Brigade successfully implemented Share the Road across

the brigade’s footprint, except within Mosul, where the persistent enemy threat required stricter measures to maintain convoy security.

## Logistics Training and Advisory Teams

It was around this same time that MNC-I began a renewed effort to assist the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) in training their logistics units. U.S. Army divisions and the 3d Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) directed the formation of logistics training and advisory teams (LTATs). The LTATs began a deliberate training process for Iraqi maintenance companies at the organizational, division, location command, and depot levels.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade was directed to immediately stand up two LTATs, one at K-1 (Kirkuk) and one at Al Kasik, with an on-order mission to stand up two more. Although MNC-I had a recommended LTAT structure model, the composition of the 16th Sustainment Brigade’s LTATs focused on subject-matter experts and trainers; the LTATs therefore had more warrant officers and noncommissioned officers than commissioned officers. As an example of the LTATs’ success, by the end of the brigade’s deployment, the Iraqi repair maintenance company (RMC) at K-1 had received an award from the Iraqi Army Director of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering for being the top RMC in Iraq.

## Combat Patrols Versus Convoys

While the 16th Sustainment Brigade was in the process of implementing Share the Road and standing up LTATs, the U.S. and Iraqi Governments signed the new bilateral security agreement. The agreement required combat patrols to be partnered with ISF at all times. Before the security agreement, sustainment convoys had been called “combat logistics patrols,” or “CLPs,” for several years. So if a “CLP” was a form of combat patrol, then it had to have an Iraqi escort, even though the security agreement stipulated that logistics convoys were not required to have ISF escorts.

Subsequently, on 1 January 2009, the 16th Sustainment Brigade stopped using the term “CLP” and substituted “convoy” in order to ensure that sustainment convoys were operating within the terms of the security agreement. This change proved to be quite challeng-

ing because “CLP” had a warrior connotation and “convoy” seemed to indicate a garrison mentality. Eventually, the ESC would publish a policy letter on using the term “convoy” in place of “CLP” to demonstrate that the change in terminology had general-officer command emphasis.

### Increased Iraqi Responsibility

The 16th Sustainment Brigade had approximately 6 months before the next step in implementing the security agreement came into effect to get used to the renewed emphasis on returning Iraq to normal conditions and working through Iraqi Security Forces. That step called for all coalition forces to be out of Iraqi cities by 30 June 2009. This new benchmark on the road to full Iraqi sovereignty brought even greater challenges to the task of coordinating the movement of convoys through the city of Mosul.

ISF and the Ninewa Operations Command felt empowered and confident that they could rid the city of Mosul of violent extremists with minimal assistance from coalition forces. Consequently, to remain consistent with the message of their information operations campaign—that coalition forces were not operating within the city—the ISF only allowed coalition forces sustainment convoys a daily 4-hour window to move through the city limits of Mosul. The 4-hour movement window caused the 16th Sustainment Brigade to increase its coordination efforts with local battlespace owners.

### Human Resources and Finance

Despite the flux in the operating environment, the deployment afforded the 16th Sustainment Brigade a great opportunity to synchronize human resources and financial management functions among the brigade, the support operations office (SPO), and the special troops battalion (STB). Following sustainment brigade doctrine, these functions were effectively managed by the SPO and commanded and controlled by the STB. This relationship should be the template for both combat deployments and garrison operations.

The 16th Sustainment Brigade SPO was able to build and monitor numerous convoys that relocated excess equipment from northern Iraq to southern Iraq for eventual shipment out of the theater. The brigade’s efforts to clear the central receiving and shipping point yards of excess equipment in northern Iraq will eventually lead to a seamless and efficient redeployment of Soldiers and equipment from the Joint Iraqi Operational Area. That, in turn, will allow the new advise and assist brigades to



*The commander of the 16th Sustainment Brigade and a local Iraqi community leader discuss the security situation in the community and at Contingency Operating Base Q-West in the village of Jaddilah Soflih, Iraq. (Photo by SFC Adam V. Shaw, 16th Sustainment Brigade PAO)*

focus on ISF training and transition and not just on retrograde logistics.

During its 15-month rotation in Iraq, the 16th Sustainment Brigade played an integral role in laying the foundation for the responsible drawdown of forces over the next 2½ years. With the brigade acting as the mayor of the Habur Gate border-crossing site, the brigade’s planners were in a position to provide detailed information on infrastructure and other data requirements for strategic logistics planning efforts. As the senior mission command of COB Q-West, the brigade also was able to provide valuable information on the infrastructure and operational intricacies of the COB; this information will support the COB’s (planned) future expanded responsibilities as coalition forces shift to a posture of strategic overwatch.

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