

Training the Iraqi Air Force: Lessons from a U.S. C-130 Advisory Mission

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Aug 3, 2007

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Among the many initiatives for training the Iraqi military, one little-publicized but crucial effort has been the U.S. Air Force's ongoing series of comprehensive advisory missions. Central Command's latest plan to develop Iraqi airpower calls for dramatic increases in the number of Iraqi Air Force personnel and aircraft, as well as the number of American advisors. How can the United States meet those goals amid continuing force commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan? And what can incoming personnel learn from past training efforts?

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, Lt. Col. Michael Bauer outlines the history, current status, and future prospects of air force training programs in Iraq. Drawing from his own experience commanding various C-130 combat and training missions during Operation Iraqi Freedom, he offers an on-the-ground look at the obstacles to successful training and a step-by-step guide to improving both U.S. advisory efforts and the capabilities of Iraqi Air Force personnel. Although challenges always exist when training and advising foreign forces, thorough preparation of American advisors and understanding of Iraq's military culture and unique operating environment can help ensure that their mutual airpower goals are met. ❖

Pages: 52

Distributor: WINEP

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