

Communique

Chairperson, Military Police Complaints Commission addresses First International Workshop on Advocacy for Independent Civilian Oversight August 8 and 9, 2009 Amman, Jordan

On August 8 and 9, 2009, Peter A. Tinsley, Chairperson, Military Police Complaints Commission (MPCC) participated in the First International Workshop on Independent Civilian Oversight at the invitation of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Iraq. Speaking on behalf of both the MPCC and the Canadian Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (CACOLE) of which he is President, Mr. Tinsley presented the Canadian experience in oversight.

The UNDP is the United Nation's global development network advocating for change and connecting countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. CACOLE is a national non-profit organization of individuals and agencies involved in the oversight of police officers in Canada. Other participants in the International Workshop included: senior representatives of the Government of Basra including the Justice Department, the Iraqi Police Services, the Ministry of Human Rights, relevant non-governmental organizations, and national and international experts in human rights, community policing and civilian oversight.

The purpose of the Workshop was to initiate national dialogue on the establishment of civilian oversight in Basra, one of Iraq's largest governorates. The Workshop was one component of a \$6M US project funded by the Government of Japan being implemented jointly by the UNDP and provincial authorities. The overall purpose of the project is to introduce community policing, assist in law enforcement capacity building activities, weapons registration and infrastructure developments in Basra.

"This forum was an important opportunity not only to share the Canadian experience in oversight over the past 30 years, but also some of the strategies, opportunities and challenges involved in implementing oversight mechanisms," said Mr. Tinsley. *"It was an honour for Canada to have its efforts and progress recognized."* Mr. Tinsley also moderated one of the panel discussions entitled Addressing Discrimination – The Role of Civilian Oversight Institutions and participated in day-long roundtable discussions. These discussions focused on topics such as establishing linkages between local communities and the Iraqi Police Services (IPS) to enhance protection of civil rights and the accountability and transparency of the IPS.

"This has been a great opportunity to initiate national dialogue on how to establish civilian oversight in Basra. If successful, it may be a model to be replicated elsewhere in Iraq," commented Laith Abdul Sammad Laftah, Higher Judiciary Council Judge of Basra. *"The expected outcomes of the workshop are likely to further the sense of security and contribute to the normalization of life in Basra, in particular through the introduction of a civilian oversight institution based on best international practice,"* stated ElBalla Hagona, the UNDP Iraq's Deputy Country Director in an UNDP press release issued following the conclusion of the Workshop.

The MPCC's was established by the Parliament of Canada in December 1999 as a federal independent quasi-judicial body to review matters of military police conduct and investigate complaints from the military police concerning interference in the performance of their duties.