

**EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW : AMBASSADOR
JULIETTE GUNDY, AMBASSADOR OF
NATO MISSION IN IRAQ**

iINNOV8 | September 29, 2024



**EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEWS**

Director's Prologue

NATO has an effective and valuable representation in Iraq through NATO's Mission in Iraq (NMI). NMI serves in an advisory capacity and its presence in Iraq is upon invitation from the Iraqi Government. NMI's bulk of operations is with the Ministry of Defense, and recently certain establishments within the Ministry of Interior have also requested NMI's assistance within their advisory roles. NMI's area of operations is in the Greater Baghdad Area, and it has no presence outside of the capital, Baghdad.

Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani's government has worked steadfastly on ending the presence of Coalition Forces in Iraq. He took practical steps in that direction in August of 2023 when a delegation from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, headed by the Minister Thabet al-Abbasi, visited Washington, DC to meet with officials from the Pentagon to discuss the process of complete departure of Coalition Forces from Iraq.

PM Sudani's Government was mandated by the Iraqi Council of Representatives to oversee the process of ending the presence of Coalition Forces and to formulate a plan to define the framework of future relations between Iraq and the member states of the International Coalition to defeat ISIS. In an interview with an Arabic news channel, PM Sudani emphasized that Iraq is no longer in need of advisors who are present under the umbrella of the Coalition Forces and that what Iraq needed was strategic agreements with specific countries. With a clear mandate, that is not affected by the calls for the departure of Coalition Forces, NMI is in a position to continue to be an effective partner of the Iraqi Security Sector. It is also poised to continue its advisory roles that are built on long-term objectives defined in coordination and partnership with the host country, Iraq.

This Exclusive Interview with NMI's Ambassador and Senior Civilian Ms. Juliette Gundy leaves no space for speculations about the role of NMI, its mandate, and the nature of this North Atlantic entity's relationship with the Iraqi institutions they work with.

Introduction To the Interview

Ambassador Juliette Gundy wears many hats, and she gives each role equal weight and attention. She talks enthusiastically about her previous assignments and applies the same level of passion to her current positions. As the Ambassador of NMI to Iraq, her role is well defined in representing NATO in Baghdad. As a Canadian diplomat, she balances her Senior Civilian role in Baghdad with the military side of NMI. In her role as the Director of Strategic Communication, Representation and Outreach, Ambassador Gundy is so keen on getting NMI's message out to the right people and institutions that she granted us the time to answer some of the questions we had with regards to NMI and its mandate and mission parameters. We met with Ambassador Gundy and LT. Col. Dr. Jan Komen, NMI's Chief Public Affairs Officer, at the Rotana Babylon Hotel in Baghdad.

Back in April of 2024, iNNOV8 had conducted an Exclusive Interview with the previous Commander of NMI, Lieutenant General José Antonio Agüero Martínez, so we were very well-versed in NMI and NATO's goals and objectives, their operation model, their long-term strategic plans. So, we dove right into the focus of our interview with Ambassador Gundy.

Ambassador Juliette Gundy



NMI's Senior Civilian and Director of Strategic Communication, Representation and Outreach

Ms. Juliette Gundy is a Canadian diplomat with over 20 years' experience in the fields of foreign policy, security sector reform and governance. She has worked for the Government of Canada, serving in the Departments of Defense, Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, and has deployed to NATO and United Nations missions. In August 2024, she was appointed to the role of Director of Strategic Communication, Representation and Outreach within NATO Mission Iraq.

After obtaining a master's degree from the Norman Patterson School of International Affairs in Ottawa, Canada in 2003, Ms. Gundy worked for the United Nations Development Program in Eritrea on Mine Action. She then joined the Canadian Department of National Defense as a Policy Advisor in 2004, working in Canada's integrated military-civilian headquarters on NATO Policy, international disarmament and Parliamentary Affairs. During this time, she also served in Canada's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York as an Advisor for General Assembly negotiations.

Ms. Gundy joined Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs in 2008. On a leave of absence from the Canadian Government, she served as a Policy and Program Advisor in the New Zealand civil service (2012-13) in support of earthquake recovery in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Ms. Gundy re-joined Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs in 2017. From 2021-2023, she served as the Head of the African Union Liaison Unit in the Embassy of Canada in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Ms. Gundy joined NMI in September 2023 as the Deputy Head of the Specialized Program Coordination Office, and was appointed as NMI's Director of Strategic Communication, Representation and Outreach in August 2024.

Ms. Gundy is a recipient of Canada's Peacekeeping Service Medal, and the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs' prestigious Award of Excellence for Policy and Program Development.

The Main Research Questions :

- 1. Will the departure of Coalition Forces place additional burden on NMI?**
- 2. Is NMI ready and equipped to fill the void that will be created as a result of the departure of Coalition Forces?**
- 3. Has the Government of Iraq approached NMI with requests to change their mandate and adapt to the new conditions once Coalition Forces leave?**

The Interview

Director Farhadi: For the sake of better understanding NMI's structure, would it be correct to say that the civilian side of NMI crafts and drafts the advisory role of the mission and the military side implements them in liaison and coordination with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense (MoD)?

Ambassador Gundy: No. I would say it is much more integrated than that. Also, NMI has civilian advisors who have never worn a uniform but are experts in their areas. We have many civilians like me who have served in Defense Ministries and various institutions of their respective countries. And we work very closely with our interlocutors from the Iraqi Security Sector for planning.

Director Farhadi: When you mention that you work closely with the Iraqi Security Sector (ISS), who are your interlocutors from the ISS?

Ambassador Gundy: We primarily work with the Ministry of Defense and Iraqi Armed Forces. And as of last August, our mandate expanded to also provide advisory services to the Iraqi Federal Police, and elements of the Ministry of Interior (MoI).

Director Farhadi: How do you find working with the MoD and MoI? Are they receptive, welcoming and appreciative of your role? Or do you face challenges?

Ambassador Gundy: We have very good relationships with the various Iraqi Security Institutions and Forces that we advise. NMI staff undergo a battery of training before arriving at the Mission in order to ensure seamless transition when there is a change in personnel. Obviously, handover from one advisor, or a team of advisors, to another, is a natural process in the Mission. However, no advisor arrives at this Mission without training, historical

background, and a thorough introduction to the Mission. Having been here for a number of years and being able to provide that support to the staff and having a good working relationship with Iraqi-partners, are some of the strengths that NMI has. And because we have been working closely with the MoD for years, I don't think navigating the nature of our work is difficult.

We have a wonderful team of interpreters who also help provide continuity. It is equally important to us to provide that sort of continuity, because without it, it would be hard for our colleagues to deal with someone new every six months, or every year, who is not familiar with navigating the system. So, arriving here prepared for the mission in every way is part of our responsibility as well.

Director Farhadi: As you know iNNOV8 is based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and we rarely hear any mention of NMI in the north. Do you have any interaction with the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs (MoPA) or Peshmerga Forces as part of the Iraqi Security Forces that you advise?

Ambassador Gundy: It is not part of our mandate and not part of our advisory and capacity building role. NMI is a non-combatant advisory mission, and our mandate has been clearly set up in terms of what we are doing. Our mandate relates to the MoD and MoI as well as the Federal Police in the Greater Baghdad Area. In terms of our work, we are geographically located in Baghdad.

Director Farhadi: In that case, would it be accurate to say that NMI has no purview over the process of Peshmerga unification and reforms in the MoPA?

Ambassador Gundy: We have a good framework that is very well defined, and based on that we only have relationships with specific Iraqi institutions, particularly the MoD and Iraqi

Armed Forces. It is a well-defined concerted effort in order to provide advisory support for these institutions.

Our work might not be as broad as one might expect, but what we have is a close relationship with the Iraqi Ministry of Defense since 2018.

Director Farhadi: Obviously USA is an integral part of NATO, do you have the impression that Iraqi security institutions are more receptive to working with NATO through NMI, rather than working with institutions or programs operated under the umbrella of the US-led Coalition Forces?

Ambassador Gundy: I believe that NMI has been here for so many years that who we are is very well understood by Iraqis. NATO works strictly within a framework and can have staff from 32 NATO members and operational partner countries, such as Australia and Austria. We are multinational, and I think at this point we have staff from 29 of 32 NATO Allies, plus Australia and Austria, here in Baghdad. So, I think we are very well known, and our partners know exactly who we are. Additionally, our mandate is also very well understood and well established. These are long-standing relationships that have been ongoing for years. So, I don't think there is any confusion about NMI and its mandate.

Director Farhadi: Does the departure of Coalition Forces, based on a request and in coordination with the GoI, mean anything for NMI? Does it affect your mission in any way?

Ambassador Gundy: Our mandate is very separate. What we are working on is long-term security sector reform, and we have Long Term Objectives (LTO) that include advising, training and education programs. As I mentioned earlier, we are working in the Greater Baghdad Area. All the work that we are doing is focused on supporting long-term security sector reform, things like defense planning and budgeting, Human Rights and International

Humanitarian Law, Ministerial advising, professional security education. They are the building blocks of our mission.

Director Farhadi: You mentioned Human Rights issues, I would like to follow up on this with a relevant question. The previous Iraqi military was strong by international standards, yet it had very bad record when it came to Human Rights violations. How do you assess the current Iraqi military's progress in compliance with international Human Rights regulations?

Ambassador Gundy: This would be a difficult question for me to answer. What I would say is that we have different advisory areas that we agree on together. There is very much continued discussion about what our interlocutors' responsibilities are, what is it that they are thinking of, examining, or perhaps even looking at changing, and then that actually spurs us to look at what can be done, what are our options in those areas. What may be some of the things that can help joint planning in certain areas and find objectives and areas of cooperation.

Director Farhadi: So, what I am hearing is that the planning happens jointly; neither NMI nor Gol dictates the plans. Right?

Ambassador Gundy: We are here at the invitation of the Government of Iraq. Everything that we are trying to do is driven by their demands and their needs. We are not dictating things and absolutely that partnership is very important for what we want to do in the long term, and for the partnership to be sustainable as well. If the plans were ours rather than those of our interlocutors, it would not be sustainable and would not make sense. It needs to be defined by them for us to be able to support them and enable them to achieve their goals. This is what we are here to do.

Director Farhadi: Considering Prime Minister Sudani's request for Coalition Forces to leave Iraq and the recent agreements between the Gol and the Coalition Forces to leave by a certain date, has there been any on-record or off-record discussion to expand the NATO Mission in

Iraq and making it bigger? Is NMI ready to take on additional tasks, in addition to the advisory role?

Ambassador Gundy: Our mandate has been set for us by the North Atlantic Council, and I know Lt. Gen. Aguero described in his interview how NATO's decision-making process works. NMI's mandate has been set. There isn't discussion about changing the mandate again. To reiterate, we are here doing security sector reform. Our mission is a very different type of work, and a very different mandate. The Government of Iraq understands the difference between our mandate and the mandate of other entities very thoroughly and clearly. The message we are getting is that they want us to continue with the work that we are doing, and we intend to keep playing that role. We will keep working with our Iraqi counterparts towards their success in the areas that we define together through our long-term capacity building, and that is the plan for now.

Director Farhadi: Does the opening of the NATO base in Amman, Jordan mean anything to you? Does it impact your operations here?

Ambassador Gundy: We saw an announcement about the opening of a NATO Liaison Office in Jordan. NATO has partnerships across the globe, and sometimes there are Liaison Offices in order to support the work of these partnerships. However, NMI is quite different from that of a Liaison Office. NATO Liaison Offices are there to support NATO and the country to work together. Certainly, once they (the Liaison Office in Amman) opens, I would be interested in knowing what they do.

Director Farhadi: NATO is undoubtedly very engaged in the war in Ukraine. Funding and resources are always an issue when it comes to long-term plans, such as the sustainability of NMI's presence in Iraq. Can you envision a scenario where the demands of the war in Ukraine might divert NATO's resources to the war zone and end NMI's mission?

Ambassador Gundy: One of the most important things for us is staffing, the ability to have the right advisors here in the mission that have the right expertise so that the needs of the Government of Iraq are met. Being able to offer support in the defined areas of work with our partners is the priority for us. And I am happy to say that we can have high quality advisors who can work together with our partners effectively. That is the most important building block for us. I think NATO sees NMI is an important component and cornerstone of the partnership with Iraq. I am not able to speak to the details of NATO's focus on other places.

Director Farhadi: Considering that a good number of NATO members are EU member states, do you work closely with the EU representation in Iraq?

Ambassador Gundy: We have working relationships with diplomatic missions of EU member states, and we specifically have contact with European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Iraq. We work very closely with them. Sometimes we support each other by delivering courses and collaborating on various programs. Over the past few months, we delivered two joint workshops to the MoI, on transparency and accountability, and on forensics in counter terrorism.

Director Farhadi: One of NMI's long term objectives deals with Women, Peace and Security. What is the role of Iraqi women in the MoD and MoI? Especially on the civilian side of their institutions.

Ambassador Gundy: One of our long-term objectives is on Women, Peace and Security, specifically with the MoD. There we are working with the Women's Affairs Department. For this long-term objective, there are a few things that we look at; one of them being Iraq's own National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security. There is also the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) that started 24 years ago, and it is now part of the UN Agenda. Countries can create their own National Action Plans as well. Iraq is in

the process of drafting its third National Action Plan (NAP). They intend to apply this NAP from 2025 onward. So, we certainly see elements around women's participation in the Iraqi Security Forces. It is very interesting that the Iraqi Security Sector Reform Strategy also calls for empowering women to work in security sector institutions. So those are the goals that the Government of Iraq has set out for itself to address women in the security sector, which then aligns with one of our LTOs. We offer workshops on Women, Peace and Security and the purpose is developing awareness about the WPS Agenda, and the cornerstone of that is recognizing the impact of conflict on women and girls. Furthermore, it is critical to understand the impact of conflict on all segments of society and allow people to reflect on what that means for their roles.

And in terms of women more broadly in civilian roles, anything we do there would be driven by the MoD, knowing what the Security Sector Reform Strategy says about women in security institutions. Anything we do is driven by our interlocutors.

Director Farhadi: Do you think Iraqi Forces are receptive to women in military roles?

Ambassador Gundy: I don't know if I can answer that question. But I can say that there are women in civilian roles and there are also women in uniform already, and that is significant. In terms of how Iraqi forces feel about women in the military, you will have to ask them about it.

Director Farhadi: I would like to give you the opportunity to comment on NMI and if there is anything we haven't touched on that you would like to mention.

Ambassador Gundy: I think the biggest change since the last interview with the previous Commander is the work we are doing with the Iraqi Federal Police. We have four long-term objectives in that regard. This area of work will not be as big as what we are doing with the Iraqi Armed Forces. However, we are working on defining those four areas to work on. That

means that in addition to military and civilian advisors we also have police advisors in the Mission.

NMI's focus right now is to keep doing what we have been doing, and what we have been asked to do.

Director Farhadi: In conclusion I can say that the success of NMI's mission is due to the fact that the agenda is jointly crafted by the local interlocutors and your advisors; that it is locally driven, and you are implementing their plans. Do you agree?

Ambassador Gundy: Absolutely. This is part of the long-term objectives. The advisory work is taking place here in Baghdad, and we are really proud of that. And of course, we do bring in experts from outside our Mission from time to time to provide more concentrated advice, maybe to deliver a workshop for example. However, our center of gravity in terms of our advisory role is here in Baghdad.

We are using every tool that we have to deliver the best support that we can. But the core of it is the mission that is here, and the work we are doing in Baghdad. We have a team of very dedicated advisors who are working hand in hand with their partners and interlocutors, and we take this very seriously. This is important work; this is an important responsibility.



ABOUT

Nestled in the mountains of Sulaymaniyah, the Culture Capital of KRI, iNNOV8 Research Center pioneers cutting-edge research and innovation. We aspire for excellence as an independent research center by providing valid, valuable, and timely products to the public. We deliver impactful solutions and contribute to our industry's vibrant and forward-thinking community. As an affiliate of CHANNEL8 Media Corporation, iNNOV8 also serves as the in-house research and public relations hub for the channel.

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