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(b)(3), (b)(6)

MNFI CJ5 Chief of Plans

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Embassy Annex, International Zone, Baghdad

By (b)(3), (b)(6)

MNFI Historian

Abstract

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development. Planning requires getting comfortable with the unknown and with uncertainty, and synchronizing the commander and the staff. We are transitioning MNFI, MNCI, and MNSTCI. We assume security gains are durable. I wish I knew what our response would be to an Israeli strike on Iran. The Phase V plan we are working on is essentially Transitioning to Civil Authority. It includes coordinating C2 Transformation, Force Structure, and Basing. We assume there will be a SOFA, but that is a big assumption. Strategy and operations are tied to tactics; our senior leaders understand that and have made the transition necessary. Logcap and contractors raise a lot of questions. 1:05:50.

Interview

I arrived in Baghdad on 28 June of this year.

What is your background?

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What individuals, institutions, or events would you point to as having had a strong influence on you?

5:25. A couple of things come to mind immediately. First, the Military Academy, and it was much more influential than I thought at the time, but over the years as I've looked back, there've been many times

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when I have reflected on the things I learned at West Point, and that had a gigantic impact on my life. Certainly, my parents in terms of work ethic and persistence. I went to USMA from Brookfield, Connecticut, where I excelled in academics and athletics. I went to the USMA Prep school because they thought my academics and athletics were not enough, then from the prep school to the academy. My mentor, (b)(3), (b)(6) who I knew as a captain. My father died when I was a cadet, and he was in some ways a quasi-father figure in providing guidance. There was a (b)(3), (b)(6) who had a significant impact on my life. More recently, LTG Van Antwerp at the War College, on guidance and counseling, and General Hantoon. Also, General James Campbell, the former Director of the Army Staff before LTG Hantoon, great mentors and examples. I would also mention BG (P) Burke Garrett, my former battalion commander.

Was there anything unusual about your winding up at USMA?

7:50. I never really aspired to it. I never understood what the academy was until I was a high school junior and somebody saw me and the way I was and suggested that I would really like the Military Academy. I was pretty serious about academics and athletics, and I came from a middle-class family, nothing fancy, but they peaked my interest and I looked into it, and thought that was something I would be interested in. I was raised in Brookfield, Connecticut. I was a recruited athlete, but I lacked other extracurricular activities to go right in. They weight a lot of other activities. They gave me an option, saying I was right on the line, saying I could go right in or take a year at prep school, and my Dad had always wished that he had taken a year of prep school after high school graduation, just to get his feet on the ground. Not that he went into the military, but it would have been good to grow for a year, so I think that was great for giving me a chance to see the military, and I had a strong sense after a year at the prep school that that was what I wanted to do, when I was accepted to the Academy. And I wound up not playing football but was on corps squad track and was a captain for that team. I stuck with the sports, but not from the recruited angle. It was great preparation, and I probably wound up doing much better academically because of that.

I want to ask about planning. I used to think that planning was simple and straightforward. You had a situation, you had assumptions, you developed your three courses of action, and you knew how to proceed. Over time, and trying to account for the invasion and policy and planning, it has become much more complicated. How has your thinking of the problem of planning has evolved over the years?

11:20. I would add that, academically, besides Brown University and continued on at K State, and almost ABD here, I think that ties into the idea of graduate level education, I say that it is more art than science. What I learned at the SAMS course is to be comfortable with what I don't know. One of the first exercises at SAMS was, given very little information, to do mission analysis. Frankly, I thought it was a little bit silly, in a way, putting us through a knot-hole, unnecessarily. Come to find out, in the real world, that it is almost identically like that. You get very little guidance, often, and if you are waiting for guidance you are probably doing the wrong thing. I think the quote from Eisenhower is that plans are nothing, planning is everything. That is kind of what I think planning is about. Over the years . . . sometimes it is just having a sense of what needs to be done, and getting a well-informed or school-trained or educated planner on the problem, because that is really what planning is, I've come to realize,

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it is really about problem solving, addressing problems as they emerge, and rarely do you have all the information you need. Rarely do we have all the information we need, which is why we have assumptions and have to work through risks and things like that. It is more art than science and not waiting for guidance has led me to focus on school-trained planners because they are the conduit between the mind of the commander and his directors or other commanders and the staff. They are the mediators, and they have to be able to translate a bunch of staff products and a wide-variety of staff perspectives into a comprehensive, clear . . . they have to make something that is almost incomprehensible clear and understandable so that the commander cannot only have his judgment informed, but so that the commander can make accurate decisions based on what we know. They call it the command and general staff college. If the staff is being worked well enough by a good planner, they will usually provide a product that is well-enough developed to inform the commander and vice-versa. It is kind of a symbiotic relationship, and I think it is the planners' role to work those relationships, so that when the commander gives guidance, the planner can go back and work the staff and guide them based on his understanding of what the commander is saying, because it is rare that you get time with the commander, and you rarely get the whole staff together, you really have to manage both very well. So that is one of the things that most excites or fulfills me as a planner and in leadership roles is working with planners to solve problems in that way.

I'll describe the situation, and please correct or augment. As of October 2008, we are waiting on the election of either Senator Obama or Senator McCain as President. We have drawn down from 20 to 15 brigades, and anticipate continued drawdown on a faster or slower timeline, we are trying to negotiate a SOFA, the [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d we've had success against AQI and the JAM, but it is a fragile situation, and there's considerable violence up in the north and occasional bombings in the north, and assassination and intimidation campaigns, there is [redacted] 1.4b, 1.4d for good and bad, Arab states have announced embassy. What other conditions and assumptions drive your effort.

19:00. With the development of the Sol and the passage of the provincial elections law, there are pretty positive things going on. There was a lot of IDF before I arrived, so there has been an uptick in security. Incidents are down considerably throughout the country. There has been a significant focus on the political, economic, diplomatic lines of operation in the campaign plan. The focus had been on security, but because security gains have achieved a degree of durability. There is an opportunity to focus on other things, like drill downs on things like reducing contractors, compared to when we were scrambling to get more people on everything. It is interesting to see the perspectives evolve. I would add that PMM is asserting himself throughout the country, bracketing up to the north . . . we recent saw a significant AQI leader detonating his own car bomb a week ago. There is this feel of a transition to Afghanistan. There has been a huge reduction in SG in the Wasit area, and more focus on the port of Umm Qasr, the elections law, and the economics, and the oil flow, the embassies, and a good tone on the other LOOs. The ISF is increasing its strength and moving to provide security on the borders from the external threat while the police take internal threats. Maybe the ISF is reaching "Iraqi good enough." I think the commander wants to get the training teams to transition so that the units themselves will become the training teams. The combat teams may go away in favor of transition teams or transition task forces. The description of what units are doing is evolving. This is a corps-centric fight.

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I think the MNCI role is decreasing, and the MNFI is kind of going through a downtick (15% reduction), a downsizing of the staff, and probably a merger to come. Eventually, MNSTCI will inherit the fight as an office of military cooperation, and they will become the supported headquarters. The corps will eventually go away, with its mission transitioning to training, and that going over to MNSTCI. It won't be 15 BCTs, it will be much less in that kind of role.

What are your key assumptions?

25:20. First, that the security gains are durable and that they will continue to improve over time, and that security will increasingly be owned by Iraq as a function of the GoI. Second, that the GoI will assert its sovereignty responsibly, with the coalition, with US, within Iraq, and within the region. I'd say another key assumption is that the US will remain a key strategic partner with Iraq on mutual terms.

What do you wish you knew?

26:30. ~~(S/NF)~~ First, it would be nice to clarify our response to Israel should they conduct a preemptive strike on Iran. That is a pretty big problem, and without have a policy on that, or a high-level approval on assumptions on that . . . that could really be an undoing kind of event for the theater if you think about it, and that is as we transition to the ISF, and they don't have control for air, A2C2, then what happens, in the interim, personally as a planner, that is one of the biggest issues we need to address as a matter of policy or transition quickly to Iraq, and the other one it, and in this role, in terms of the election, knowing the speed a retrograde. If we are going to, but just the speed of a retrograde, if we are going to retrograde from the Iraqi theater, how quickly are we going to do that, and there are key throughput issues that have to be addressed, certainly that is tied to issues with Iraq and Afghanistan and theater throughput. Those are important assumptions.

On the possibility of an Israeli strike, might the administration maintain an ambiguous stance on that out of fear of unintentionally triggering something?

1.4b, 1.4d

In all of this, where does the Stage V that you've described to me come in?

~~(S/NF)~~. 30:00. From my perspective . . . at Central Command, we developed this strategy: Ends, Ways, and Means. And then we felt we had about 30+ plans, and they didn't have anything that put all those together, so we created a theater campaign plan, which essentially was the operationalizing of the strategy, and the sorting of the plans. Well, here in MNFI, we have a pretty similar situation, in that we have a JCP, which is a strategic document, I would argue, it does have some of the elements of the operational . . . but it is almost like this strategy at Central command plus some of the theater campaign plan, that we had. Meanwhile there are all these plans that the MSCs are creating, for instance, MNCI, MNSTCI, are creating their own oporders. In my minds eye, 1003V had a Phase I, II, and III, and somewhat of a Phase IV. In some people's minds, there was no Phase IV plan or planning. There was planning that was done with it, but it wasn't manifested with it, obviously, in the way people thought it

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might have been, and there are a lot of reasons for that, but new doctrine since that plan was actually executed split out that old Phase IV into two phases: Phase IV and Phase V. Phase V is transfer to civil authorities, and I think we've been in Phase IV for a long time now, and we're transitioning, particularly with the SOFA, and with the many situational issues that we mentioned, increasing security, focusing on the other LOOs, the GoI asserting more of its sovereignty, you're getting a transfer to civil authority. Now, we, and our team is only about three months old because there has been so much transition in the MNFI headquarters, and it is 100% augmentees in a joint headquarters, we do have school-trained planners, and as we look at the various planning teams we have, for example, the Transformation of Command and Control was one, we realized that there was no strategic basing plan for the theater. We were working through Force Structure, we realized the situation is changing, and in our weekly meetings we asked ourselves how do all these things connect, and if you look at an order, then you have the situation, a mission, a task organization, basing, and command and control, and we realized there was a bigger piece here, and that became in our mind's eye a five paragraph [?] to the Joint Campaign Plan, and not to fault the JCP, but this Phase V would really be a Universal Joint Task List, joint terminology type of a doctrine that would ideally be the kind of document that a planner at a Corps or a MNSTCI level would be able to read and say, "I know what you're telling me to do." Right now, I think the JCP does that, but it's a bit more of a translation process than it ought to be. Not to take anything away from that, because I had something to do with that JCP creation back in 2004 when I was at SAMS, we were . . . a special project was to work with the planners here at CJTF-44 on what they were calling the campaign plan, and they had a much more operational level document at the time, but over time it morphed into the other operational LOOs that we have today, and that is because . . . and great on us thankfully that we were able to get the interagency and the joint community involved in this to load share and get this where it needs to be. But now it is such a strategic document that it kind of forfeited that middle operational piece that it initially had. So where 1003V was going for so long, it is now where Corps has had to pick up that operational picture, and the JCP has dipped down into it, but there still is a gap, frankly, so when we briefed that to the commander, we should him what we thought was the gap, and he pointed at it directly, this is General Odierno, and he pointed at that, where we thought the gap was, and he said, "I always thought I needed that." So he's told us to press on with creating this, so we're looking at to 2012 to how we see possible missions changing over time, based on conditions, and as those missions might change, our role will change in terms of the capabilities and the capacities that we will provide to the Iraqis, particularly as their capacity increases, we can decrease on our commitment of capacity, and ideally retaining the spectrum of capabilities that are necessary. And ideally we will shift our force structure accordingly. For example, the MiTTs become organic to the units that are here, so we don't need external MiTTs, they're part . . . that is one example . . . and then we adjust the basing to support that force structure, and then I think it is a question or "thin" rather than a consolidation approach. So as you had Nagl mention in this article, where you once had a BCT, you will now have a battalion. It is going to do the same things, but as the ISF is on an uptick, we can downtick, we're providing the same capabilities across the board but less capacity, so you adjust your basing accordingly. You pull out equipment that you don't need, and you move toward more of a kind of retrograde feel, you might say, we will shrink our size on the base but we still are there, and the ISF is moving in, and we maintain a presence to influence it. And then, the final part is the C2, and I got at

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that and the idea of how does the embassy fit with MNFI as it downsizes and MNCI as it transfers its mission and MNSTCI upticks from a supported role. So you put that all together and you convey it out over three years, and actually we might be down to very few BCTs or brigade advisory assistance teams and a number of years, and if we're told to leave in 16 months, we'll have to figure out what that might look like, how does the force structure tie to the basing, tie to the C2, so that we end up where we want to be, and the commander has made it pretty clear, he said start with the end in mind, and so we've tried to start with more of a . . . an OSC, Office for Security Cooperation-like, must more robust than that, but more of a MNSTC-I-type role where we're . . . mil-to-mil, engagement, supporting, training, that kind of thing.

Where do we stand on the SOFA?

38:50. I've been in a number of sessions on the SOFA, though we have another division that is handling that.

I stopped listening to the recording at this point due to time constraints. The rest is worth listening to. The rest of this transcript comes from my notes of the interview.

We assume we will have an agreement, and that is a big assumption. The largest rocks include jurisdiction, basing, detention, combat operations, counter-terrorism. Basing is the most important issue right now. The language is relatively vague for flexibility. There are the problems of defining 'rural,' 'urban,' 'combat forces.' It must be clear on how you're defining things.

What is your impression of GoI Capacity?

Not too concerned. Many background elections. Provincial elections. They decided. The key is doing essential services in non-sectarian ways. Portfolios: Turkey.

What other major issues are there?

Strategic and operational factors as they're tied to tactics. Getting a strategy right is important. Military leaders are stepping up, post-Vietnam from Active Defense to Airland Battle. National Training Centers, Warfighters, our thinking changed from 1982 to 2002. It became more operationally based and showed a common cultural bias. We learned to change our strategy in stride. Our senior leaders understand the complexities and they have made the transition.

I'm very proud of this transition, of synchronizing all the logistical aspects, handling base closure, contractors, retrograde. It is a bigger organization from just the corps.

The contractors raise a lot of questions, of how many are there, where are they, how do they tie in, and how many will we need? They can remission logcap contractors, but you can't do that with just anybody. It is a very big deal now. They're essential. Under operational cohesion, decision points and a change of mission. We face metapoints on a change of mission. There are decision points, risks, and effects.

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What will be your lasting impression of this tour?

It has been an amazing time with everything happening. Leaders are agile in their thinking. It is a huge saga and story. We have to try to help people sort through the complexity and get some clarity . . .

they've stepped up. Clarity to chaos.

1:05:50.

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