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

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Embassy Annex, International Zone, Baghdad

by (b)(3), (b)(6)  
MNFI Historian

### **Abstract**

I am an MI officer. We began developing Social Network Analysis in the Balkans, and we have improved it here, using it in targeting our engagements. We've previously had a problem of not sharing a common database among all command levels. We rotate analysts from the states here, and it can be done effectively back there. I arrived in July '07. FSEC was a new innovation designed to press Reconciliation quickly to still violence. FSEC is wedded to IFCNR. We engage different people to deal with different issues. We engage OMS/JAM through the GoI and the media. We've gotten IFCNR to set down with Sunni extremists, which is a triumph. Too many of the criminal elements kept using JAM as cover, and we've had to go after them. The PM made huge mistakes in Basra, but we fixed the situation. Now he needs to realize their continuing reliance on us. Mohan proved himself completely incompetent. Maj Gen Newton felt the US military has now made itself the premier counterinsurgency force in the world. IDF in the IZ has been stressful, but the military has dealt with it without lashing out. The civilians have had a more difficult time of it. I can say I've been under fire.

58:17.

### **Interview**

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(~~S/REL ACGU~~). We do Social Network Analysis, but it has been in a stove-piped fashion. It was never done on a shared database. We've got to put it all together. In the post 9/11 environment, we had to apply SNA in a kinetic environment. We had to understand the tribes and the senior leaders. The major problem was that at all command levels, we never shared a common database. As we have some continuity in length of deployments and the people rotating, this eases the problem. (b)(3) (b)(6) analysts are only here for four months at a time, but they've been focused on these issues for a long time and they have a solid reach back capability. It is now part of the COIN doctrine, and it keeps people from burning out. You don't have to do SNA here. You can do it in a reach back fashion, all or in parts, at CENTCOM (b)(6) (b)(3) (b)(6) or elsewhere. Analysts are a high-demand, low supply population. 11:26.

SECOND RECORDING.

***When did you arrive here?***

I arrived here on 8 July 2007.

***What was the situation at the time?***

FSEC when I arrived was a fairly new organization. Lt Gen Graham Lamb of SAS fame was here. He and GEN P. wanted to take advantage of the momentum in the Awakening movement to engage Sunni leaders. Lamb started doing this engagement, but it quickly became clear Engagement was a full time job, and it was not appropriate for the DCG to pour so much of his time into it. There was a decision made, I believe in March '07 that they needed what became the FSEC. They assigned a new two star (UK) and a senior DoS deputy as co-directors. They manned it with a grab bag of personality, roughly half US and half UK. In May of '07, they named the new DCoS for FSEC, Maj Gen Paul Neuton. The DoS do-director was (b)(6) and he'll be leaving in May. I replaced (b)(3), (b)(6). He spent the last four months of his 12 working to stand up FSEC. So it was a very busy time for him. When I arrived, we did not necessarily have the proper manning. We've adjusted that for the three lines of operations: 1) Operational with an intel analysis, 2) a second lane with analysis of the Sunni, 3) and the Shia lane or OMS/JAM with two intel analysts (1 UK and 1 US). They're primary focus is on JAM.

***There appears to be a lot of redundancy here on the MNFI staff? Is FSEC a part of the permanent staff of MNFI?***

We will have Strategic Engagement here for as long as the Force is here, but the only reason to have FSEC is to reduce violence and promote accommodation, or reconciliation. Our responsibility is to find ways to reduce violence and increase accommodations. If we're successful, we will work our way out of a job, whereas Strategic Engagements under STRATEFF will continue. Petraeus and LTG Lamb wanted a small, special element that was agile and spared daily staff routines that slow down STRATEFF, feeding the monster, to be able to focus on this task. That is why Maj Gen Hughes works directly for Petraeus.

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When I arrived in July of '07, Fardh al Qanoon had been going since March, but the violence was peaking.

(~~S/REL ACGU~~) The violence started dropping about the time we saw Sadr go back to Iran. We think he was feeling incapable and incompetent and out of control. He felt it was out of control. Violence dropped about 20%. Then there was the 28 August incident in Karbala, which was a real black eye for JAM. This led to Sadr declaring the freeze, and violence dropped another 40%. Violence had peaked because we were gaining the upper hand. We didn't know where the violence was going to peak, but we were taking the fight to the enemy. I remember arriving here and quickly getting the feeling that we were gaining the upper hand, even though the level of casualties was high.

***Who are the Iraqi leaders that are important to your operations?***

8:51. I would describe the FSEC as being wed to the IFCNR. Part of our mission is to push, pull, pry, cajole, influence, do whatever we can to get the GoI to adopt policies and laws that will support reconciliation. This is a big struggle because you have a Shia-led government, and my assessment is that after hundreds of years of being oppressed by the Sunnis, the Shia are afraid that somehow the Sunnis are going to fight their way back to power, as they did under the Ottomans and with the British. That was their mindset when I arrived last July. The IFCNR has only one or two Sunnis on the committee, and many of those on the committee came from a very sectarian background. Frankly, though, I think they've come a long way. The IFCNR is a National Security Council-level element in US terms. Its members are appointed by the Prime Minister. I think they've become much more trusting. I think they're convinced now that we're not going to somehow let the Sunnis climb their way back to the seat of power. They're every watchful, however, to retain the security mechanisms and their power.

11:00. The chairman Muhammed Salman. The deputy is (b)(6) She is fairly famous or infamous, depending on how you look at her. She used to be considered a Sadrist. We describe her now as a Malikist, and she does the PM's bidding.

(~~S/REL ACGU~~) My assessment is that the PM, due to his Dawa origins, which was in opposition under the Ba'athists, in order to survive at that time, you really had to trust the people around you, which meant he had to rely on a very tight circle of confidants in order to survive. As a result, he now trusts individuals rather than institutions or the bureaucracy. If you do an SNA of the PM, using all source intelligence, you can identify who the key personalities are with influence.

13:00. Now, depending on what initiative we're pursuing, like getting CLCs integrated into the government, then there is a certain grouping we'll engage based on what influence they wield. Another assessment we have is that the best way for us to communicate messages to OMS/JAM is through 1) the GoI, 2) the media. They will not talk to us directly, but they do talk to various GoI members. The result is we have to feed our messages to Sadr or the PM through multiple channels.

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14:15. So if we want to maintain the Sadrist freeze, and we think it is about to be broken, we will think about what message we want to send, what are our talking points, and then we'd go into the different nodes to feed that message in through multiple avenues. We do the same with the PM, trying to feed a unified message to him through multiple contacts.

We also engage (b)(6) (a member of the CoR) is a key advisor to Maliki, one of the most trusted. Maj Gen Hughes has a close and trusting relationship with (b)(6) (b)(6). We just helped him with transportation to Basra for the recent operations. We also keep in contact with the Minister of the Interior, the Minister of Defense, and we try to keep in touch with key members of the CoR, especially the speaker (b)(6) and those members of the GoI who have some influence with the Sadrist trend or with the Sunnis.

There's about seven folks we see as key, the inner circle around the Prime Minister. Among the Sunnis, we engage (b)(6) the Speaker of the CoR. Salah Mutlack is another key government leader we engage with, as well as Vice President Hashimi. We also engage Sunni insurgent leaders in an effort to bring them, because reconciliation is between the GoI and the Sunni and the Shia and the Kurds. So we'll try to bring them all together. So we go to see the Sunni insurgency leaders.

~~(S/REL ACGU)~~ We have gone to see (b)(6) from Abu Ghraib. We have brought him to sit down with the IFCNR, and this is somebody who, if you had said in May 2007 that he, a leader of the Jaish al Islami, the Islamic Army of Iraq, with past ties to AQI and (b)(6) and another gentleman from Ameriya named (b)(6). These were guys who had been shooting at us, and we try to bring them in, and we've been successful at getting them to sit down with us [and with some of GoI]. If you had said in May of 2007 that the Shia-led IFCNR was going to talk with Sunni leaders of the Islamic Army of Iraq, people would have responded that it was never going to happen. But over time, step-by-step, we've gotten these guys to sit down in the same room with us. And the best part is, they're starting to talk to one another without us being in the room.

19:36. Indirectly, this is the key in that it affects so many other things. And it gets you down the road to the endstate, which the benchmarks are all pointed towards getting to reconciliation, whether you're talking about Article 140 with the Kurds or Accountability and Justice with the de-Ba'athification process, those are all part of the same effort.

***Can you explain what has happened over the last two weeks?***

21:55. If you go back to August 28, 2007, when they established the ceasefire, one of Sadr's intents was to cleanse JAM of elements that he could not control, of criminals who were cloaking themselves in the JAM name. He was not controlling the whole organization, but maybe only 60 or 70%, but there were a whole lot of guys there, criminals, kidnapping, running gasoline rackets, etc. who were extorting money one way or another while calling themselves JAM. When he called for the freeze, it opened up the way for him to purge the bad elements. There was probably some purging, but not enough. Sadr probably expected the GoI and CF would help him with the purge, but we had to be careful of it because the guy on the street doesn't recognize the distinction

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between JAM and the SG criminals. The guy on the street only sees us going after JAM. Then there's a lot of people in the SGs and in the mainstream JAM who did not like the freeze because they were making their living through criminal activity, by getting paid for setting IEDs, by extorting, etc. and the Sadr name gave them cover. So there was always this underlying tension among the Shia and in the SG, so these guys were always looking for a loophole and interpretation of anything Sadr said suggesting a possible end to the freeze.

There was not enough denuding of the criminal elements in places like Sadr City. We wanted to keep the violence low, so in places like Sadr City, we were not going in heavy, we were trying to carefully pin-point target the rogue elements. As time passed, there was recognition that there would have to be a reckoning at some time. It was a question of when was that going to happen. I think I expected it to come before the provincial elections that we expect to happen later this year. So, you had those tensions already set.

25:35. [When] the PM decided to go to Basra, and that was just a catalyst for something that was probably going to happen sooner or later anyway. If we had gone to do the Basra campaign in a more methodical manner in June or July, we probably still would have had this problem with the reaction in Sadr City and Shula and the other Shiite parts of the community. The other thing that I think caused the tension and the violence to rise in the February-March time frame was you had the 1.4b, 1.4d and you started to



***Basra initially looked like fiasco. When Iran stepped in as the mediator, it seemed to signal that Iran was in control, but the political backlash in Baghdad seems to have strengthened the PM and the GoI. It is very confusing.***

28:50. Yeah, but you've got to remember you're in a part of the world where Saddam Hussein convinced everyone that he won the first Gulf War. It is perception, not necessarily reality that is important. I think the ISF, in deploying down to Basra, did something they couldn't have done several years ago. They got down there with some form of C2, and they moved forward, and things didn't well from our Western viewpoint. They continued to have problems with logistics, which we knew because that's one of their weak points. They had problems with intelligence, which they rely on us for, and they had problems with close air support, which they rely on us for. So, in their effort to

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do it on their own, I think they reminded themselves how much they rely on coalition forces, which could be a good thing, because maybe they won't get so 'froggy' and jump so quickly or so far the next time. Basra is a long way away, they were beyond their capabilities probably. They've done similar operations without a lot of coalition support, like in Diwaniyah and other places that are closer and more within their operational capabilities and reach.

***And probably Diwaniyah was a little more friendly terrain.***

30:15. Yeah, and frankly Basra is far away, and their situational awareness of what was going on down and the reality on the ground was not very good, even though it is in their own country. So it seems they were surprised by the realities that met them when they got there. But I think in the political realm, I think the PM was seen as being politically and personally brave for doing this. They didn't . . . it wasn't the most . . . we're not going to talk about this campaign centuries from now in the history books as being something to emulate. It is not something like Robert E. Lee at Chancellorsville, but they did get there and they did get into the fight. And they gave JAM . . . really, they weren't exactly taking to the ISF either.

~~(S/ACQU)~~. There is a reason, I think, that Sadr was amenable to this cease-fire. That is because they were taking some significant losses, particularly in Baghdad, where I think the CF and the ISF was inflicting some heavy losses on them. I think the JAM was getting to a culminating point down in Basra and they were losing in Baghdad, so it was the right time. A lot of the western press did not appreciate, though the Iraqis did, that at the last moment the PM sent forces down to take Umm Qasr away from the criminals and militia. I think the western press stayed focused on how bad the ISF had done, but the Iraqis focused on the fact that he took control of Umm Qasr, and he kept up in Basra.

He was able to reappear in Baghdad as the conquering hero. Also, it solidified a lot of political support behind the PM. The Sunnis stood by him, as well as the Kurds, the UIA, and the Sadrist were politically isolated, and you saw that. You had the two-pronged approach from the Sadrists, the fighting in the streets and the maneuvers in the CoR trying to undermine the PM, and they failed. They just never got much traction.

***How does General Mohan look coming out of this?***

34:00. It amazes me, but maybe that's just the western mindset. The PM went down there and everybody said Lt Gen Mohan was being fired, but then he still stayed in his job, and . . . from our perspective, he was a miserable commander. He was a commander in name only. Not much concept of operations and the art of war, how to synchronize logistics. But he tried . . . jumped in one of his vehicles and went down with his . . . a battalion in the attack. Here he was the Basra operational commander, charged with several divisions worth of force by the time they got done deploying everything down there, and he wanted to steal the moment and get a little bit of good press, so he was leading a battalion in the attack there, about 4 or 5 days ago. I personally think in the MoD, in the inner circles, that his stock is down. But, he's going to stay in position because to relieve or remove him just now would probably have negative reflections on the government.

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People thought he was doing pretty good down there for a long time. We did not have good situational awareness in Basra. When the British pulled out of Basra back to the airfield, our ability to see and understand what was happening on the streets on Basra just went away. Instead, what we were getting back were reports that Mohan was doing this and Mohan was making things happen. Mohan was preparing for this offensive in the June or July timeframe. Instead, they kicked it off on very short notice and with very little coordination. I think we were all a little surprised when we got down there and we found him to be a little bit more inept than we expected.

***Who else should I interview at FSEC, and what should I ask them?***

You should interview (b)(6) the founding co-director. The questions that need answering include more substance on 1) the initial founding, 2) what he learned about FSEC through the diplomatic mission, and 3) views on what is happening.

You should interview Maj Gen Hughes for his perspective from November on, when he took over. This is a non-standard job. You have to be very flexible and fluid. You have to adjust and learn how to do this, because there is no manual to tell you how to do this.

39:15. Some would argue that the British officers have a leg up here because of their time in Northern Ireland, but then others would argue that Northern Ireland and its lessons don't really fit here, that the Northern Ireland paradigm is quite a bit different from the Iraqi paradigm. So ask him if it fits or not.

I know this is a job that I won't really understand what I'm taking away until I'm gone for six months or a year. It's a challenging job on a daily basis because, as I said, nothing is standard, and everyone you meet, you kind of have to explain what you're doing, although what you're doing here I think it critical. I don't think we've done a good enough job . . . I can only blame myself . . . at codifying what we're doing. There's been personnel from Afghanistan who have come to visit FSEC. The DCM from the Embassy from Kabul came to talk to us about Reconciliation and what we're doing to see if there's lessons learned that could be applied to Afghanistan.

I think many of the British officers, Maj Gen Newton, the previous chief, said we often self-flagellate a bit here as Americans because we think we're inept in counter-insurgency. He's made the comment in the past that we are the premier counterinsurgency force now in the world, that what we are asking our battalion and company commanders to do and the flexibility that we're expecting of them is mindboggling to anybody that gets down there and sees what is happening and the complexity of everything, and every part of the AOR is different. Nowhere is it the same.

So I think it is important that we codify this, and I think it is important that you do this and you help us do this, but we have to keep doing this . . . writing for various manuals and national security publications, etc. I think it is important. I have a hard time doing this because of the classified nature of much of what I do.

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***What has it been like to be under fire in the past year?***

42:30. I was prepared for it last year when I deployed last year, in the violent months of the spring and summer, but then it calmed down. Now, we've been reminded of a war zone now with the IDF in the last two or three weeks. It reinvigorates your appreciation for the soldiers down there on a day-to-day basis facing fire. IDF can be a bit unnerving, because there is not much that you can do about it. You have to hope and pray that the soldiers out there in Sadr City are doing something about it. But I think everybody did well under the pressure. People got a bit irritable, but they adjusted. I think it was interesting to see the soldier skills and values come to fore, and a bit not so in some of the civilians. So I think the training the military puts in their personnel does pay those dividends, where we just kind of realize what it is and suck it up and move on. And it took a bit of reminding people because . . . it is terrible that we lost the people we did here in the Green Zone, but I think we came out of the last two weeks about as good as we could have expected, mainly because of what we didn't do. We did not act out in a rash manner. We did not lash out at Sadr City. If we had . . . we sat back, we monitored, we collected intelligence, and we spear fished in a pond, and we're still doing that. And if we had acted in a rash manner - - despite the fact that we have lost four or five people killed and numerous wounded in the International Zone--if we had acted in a rash manner, there would have been a lot more soldiers killed moving into Sadr City in a fast and unprepared manner. But I will be able to say that I have been under fire, and I will remember it.

44:51.

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